

THE PERFECT VOICE



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Thane tops in rape cases



SEBI employees protest at HQ

Demand Buch's resignation

Mumbai: A large number of SEBI (Security and Exchange Board of India) employees protested outside the capital markets regulator's headquarters on Thursday, seeking chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch's resignation.

The staffers, numbering over 200 as per an estimate, held a silent protest outside the main building in the Bandra Kurla Complex, housing Buch and other officials' offices.

None of the protesting employees spoke to the media, but a handout purported to have been drafted by the protesting officials sought the withdrawal of a press release issued by SEBI on Wednesday and also Buch's resignation.

The protesting employees assembled in front of the building and were seen standing there for about 90 minutes before dispersing.

For Puri, protests and internal issues have come at a time when she is probably facing the most challenging times in her stint. The career banker-turned-regula-



tor is battling speculations on whether a conflict of interest made her go slow on the probe against Adani Group and a raft of other allegations around it.

This is not the first instance of a protest at the SEBI, which witnessed a similar protest over a month ago by some employees. At that time, officials had said that the protests were by a few elements and do not have the backing of the recognised unions or associations.

In what is unprecedented for any financial regulator, around 500 employees are reported to have written to

the Finance Ministry on August 6 against the top management for what they called a "toxic" work environment, which includes instances of public humiliation and shouting down.

After the publishing of a media report about the letter, SEBI responded with a press release, which said such claims are "misplaced", which seems to have irked the employees.

The regulator said that some "external elements" had instigated its employees into believing that they shouldn't be held to high standards of performance and accountability, though, it did not provide specific details. "The claims of unprofessional work culture in the letter dated August 6, 2024, are misplaced," SEBI said in a statement.

The regulator suspects that junior officers have been receiving messages from outside parties encouraging them to "go to the media, the Ministry, or the Board," possibly for the outsiders' own agendas. -PTI



First look of Lalbaugcha Raja Ganesh idol at Lalbaug in Mumbai on Thursday. Pic: Bhushan Koyande

Attacks on Hindus 'exaggerated': Yunus

Dhaka: Chief Adviser to Bangladesh's interim government, Muhammad Yunus, has said the issue of attacks on minority Hindus in his country is "exaggerated" and questioned the manner in which India projected it.

In an interview with PTI at his official residence here, Yunus said the attacks on minorities in Bangladesh are more political than communal.

He suggested that the at-

tacks were not communal, but a fallout of a political upheaval as there is a perception that most Hindus supported the now-deposed Awami League regime.

"I have said this to (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi also that this is exaggerated. This issue has several dimensions. When the country went through an upheaval following the atrocities by (Sheikh) Hasina and the Awami League, those who

were with them also faced attacks," the Nobel laureate told PTI. The minority Hindu population faced vandalism of their businesses and properties, as well as the destruction of Hindu temples, during the student-led violence that erupted following the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

After unprecedented anti-government protests that peaked on August 5, Hasina resigned as prime minister

and fled to India.

"Now, while beating up Awami League cadres, they had beaten up Hindus as there is a perception that Hindus in Bangladesh mean Awami League supporters. I am not saying that what has happened is right, but some people are using it as an excuse to seize property. So, there is no clear distinction between Awami League supporters and Hindus," he said.

Unusual photograph keeps tongues wagging on Shinde's Hindutva credentials

Mumbai: Is Chief Minister Eknath Shinde keeping away Hindutva to woo Christians? This was the question asked in hushed voices in Mantralaya corridors on Thursday on the sidelines of the meeting of the state Cabinet.

Shiv Sena's full-page advertisement appeared in a prominent Marathi daily on Thursday giving information of an "Interdenominational Christian Conference" to be held at CIDCO exhibition centre at Vashi in Navi Mumbai and appealing people register for the conference. The advertisement carries a prominent photograph of CM Shinde. Interestingly this is a unique photograph of CM Shinde where he is seen without vermilion on his forehead, his style statement proclaiming his Hindutva inclination.

Shinde always ensures he has vermilion on his

forehead before leaving home everyday. He also takes care that it is prominently seen on his forehead in a proper manner throughout his meetings and public rallies throughout the day. This backdrop led to the question in hushed voices in the corridors of Mantralaya - whether the CM's photograph was deliberately changed to woo the Christian community.

A former corporator from Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation and Shiv Sena Navi Mumbai Jilha Sampark Pramukh Kishor Patkar's name appears at the bottom of the advertisement as 'welfare minister'. When contacted, Patkar said that the party is just a sponsor and the program has nothing to do with the party. "It is being organised by the Christian organisations and everything is done by them," Patkar, who has very close connections with the local Church in Vashi, said.



Party spokesperson Sanjay Nirupam condemned the photograph used in the advertisement and said that it must have been a work of someone who doesn't understand the Shiv Sena's ethos. Interestingly, Eknath Shinde had come down heavily on his predecessor Uddhav Thackeray after the latter's party had organised a competition for Muslim community in Parel last year.

"Shiv Sena stands for Hindutva and this appears to be done by someone who doesn't look at things in right perspective. We wear pagdi when we go to Gurudwara, were topi while going to mosques and for Iftari. Hence it is not wrong to think that we can't go to any Christian program with vermilion on forehead." Party has nothing to do with the advertisement.

Sanjay Nirupam

Uddhav skips Rahul's events

Sangli: Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday did not attend the public meeting addressed by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in Maharashtra's Sangli district, where the latter also unveiled the statue of late Maharashtra minister Patangrao Kadam.

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha is on a one-day visit to Maharashtra.

Earlier in the day, Gandhi met the family members of Congress' late Nanded MP Vasant Chavan and expressed condolences. After that, the former Congress chief came to Sangli, where he unveiled the life-size statue Patangrao Kadam at Wangi. Gandhi also visited a museum dedicated to the late leader. Thereafter, he addressed a public rally in Sangli.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Nationalist Congress Party (SP) chief Sharad Pawar were present there.

Firing at Badlapur station out of professional rivalry, one injured

Mumbai: A man fired a couple of shots from his revolver at two persons at crowded Badlapur railway station in Thane district on Thursday evening, injuring one of them in what police said was a fallout of professional rivalry.

The incident took place at platform number 1 at around 6 pm when the suburban station on the Central Railway route was chock-a-block with commuters, said the Government Railway Police.

The entire incident was captured on cameras and a video of it went viral on social media within minutes. After opening fire, the assailant, identified as Vikas Nana Pagare (25), ran towards railway tracks in a bid to escape, but he was chased and pinned down by policemen on duty with the help of some commuters, and later placed under arrest, they said.

The injured person was



identified by police as Shankar Sansare, while the second man targeted by Pagare escaped unhurt, but his identity was not revealed. Sansare was rushed to a local hospital, where he is being treated for gunshot wounds, said the GRP.

The assailant and also the duo he attacked have criminal records and the firing was linked to professional rivalry over TV cable business between them in the area, said the police, citing preliminary probe.

Initially, there was a fight between Pagare and

the duo outside the railway station.

As Sansare ran inside the station, the gunman followed him and fired at him and the other person accompanying him from his revolver, they said. The GRP's Kalyan unit, under whose jurisdiction the incident took place, were in the process of registering an FIR against the accused and carrying out further probe.

Senior officials, including the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central Railway), later visited the crime spot.

Meet the educators conferred upon National Awards

Happiness lab, preventing child marriages

New Delhi: Happiness lab, gamified assessments, home-based education visits, preventing child marriages and an automated school bell made of recycled materials are among the feats that have bagged National Teachers Awards for 82 teachers from across the country.

The awards were conferred upon by President Droupadi Murmu here on Thursday. Chandralekha Damodar Mestri, a teacher at the Satyawati Soiru Angle Higher Secondary School, South Goa, has been award-

ed for bridging the language gap for her primarily first-generation learner students. She developed innovative, low-cost teaching aids and conducted home visits with books and stationery to foster a love of learning.

K Suma, from Andaman and Nicobar Islands, has bagged the award for her dedication to improving the infrastructure for government schools and increasing enrolment. She promotes health and wellness through yoga camps and supports inclusive educa-

Mantaiah Bedke, a teacher at ZP Upper Primary Digital School, Jajavandi, Maharashtra, has developed innovative, low-cost teaching materials, including a "speaking wall," where words and sentences on walls help expand students' vocabulary through constant exposure.

tion with home-based education visits every fourth Saturday.



Minakshi Kumari, from Shiv Ganga Girls Plus 2 High School, Madhubani, Bihar, has championed community involvement by engaging parents in improv-

Sagar Bagade, a teacher at Sou S. M. Lohia High School and Junior College, Kolhapur, organized numerous social events to raise awareness on issues affecting orphans, tribals, young HIV patients, and individuals with disabilities.

ing school outcomes like clean uniforms, sanitary pads, and drinking water

facilities.

"She has published over 50 stories and poems and successfully advocated against child marriage, preventing 20 cases. Her efforts have led to increased participation by girls in academics, sports, Mithila painting, and community service," her citation read.

Hukam Chand Chaudhary, a government school teacher from Rajasthan, has been awarded for his creation of low-cost, project-based approaches, such as an automated school bell made from recycled materi-

als and an AI-powered chatbot for answering questions on WhatsApp. Pallavi Sharma, Principal of Mamta Modern Senior Secondary School here, has bagged the award for her initiatives including a Maths and Science Park, Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Laboratory and "Khushishala" - a happiness lab. Narasimha Murthy H K, a teacher at Daffodils English School, Sanjaynagar, Karnataka, uses activities such as blind-folding tasks and paper folding to infuse problem-solving in his students. -PTI

'Modi should apologise to every Maharashtrian'

By Correspondent

Sangli (Maharashtra): Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Thursday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi should apologise not only for the collapse of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's statue in Sindhudurg district, but also for demonetisation, anti-farmer bills and GST.

Modi should say sorry to each and every citizen of Maharashtra for the insult caused to the legendary 17th century warrior king when the statue at Rajkot fort collapsed on August 26, he added.

The Congress leader was speaking at a public meeting here after inaugurating a life-size statue of late party leader Patangrao Kadam.

With the BJP-Shiv Sena-NCP government in Maharashtra coming under fire over the collapse of the Shivaji Maharaj statue, the prime minister during his subsequent visit to the state said he apologised to the iconic king, his "deity", and also

the people whose sentiments were hurt.

"I want to ask the prime minister what he is sorry for, is it because the contract to make the Shivaji statue was given to an RSS person who had no merit, or for the corruption in the process," Gandhi said.

Modi should answer why all contracts are given only to "Adani and Ambani" and why he was running the government only for "two people", the Congress leader added.

Modi did not visit Manipur which is facing a civil war-like situation as the BJP itself has set the northeastern state on fire, Gandhi alleged.

Small and medium businesses were being finished for the benefit of "two people", he said, adding that Adani and Ambani groups cannot generate employment.

Late Patangrao Kadam dedicated his life to the Congress party, Maharashtra and the country, and worked for development and spread of education, the Raebareli MP said.



When Indira Gandhi lost the Lok Sabha election, Kadam stood by her and organised a public meeting even at 2 am, Gandhi noted.

Reiterating his demand for a caste census, he said it would provide a snapshot of how many people are there in different social strata, and their share

in the country's wealth and decision-making.

"But the BJP says no. Now the RSS has said that caste census is necessary. Congress and INDIA bloc will ensure that caste census is carried out at any cost. We need to understand the truth, who benefits from the country's wealth," he said.

Vishwajeet Kadam's Power Play in Sangli

Congress leader Vishwajeet Kadam reportedly spent around `50 crore on the statue unveiling ceremony. For the event, approximately 20 acres of land was acquired, necessitating the removal of sugarcane crops and compensation of around Rs. 4 lakh per acre to affected farmers. A waterproof tent, costing about ₹8 crore and sourced from Jalandhar, Punjab, was erected. Around 1.5 lakh chairs were set up, each with snacks, juice, and water bottles. Approximately 150,000 people, including village and district council members, Congress leaders, and well-wishers, were invited. Additionally, a 20-acre memorial site featuring landscaped gardens, a museum, and a large hall has been established as a tourist attraction.

nounced wrestler Chandrar Patil for the Sangli seat — a move that had irked the Congress leadership across the State given that Sangli had been a Congress bastion for half-a-century.

The Congress had been grooming Vishal Patil for the Sangli seat. Patil had been mentored by Kadam. Eventually, Patil rebelled, contested as an Independent candidate and pulled off a major victory by beating the Sena (UBT)'s Chandrar Patil in the Sangli Lok Sabha seat. It is widely believed he had Kadam's strategic support. Vishal Patil's win had further aggravated tensions between the Sena (UBT) and the Congress, particularly with Kadam.

Thackeray's name was notably excluded from the program as well. In contrast, Sharad Pawar's presence signaled continued support from key Maha

Vikas Aghadi figures.

Dr. Vishwajeet Kadam, closely allied with Rahul Gandhi, has been a rising force in Congress. Gandhi's emphasis on promoting young leaders is evident in Kadam's role as the President of Maharashtra Youth Congress. This effort aligns with Gandhi's broader strategy to invigorate the party with fresh, dynamic leadership.

As veteran Congress figures such as Prithviraj Chavan, Balasaheb Thorat, and Sushilkumar Shinde approach retirement, the party is pivoting towards a new generation. Kadam's prominence in Sangli, supported by significant investment—reportedly around ₹50 crore—demonstrates his growing influence and potential.

The BJP's strategy of elevating younger leaders is being mirrored by Congress.

The prime minister has not apologised for the "anti-farmer laws" which were later withdrawn due to protests, he further said, and demanded that Modi apologise for demonetisation and the "wrong" Goods and Services Tax.

Ajit tries to checkmate Shinde on flagship scheme

By Suyash Padate

Mumbai: The goal here is to get the credit. Whole state of affairs is looking like a whiny baby. The fracas, which started for taking credit of the state government's flagship 'Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana' is aggravating on every given day. The Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar virtually hijacked this scheme giving a categorical message to the alliance partner that he is 'dada'.

Overnight CM Eknath Shinde has disappeared from the advertisements created by the NCP. Eyebrows were raised in the political circle and now a question is being asked in the corridors of power that is Ajit Pawar trying to take all credit for Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana.

Advertisements done by NCP and teasers circulated by the party have claimed 'Dadacha waada, Laabh aani Bal' (profit and strength), 'My Dada sent the money' and Dada is one and it is 'Ajit Dadachi Ladki Bahin Yojana'. This has not gone down well into the Sena camp and prompted a backlash. How-



ever, within no time a clash between Shiv Sena and NCP over credit for the 'Ladki Bahin Yojana' escalated.

Significantly, the NCP not only removed the word 'Mukhya Mantri' (Chief Minister) from the advertisement but also called it 'Ajitdada's Ladki Bahin Yojana' which made Shiv Sena leaders furious.

Suddenly in the series, the Ajit Pawar-led NCP has released two advertisements in which the party tried to project that it was Ajit Pawar who brought the scheme for women that costs the state exchequer ₹46,000 crore annually. In one advertisement, a man asks his daughter where she got a new dress and she replies saying Ajit Dada. "Dada", is a Marathi term meaning "elder brother". In another adver-

Rs 4787 cr disbursed to 1.60 cr women

By Correspondent

Mumbai: While stating that none of the existing government schemes would be closed down because of the expenditure on Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana (MMLBY) scheme, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Thursday told the meeting of his cabinet of ministers that Rs 4787 cr have been disbursed to 1.60 cr women under the scheme as of now.

CM Shinde made it clear that two instalments of Rs 1500 have been disbursed through DBT as yet and the scheme will remain open for enrolment till September 30 so that the benefits can be transferred to 2.5 crore women across the state. He also made it clear that news reports stating that schemes to give cash benefits to farmers have been closed down due to financial burden of MMBLY and added that enough care has been taken to ensure that all schemes run smoothly.

DCM Ajit Pawar, who is suffering from bronchitis, registered online attendance to the meeting.

Ladki Bahin Sena to connect with 1 cr families

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Shiv Sena has made elaborate plans to reach out to around one crore families of beneficiaries of Mumhyamantri Ladki Bahin Yojana (MMLBY) from around 70-80 assembly seats in a span of one month before assembly elections, party spokesperson Sanjay Nirupam said her on Thursday.

Under the mass outreach program titled 'Ladki Bahin Kutumb Bhef' the party workers will reach out to 10 families of the beneficiaries of the MMLBY scheme. All the party leaders starting from CM Eknath Shinde to the 'Gat Pramukh' (booth head) will reach out to beneficiaries in three days of week viz Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Around 5 lakh families will be contacted in a day, 15 lakh in a week and 60 lakh in



CRIME WATCH

Man beats elder brother to death

Nagpur: A 25-year-old man allegedly beat his elder brother to death in Nagpur after he scolded the former's wife, police said. The incident occurred on Sunday in Hingna area of the city, they said. Govind Chowkhe attacked his 36-year-old brother Kisan following a heated argument. The brothers and their families lived in the same house with their mother.

"The argument between the siblings broke out after Kisan reportedly scolded Govind's wife over a family matter. Angry with him, Govind hit Kisan on his chest and head multiple times, in which the latter was seriously injured. He was rushed to a hospital, where doctors declared him dead," an official of Hingna police station said.

Man seriously injured in machete attack

Pune: A man was seriously injured after he was allegedly attacked with a machete by two persons in Pune city of Maharashtra, police said.

The incident took place on Wednesday in Kirkatwadi area on Sinhadag Road on Wednesday morning, following which the accused duo, including a minor, was detained by the police, they said. The victim is identified as Sagar Chavhan. The two who stabbed Chavhan were detained by the Crime Branch of the Pune police.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is HEREBY given on behalf of my client Mr. Tawheed A. Sofia, who is the current owner of Flat No. 404, 4th Floor, Block D, Simla House CHSL, Nepean Sea Road, Mumbai - 400 006 along with (5) shares of the Society under certificate no. 48, distinctive from 236 to 240 dated 11/01/1971.

Originally the said Flat was purchased by Master Mahesh Harjani, Master Madan Harjani, Miss Sonu Harjani and Miss Rita Harjani through their Father and natural guardian Mr. Doulatram Harjani from M/s Ishwardas Haridas Bhatia Vide Agreement dated 29.05.1969, thereafter Mr. Mahesh, Mr. Madan, Miss Sonu alias Sunita and Miss Rita has gifted their shares in the name of Smt. Ganga Lilaram Bharwani vide separate gift deeds dated 24.10.1985, who sold the said Flat to Mr. Nusarat Abdul Ghani, Mr. Gulzar Ahmed Sofia and Mr. Tawheed Abdul Sofia vide registered agreement dated 31.12.2013. Thereafter Mr. Nusarat Gani and Mr. Gulzar Sofia has gifted their respective 1/3rd share from the said property in the name of Mr. Tawheed Sofia vide separate registered gift deeds dated 05.03.2021.

All the said unregistered Gift Deeds dated 24.10.1985, 1) executed between Mr. Mahesh Harjani and Smt. Ganga Lilaram Bharwani, 2) executed between Mr. Madan Harjani and Smt. Ganga Lilaram Bharwani, 3) executed between Ms. Sonu alias Sunita and Smt. Ganga Lilaram Bharwani, 4) executed between Ms. Rita Harjani and Smt. Ganga Lilaram Bharwani, all deeds executed through their P.O.A. Father and natural guardian Mr. Doulatram Harjani in favour of Smt. Ganga Lilaram Bharwani for the above said Flat has been lost/ misplaced and the same could not be traceable inspite of best efforts done by my client and has registered with Marine Drive Police Station the said lost report, vide Loss Report No. 104409-2024 dtd. 04/09/2024.

On behalf of the client, Mr. Tawheed A. Sofia, the undersigned advocate hereby invites claims or objections, if any, in case of any claims/objections kindly intimate the undersigned advocate along with the relevant documents to support their claims/objections within 14 days from the date of publication of this notice. In absence of any claim within stipulated period, it shall be deemed that the property has no claim by virtue of lost agreement. And I shall issue No Claim Certificate as requested by my client, and thereafter no claims shall be entertained.

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

Place : Mumbai
Date : 06/09/2024.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Sanjay Raut,
Leader, Shiv Sena
(UBT)

"Pawar saheb is 100 per cent right. This is a three-party government, but the MVA is getting majority in Maharashtra. Our first task is to dislodge the current government. We can talk about the CM's post any time later."

Teen allowed pregnancy

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court on Thursday allowed a 17-year-old sexual abuse survivor to continue her pregnancy, noting that it was conscious of her reproductive freedom and right to choice.

A division bench of Justices A.S. Gadgari and Neela Gokhale said that while the teen initially sought to terminate the pregnancy, she later chose to deliver her baby as she intended to marry the man who had allegedly abused her.

"We are conscious of

the right of the petitioner (teenager) to reproductive freedom, her autonomy over the body and her right to choice," HC said.

The court said it permits the teenager to medically terminate her 26-week pregnancy if she so desires. "However, since she has also expressed her willingness and desire to continue with the pregnancy, she is fully entitled to do so," the bench said.

The girl and her mother learnt about the pregnancy when she was taken for a check-up for fever. A

case was later registered against a 22-year-old man for sexually abusing her. The survivor then moved the HC seeking to terminate the pregnancy.

However, the teen later claimed that she was in a "consensual" relationship with the man and that they intended to get married and raise the baby.

The minor was examined by a medical board at the state-run JJ hospital which submitted a report to the HC, saying that there were no abnormalities with the foetus. -PTI

Ghodbunder Road Traffic Jam

Commuters' woes in CM's turf

Perennial issue remains a nightmare, thousands of people stranded on the roads amid high humidity

By Anand Mishra

Mumbai: The perennial problem at Ghodbunder Road in Thane remained on its peak on third consecutive days on Thursday, crippling the city's traffic movement and sending nightmares to the lakhs of motorists as well as residents.

Massive traffic congestion continues in the key areas forcing the public to urge Maharashtra CM Eknath Shinde to solve the congestion issue on priority basis.

Waghbil Traffic Division said that Thursday's traffic disruption was due to the wrong side driving of vehicles at Brahmand and Mampada and its men were doing the job to clear it. According to the sources, many trucks despite the ban order enter into the



road in the peak hours and send entire road traffic out of the track. People demanded chief minister Eknath Shinde to intervene

vices from Hiranandani and Brahmand to Thane. Many TMT buses were already trapped in the traffic, so only a few services were running until Thane station. People's wait for TMT buses at different locations was a common scene on roads.

Anger and Woes burst on social media

Affected commuters shared videos and photos of jam-packed Ghodbunder Road in Thane on social media as vehicular traffic came to a standstill. WhatsApp groups formed by housing societies also used to warn the residents to avoid affected roads and to

fect Voice' that the Ghodbunder road traffic issue was, is and would remain a nightmare, because no authority seems serious resolving this grave issue. Dealing with heavy traffic has become a daily struggle for Ghodbunder Road residents. It's affecting not only the working class but also schoolchildren.

She said, "I think 100 times before leaving home, just because of traffic issues. Facing hardships due to traffic especially on Ghodbunder road has become everyone's destiny here."

Truck mishap led disruption

Notably, a truck mishap on the wee hours of Wednesday on Ghodbunder road caused massive traffic disruption lasting for nearly 11 hours and this was the second such incident in two days, which left thousands of commuters, including students, travelling to and from Thane and Mumbai, stranded along the highway. The driver of the truck, laden with 35 tonnes of chemical and headed towards Haryana on the Ahmedabad-bound lane, crashed into the divider. The truck then toppled on the slip road ahead of the Patlipada flyover. Meanwhile, irate motorists waiting on the Borivli-bound lanes in Thane ended up jumping lanes, compounding the problem and bringing traffic to a grinding halt.

New line between Borivali and Virar HC allows cutting of mangroves

Mumbai: Construction of fifth and sixth lines between Borivali and Virar stations of the Western Railway (WR) would ease traffic congestion, reduce emissions and save fuel, the Bombay High Court has said while allowing cutting of mangroves for the project.

A division bench of Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Amit Borkar permitted the WR to fell 2,612 mangroves on the land required for the new lines on the Mumbai suburban train route.

The order of August 30, which became available on Thursday, said the project was overwhelmingly in public interest and has significant ecological benefits.

As per an old judgement, the high court's permission is needed to remove mangroves in the Mumbai region.

The WR had filed a petition seeking permission to cut the mangroves. The construction of fifth and sixth lines would meet the demand for additional services, it said.

The HC noted that broader public interest, weighed against environmental consequences, is balanced by the fact that the construction would alleviate congestion on the existing lines.

"The railway system is an eco-friendly mode of mass transportation and one of the most efficient in the world. The construction of these lines would reduce emissions, alleviate traffic congestion, and con-



serve precious fuel," the court said.

The project was absolutely necessary and had no viable alternative as its site is adjacent to the existing tracks, the judges observed, adding that the "alignment has been determined to be the most suitable from technical, economic and functional perspectives."

The bench directed the railway authorities to replant 7,823 mangroves to compensate for the ecological damage.

The fifth and sixth railway lines between Borivali and Virar are being constructed under Phase III-A of the Mumbai Urban Transport Project (MUTP) at a cost of Rs 2,184 crore.

The 26-km lines are expected to increase the frequency of trains beyond the western suburbs.

Currently there are five lines between Mumbai Central and Borivali, and a sixth one is under construction. From Borivali to Virar, there are only four lines.

-PTI

- ▶ Major Reasons Behind Perennial Traffic Jam
- ▶ Huge real estate construction activity across city
- ▶ Metro work also is in progress
- ▶ Road widening and beautification projects are also underway
- ▶ Rains have created potholes on the roads
- ▶ Administration is not quick enough to clear it.

as he belongs to the same city. They said, "CM and most of the cabinet are from the Thane city and yet these people have failed to take care of their own city. Or at least fines can be increased and penalties can be made more effective to deter road violations."

Office-goers and students hit the most
Motorists started getting

late for offices and urged authorities to restrict heavy vehicles. Many schools requested parents to make travel arrangements for their kids as school buses could not find their way through traffic snarls. Many of the office-goers left the buses in the middle of the roads and navigated with alternative routes. This road traffic jam also affected the TMT bus ser-

alternate or internal roads to reach their destination. Residents of Orion One society in Anand Nagar, sharing their plight on WhatsApp group posted, "Huge traffic on Ghodbunder Road, Internal roads also jammed. Don't travel through Kolshet road, full traffic. Don't venture out of home, until extremely important. A local resident Anamika Jha told 'The Per-

The traffic jams over the last two days, and especially today, have been the worst. My son's school bus left around 11:15 am and didn't reach home until 1:30 pm. Normally, it takes 25 minutes. You can imagine the toll this takes on the kids' health. Even I think 100 times before leaving home.



Anamika Jha, Resident of Orion One Society

Sculptor had intention to surrender, says lawyer

By Correspondent

Thane: Sculptor Jaydeep Apte, who has been arrested in connection with the collapse of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's statue, came to meet his family at Kalyan in Thane district as he wanted to surrender before the police, his counsel has claimed.

Apte, 24, was arrested from near his house in Kalyan on Wednesday night by a team of police.

The police in Sindhudurg district were looking for Apte since the statue made by him and installed at the Rajkot fort in Malvan collapsed on August 26, less than nine months after it was inaugurated. Police had formed seven teams to trace him.

Talking to the reporters late Wednesday night, his counsel advocate Ganesh Sovani said Apte decided to surrender before the police and face legal action instead of applying for a pre-arrest bail.

The decision was made on Wednesday and as per the plan, he came to Kalyan to surrender before the po-

- The Sindhudurg police on Thursday told a court there that the materials recovered from the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue which collapsed last month at Rajkot fort in Malvan were rusted and it needs to be ascertained if items of subpar quality were used by the accused.
- The police, while seeking custody of sculptor-contractor Jaydeep Apte and consultant Chetan Patil, said interrogation was required to find out what kind of materials they had used to design and construct the 35-foot statue.
- They were both produced before a local court in Maharashtra's Sindhudurg district on Thursday which remanded them in police custody till September 10.
- The police, in their remand-seeking note submitted to the court, said it needs to interrogate the accused to find out from where they purchased

lice, he said. "We had held talks with his family members and decided that it would be proper for Apte to surrender and assist the probe agency," Sovani added.

He also dismissed the police's claim that Apte was hiding.

The police, on the other hand, maintained that they

laid a trap and nabbed Apte after receiving a tip-off that he would come to meet his family members in Kalyan. He was wearing a mask to conceal his identity, an official said.

The collapse of the statue of the iconic founder of the Maratha empire has triggered a huge political row ahead of assembly elections

the materials used to construct the statue and if they were of sub-par quality.

- "Nutbolts, iron rods and other materials of the statue were rusted. It needs to be seen what kind of material was used for the statue by the accused and if it was of subpar quality," it said.
- The police said it also needs to collect the mould and dye and the sample of materials used for the statue.
- It needs to be ascertained if the accused had carried out a feasibility audit while designing and constructing the statue, police added.
- "Whether the accused had considered the parameters of wind, water, earthquake and topography of the area before making the structural design of the statue needs to be probed. It also needs to be found out if the accused were aware of the longevity of the statue at the time of designing it," the police said in its report.

in Maharashtra with the Opposition targeting the Eknath Shinde-led government.

After the statue collapsed, Malvan police registered a case against Apte and structural consultant Chetan Patil for negligence and other offences. Patil was arrested from Kolhapur last week.

Sena leader booked for attacking Dalit

Thane: A Shiv Sena leader and several others were booked in Thane for allegedly attacking some people and preventing them from entering a temple, a police official said on Thursday.

The incident took place late Wednesday night after a meeting called at a temple by accused Vikas Repale, who is a former corporator, the Wagle Estate police station official said.

"As per the complainant, who is a 25-year-old Dalit student, he and some others of his caste were stopped from entering the temple for the meeting by Repale. He told them why they should come to a temple when he (complainant) belongs to a different religion (Buddhism). As per the complaint, Repale tried to hit them with a rod while others with him threw slippers," the official said.

"The group also threw stones when the complainant was going to the police station to get a case registered. We have booked Repale and some others under BNS and SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

-PTI

MMRDA to develop major roads in Thane



Mumbai: In a significant move to alleviate traffic congestion and enhance connectivity, the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) has approved appointments of contractors for key road infrastructure projects in Mumbai and Thane. These projects involve the construction and widening of over 50 kilometers of roads, addressing critical transportation needs in the region.

Dr. Sanjay Mukherjee, IAS, Metropolitan Commissioner of MMRDA, emphasized the importance of these projects. He said, "These infrastructure projects will play a pivotal role in improving traffic flow and accelerating development in Mumbai and Thane. Our focus remains on creating a robust road network that meets the future demands of the region."

The key projects

Balkum to Gaimukh NH 3 Connector Ghodbunder By-Pass DP Road (Thane Coastal Road): Length: 13.45 km, Contractor: M/s. Navayuga Engineering Company Ltd., Project Cost: 2,727 crore

Creek Bridge and Road from Kasarvadavli to Kharbao, Bhiwandi: Length: 3.93 km, Contractor: M/s. Afcons Infrastructure Ltd., Project Cost: ₹1,525.31 crore

Elevated Eastern Freeway Extension from Chheda Nagar, Ghatkopar to Thane: Length: 12.955 km, Contractor: M/s. Navayuga Engineering Co. Ltd., Project Cost: ₹2,682 crore

Elevated Road from Anand Nagar to Saket on Eastern Express Highway: Length: 8.24 km, Contractor: M/s. J. Kumar Infraprojects Ltd., Project Cost: ₹1,847.72 crore

Elevated Road from NH-4 (Old) to Katai Naka: Length: 6.71 km, Contractor: M/s. Afcons Infrastructure Ltd., Project Cost: ₹1,981.17 crore

Creek Bridge from Gaimukh to Payegaon: Length: 6.509 km, Contractor: M/s. Ashoka Buildcon Ltd., Project Cost: ₹975.58 crore

Creek Bridge from Kolshet to Kalher: Length: 1.64 km, Contractor: M/s. Ashoka Buildcon Ltd., Project Cost: ₹288.18 crore

Elevated Road from Kalyan-Murbad Road to Badlapur Road Over Karjat Kasara railwayline: Length: 2.16 km, Contractor: M/s. Ashoka Buildcon Ltd., Project Cost: ₹451.10 crore

Metro Line 4 & 4A - Construction of Foot Over Bridge at Teen Hath Naka (Part of Extended MUIP): Length: 603mtr, Approved Financial Offer: ₹68.08 Cr. (Excluding GST), Contractor: M/s. KBA Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd. (JV with M/s. Shree Mangalam Buildcon)

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Anushka Sharma, actor

"We have started having this discussion at home that if we don't make the things our mom's did, then we will not be passing on these recipes, you know? So sometimes I cook, sometimes my husband cooks, and we really do try to make the way our moms did, like out of memory."

Film city in Nagpur

By Correspondent

Nagpur: Maharashtra Culture Minister Sudhir Mungantiwar said on Thursday that the state government has decided to set up a film city on 100 acres in Nagpur district in the state's Vidarbha region.

He was speaking to reporters at Nagpur airport.

"We have decided to set up a film city on 100 acres of land in Nagpur district," he said.

Fares of Navi Mumbai metro reduced

Vashi: The fares of the Belapur-Pendhar metro rail corridor in Navi Mumbai have been reduced by as much as 33 per cent and these will come into effect from September 7, a top CIDCO official said on Thursday.

As per the revised rates, the minimum fare will be Rs 10 while the maximum would be Rs 30, a release from state-run town planning authority City and Industrial Development Corporation said.

"After the revision, tick-



ets will cost to Rs 10 for the first stretch of 0-2 km and 2-4 km, Rs 20 for 4-6 km and 6-8 km, and Rs 30 for 8-10 km and beyond. Previously, the metro fare from Be-

lapur Terminal to Pendhar was Rs 40, which has now been reduced to Rs 30," the release said.

The fares have been reduced to benefit commuters and people in Navi Mumbai should take benefit of this service, the release quoted CIDCO managing director Vijay Singhal as saying.

Services on the Belapur-Pendhar, which connects CBD, Talaja MIDC and CIDCO's housing complexes in Kharghar, started on November 17 last year.

-PTI

2 labourers killed, 2 injured

Mumbai: Two labourers were killed and as many others injured after some portion of a slab at an under-construction building collapsed on Thursday afternoon, civic officials said.

The incident occurred in Govind Nagar area of Malad East around 12.10 pm, they said.

"As per the primary information, some portion of the top floor slab of a 20-storey under-construction building collapsed," a civic official said.

Modi visits semiconductor company in Singapore



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Singapore counterpart Lawrence Wong during their visit to AEM Holdings Ltd. in Singapore on Thursday.

Pic: PTI

Singapore: Prime Minister Narendra Modi accompanied by his Singapore counterpart Lawrence Wong on Thursday visited a leading Singaporean company in the semiconductor and electronics sector and discussed ways for collaboration in this critical industry.

Modi is here on a two-day visit at the invitation of Wong.

Both the leaders visited AEM Holdings Ltd and were briefed about the company's role in the global semiconductor value chain, its operations and plans for India, the Singapore Semiconductor Industry Association

gave a briefing on the development of the semiconductor ecosystem in Singapore and opportunities for collaboration with India, the statement said.

"Given our efforts to develop the semiconductor manufacturing ecosystem in India and Singapore's strengths in this sector, both sides have decided to expand bilateral cooperation. During the 2nd meeting of the India-Singapore Ministerial Roundtable, both sides agreed to add advanced manufacturing, with a focus on semiconductors, as a pillar for enhancing bilateral cooperation," the press statement said.

Both sides have also concluded the memorandum of understanding on India-Singapore Semiconductor Ecosystem Partnership, it said.

At the facility, both the leaders also interacted with Indian interns from Odisha's World Skill Center undergoing training in Singapore as well as Singaporean interns who visited India under the CII-Enterprise Singapore India Ready Talent Programme and Indian engineers working at AEM.

The visit to the company by both the leaders underscores commitment of both sides to develop cooperation in this area. Prime

Minister Modi conveyed his appreciation to Prime Minister Wong for joining him in this visit, the statement said.

Prime Minister Modi also invited the Singaporean semiconductor companies to participate in the SEMICON INDIA exhibition to be held in Greater Noida on September 11-13, 2024.

Modi flew to Singapore on Wednesday after wrapping his visit to Brunei, the first bilateral visit there by an Indian prime minister.

He was accorded a warm welcome by the Indian community on his arrival here.

-PTI

No friction on GST: FM

Chennai: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday denied any "friction" in the ties between the Centre and States over Goods and Services Tax and emphasised that the federal structure in this economic reform should be respected.

Simplifying and easing compliance on the tax payers received top priority rather than raising revenue during all consultative meetings on the union Budget, she said.

"Revenue is the last consideration with which every budget meeting happens. You may think that I am not telling the truth. The hard truth I would like to put before you. Yes, we like to raise revenue. During several consultations including those with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, revenue raising came last. But, simplifying, easing and compliance of taxpayers came first," Sitharaman said.

Addressing a meeting on "The Finance Minister's Insight: Path Forward" held under the aegis of the Revenue Bar Association here, she said the average Goods and Services Tax (GST) rate decreased to 12.2 per cent as of 2023, which was much below the revenue neutral rate (RNR), originally suggested at 15.3 per cent.

Major cities witness 25 ultra-luxury home sales



New Delhi: Sales of ultra-luxury homes, costing over Rs 40 crore each, in major cities till August this year stood at 25 units with a cumulative value of Rs 2,443 crore, according to Anarock.

Real estate consultant Anarock data showed that a total of 25 ultra-luxury homes were sold in Mumbai, Hyderabad, Gurugram and Bengaluru in the first 8 months of 2024 for a collective sales value of Rs 2,443 crore.

Pune, Chennai and Kolkata did not witness any sales in this rarified price bracket. The data includes both primary (first sale) and secondary (re-sale) markets.

"The whole of 2023 saw

about 61 deals with a cumulative sales value of Rs 4,456 crore in Mumbai, Hyderabad and Gurugram.

"With four months remaining in 2024 and the festive quarter from October to December ongoing, we are likely to see more such large ticket-size residential deals happening before the year is through," Anarock Chairman Anuj Puri said.

Of the total of 25 ultra-luxury homes sold in 2024 so far, at least 20 were high-rise apartments worth Rs 1,694 crore while the remaining five sales were of bungalows cumulatively worth about Rs 748.5 crore.

Among cities, Mumbai has witnessed maximum sales of 21 units collective-

ly worth Rs 2,200 crore.

At least two ultra-luxury home deals collectively worth Rs 80 crore were closed in Hyderabad's Jubilee Hills.

Gurugram in NCR witnessed sale of an ultra-luxury home for Rs 95 crore, while Bengaluru also closed one deal worth Rs 67.5 crore.

Of the 25 deals closed across cities this year, as many as nine were of large ticket sizes worth over Rs 100 crore each, and a collective sales value of Rs 1,534 crore.

The entire 2023 calendar year saw 10 such large deals for a collective sales value of Rs 1,720 crore, Anarock said.

-PTI

Beauty, personal care market expected to rise

New Delhi: India's beauty and personal care market is expected to grow at a compounded annual growth rate of 10-11 per cent to reach USD 34 billion by 2028, Nykaa Beauty Trends Report said on Wednesday.

The report estimates India's beauty and personal

care (BPC) market to be around USD 21 billion at present.

According to the report, the Indian BPC market is the fastest-growing market across the world growing at a compounded annual growth rate of 10-11 per cent.

According to the report, e-commerce is poised to be the biggest driver of this growth and the fastest-growing segment, anticipated to achieve a CAGR of around 25 per cent.

"Rising aspirations and higher incomes among Indian consumers will propel

the market for premium beauty, expected to reach USD 3-3.2 billion by 2028. With 520-560 million users in 2023, the democratisation of beauty expertise via social media is significantly influencing consumer choices," the statement said.

-PTI

India may be top car market

Pune: German luxury car maker Mercedes-Benz India on Thursday said India has the potential to become one of the top five markets for its Maybach brand of cars in sales volume.

Launching the electric version of its first-ever all-electric Mercedes-Maybach in India, the company's managing director and CEO Santosh Iyer said the launch of the new car models -- Mercedes-Maybach EQS 680 SUV manifests the firm's ambition to lead in digital and electric mobility with a focus on ultra-luxury segment.

The Maybach EQS 680 SUV starts at Rs 2.25 crore onwards (all India ex-showroom).



People purchase onions as NCCF (National Co-operative Consumers' Federation of India Ltd) started retail sale at a concessional rate, in Delhi-NCR on Thursday.

Pic: PTI

Companies form JV to recycle PET bottles

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Two Indian companies listed on the stock exchanges have proposed a joint venture to recycle PET bottles, as per the corporate filing with the stock exchange.

The joint-venture, which is yet to be finalized, will see Race Eco Chain and Ganesh Ecosphere holding 51 per cent and 49 per cent stake, respectively.

The joint venture aims to launch numerous washing lines across India to transform PET bottles into reusable flakes, thereby significantly reducing plastic waste and fostering a circular economy and address the escalating demand for recycled PET (rPET) in India, driven by Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) mandates and regulatory requirements.

Earlier, Race and Zepto



(Kiranakart technologies) had cemented a pivotal partnership for post-consumer waste collection from households. Through this collaboration, ZEPTO's ded-

icated delivery agents are tasked with directly collecting PET bottles from households, achieving comprehensive traceability through efficient procurement of post-consumer waste PET bottles.

By 2025-26, the Indian government has stipulated that packaging must contain 30 per cent recycled plastic, increasing to 60 per cent by 2028-2029.

This initiative under-

scores the importance of recycled materials and projects that the demand for rPET in India will surpass 1 million tons by 2031.

By creating employment opportunities within the recycling industry, this initiative advances both environmental protection and economic growth. This investment in the JV is in response to mounting demand for ESG and regulatory demands (EPR Rules).

Phishing link located

New Delhi: Indian cyber-security agencies have detected a phishing fraud that "mimics" the official website of the Ministry of Defence to "harvest" the log-in credentials of officials to "steal" sensitive government documents.

The communication has been accessed by PTI and it says both the URLs seek NIC-provided log-in credentials of government officials through a fake e-mail that comes attached with a "fake" document titled "Hackers Targeted Defence Personnel in Mass Cyber Attack".

Once individual credentials like log-in IDs and passwords are punched, the links re-direct the users to a "login-error.html" page.

"Both the phishing URLs have mirrored the original MoD website (www.mod.gov.in) to lure end users into believing they are legitimate MoD websites," the communication says.

The two links are "mimicking" the Department of Defence under the Ministry of Defence and the phishing campaign is primarily aimed at harvesting the NIC credentials of government officials to steal sensitive documents pertaining to the Indian government, the communication says.

Quick commerce platforms in 60 cities

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Indian quick commerce platforms like Zepto, Blinkit among others are transforming the retail landscape by offering household products that are 10-12 percent lower than MRP (maximum retail prices), according to a report by Equiur Research - a wealth management firm.

The report estimates target addressable market for quick commerce in top-60 Indian cities at USD 150 billion as a larger share of the grocery market will shift towards it.

These platforms are offering more SKUs (stock keeping units) or products, superior service along with discounts, disrupting the market by targeting affluent impatient customers in affluent areas.

Unlike food delivery, which tends to be expensive, quick commerce is more affordable than offline retail, making it accessible across income groups and these sales are not confined to smaller SKUs, but even larger grocery packs are increasingly becoming popular, suggesting that



consumers are using them for monthly purchases.

Competition has intensified with players Flipkart and BigBasket, now transitioning to a full quick commerce model by entering this space and incumbents like Blinkit and Zepto are set to double their store count next year.

As players add stores in overlapping geographies, price competition and discounting may increase over the next 12 months.

These platforms are driven by execution rather than just strong balance sheets and demand a distinct operational DNA for positive unit economics.

India's market for quick commerce is large enough to support 4-5 players, though some may operate sub-optimally in specific regions.

BSE SENSEX		TOP GAINERS		PTI	
September 5, 2024		September 5, 2024		September 5, 2024	
%	POINTS	%	POINTS	%	POINTS
+3.11	Titan	3721.40	-1.41	Reliance	2987.15
+0.89	ITC	511.15	-1.08	Tata Motors	1068.65
+0.49	Infosys	1931.40	-1.00	Nestle India	2509.55
+0.33	HCL Tech	1791.00	-0.96	Bharti Airtel	1547.05
+0.30	Tata Steel	151.75	-0.80	LT	3623.30
+0.26	SBIN	818.60	-0.75	Bajaj Finance	7243.40
+0.20	HDFC Bank	1643.25	-0.74	IndusInd Bank	1423.75
+0.16	Asian Paints	3237.00	-0.71	JSW Steel	926.40
+0.04	Axis Bank	1178.00	-0.69	Sun Pharma	1820.00
+0.02	TCS	4480.35	-0.67	M&M	2730.15

BSE SENSEX		TOP LOSERS		PTI	
September 5, 2024		September 5, 2024		September 5, 2024	
%	POINTS	%	POINTS	%	POINTS
-1.41	Reliance	2987.15	-0.69	Sun Pharma	1820.00
-1.08	Tata Motors	1068.65	-0.67	M&M	2730.15
-1.00	Nestle India	2509.55			
-0.96	Bharti Airtel	1547.05			
-0.80	LT	3623.30			
-0.75	Bajaj Finance	7243.40			
-0.74	IndusInd Bank	1423.75			
-0.71	JSW Steel	926.40			
-0.69	Sun Pharma	1820.00			
-0.67	M&M	2730.15			

Wells Fargo to hire transgenders in India

New Delhi: Leading financial services company Wells Fargo on Thursday said it has broadened its talent attraction strategy by launching the Transgender Persons Hiring Program in India, a move that will increase diverse representation across levels.

Building on the programme's initial pilot with its 2022 cohort of 13 individuals hired in its technology function, the company aims to train and attract additional talent across multiple

lines of business in 2024.

The programme aims to provide employability skills training and professional development for transgender talent, Wells Fargo said in a statement.

"Investing in diverse communities to upskill and unlock potential and, at the same time, set up the right environment for success is a critical area of focus for Wells Fargo," said Uday Odedra, executive vice president and Region head of Wells Fargo India & Philippines.

In partnership with community organisation PeriFerry, the company currently sponsors 30 transgender individuals.

"By offering meaningful employment and professional opportunities to transgender individuals, we are not only enhancing our workforce diversity but also driving a culture of inclusion," said Sneha Suresh, executive director, and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion leader, Wells Fargo India & Philippines.

-PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Shaktikanta Das, Governor, Reserve Bank of India

"Our nation's journey towards becoming an advanced economy is drawing strength from a unique blend of factors, and these factors would include a young and a dynamic population, a resilient and diverse economy, robust democracy, and a rich tradition of entrepreneurship and innovation."

Rebellion in BJP, min quits



Chandigarh: A day after the ruling BJP announced its first list of 67 candidates for the October 5 Haryana assembly polls, the party faced rebellion with minister Ranjit Singh Chautala and MLA Lakshman Dass Napa who were denied ticket quitting the party. Energy and Jails Minister Ranjit Chautala (79), son of former deputy prime minister Devi Lal, said he took a decision after a meeting with his supporters and will now enter the fray as an Independent. Napa quit the party after being denied ticket while former minister Karan Dev Kamboj also stepped down as state BJP's OBC Morcha chief after party ignored his candidature. The rebel trouble for BJP started shortly after it came out with the first list of candidates as it left many sulking. After quitting the party, Napa met former chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda at his residence in the nation-

al capital and later said he will be joining the Congress along with his supporters. Ranjit Chautala called a meeting of his supporters after the party ignored his candidature from Rania segment in Sirsa district. "I took the decision after consulting my supporters," he said when asked about his move. "I had good relations with them (BJP). They gave me Lok Sabha ticket (from Hisar, which he fought unsuccessfully). But don't know on whose advice they have acted. I will say anyone who has given them this advice has caused damage to the party," Chautala said. "I am Chaudhary Devi Lal's son. I have some stature... I have decided to contest as an Independent," he said, while adding he has resigned as minister and quit the BJP. Chautala was hoping to contest from Rania seat but the BJP fielded Shishpal Kamboj instead. -PTI

HC to constitute special bench for hearing

Kochi: The Kerala High Court on Thursday said it will constitute a five-judge special bench to hear cases related to the Justice Hema Committee report. A bench of Acting Chief Justice A Muhamed Mustaque and Justice S Manu made this oral observation while hearing a plea challenging a single judge's decision allowing release of the committee's report. The special bench would also comprise women judges, the High Court said in its oral observation, a lawyer associated with the petition said. The single judge on August 13 had allowed release of a plea challenging the State Information Commission's order permitting the panel's findings and recommendations to be made public. The single judge order came while rejecting the plea by Sajimon Parayil, a film producer, who had challenged the Information Commission's July 5 order directing the State Public Information Officer (SPIO) to reasonably disseminate the information in the report while ensuring that it does not compromise the privacy of individuals. Parayil filed an appeal against the single judge's order before a division bench headed by the Acting Chief Justice which on Thursday decided to constitute a special bench for hearing matters related to the panel's report. The committee was constituted by the Kerala government after the 2017 actress assault case and its report revealing instances of harassment and exploitation of women in the Malayalam cinema industry. -PTI

A TALE OF TWO CELEBRATIONS



A teacher conducts a class for slum children in Maratha basti slum area on Teachers' Day, on the outskirts of Jammu on Thursday. Pic: PTI



Artists perform during a teachers' felicitation event organised by the Delhi Municipal Corporation on Teachers' Day in New Delhi on Thursday. Pic: PTI

HC seeks CBI report on nasty social posts

Kolkata: The Calcutta High Court on Thursday directed the CBI to file a report by September 18 on detestable posts being made on social media regarding the rape-murder victim of R G Kar Medical College and Hospital. The court noted that nasty comments, which are far from being acceptable to any member of the society, have been made with the photograph of the victim as found in the copies of the offending posts provided by the petitioner. The body of the on-duty trainee doctor was found in the seminar room of the state-run hospital on August 9, triggering nationwide outrage. The CBI is investigating the case from the second week of August on an order of the high court. The petitioner prayed in the PIL that the CBI be directed to investigate the cyber offences in connection with the "unfortunate and brutal incident." -PTI

Kerala to host conclave of five opposition states

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala will host a conclave of five opposition-ruled states—four from South India and Punjab from the North—to discuss how to ensure their fiscal needs are addressed in the upcoming 16th Finance Commission, state Finance Minister K N Balagopal said on Thursday. Besides the Left-ruled Kerala and AAP-governed Punjab, the states that will take part in the conclave are Tamil Nadu (DMK) and the Congress-ruled states of Karnataka and Telangana. The move by the Left government is seen as an effort to bring together the opposition-ruled states to strengthen their bargaining position with the BJP-ruled Centre. Last year, the state had filed a suit in the Supreme Court against the Centre for imposing limits on its borrowing capacity. Balagopal said that the conclave, which will be inaugurated by Kerala Chief



Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on September 12, aims to 'protect and strengthen' the cooperative and fiscal federalism of the country. Besides himself, Telangana Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu, Karnataka Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema, Tamil Nadu Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu and Leader of the Opposition in the Kerala Assembly V D Satheesan will also take part in the conclave, Balagopal said. Additionally, officials including finance secretaries

of all the five states and several subject matter-related experts, like former Economic Advisor to the Central Government Arvind Subramanian, will also attend, the minister said. He further said the conclave was being hosted by Kerala at a time fiscal federalism in the country was under challenge to a great extent. "The main objective of the conference is to conceptualise the developmental and financial issues being faced by the states and present them before the 16th Finance Commission. "A healthy Centre-State relationship requires fiscal stability of the states," Balagopal said. In 2011-12, the share of cess and surcharge in Central government revenue was 9.4 per cent and by 2022-23, it had gone up to 22.8 per cent, he said. As a result, the states get only 29.6 per cent of the Centre's revenue as against the recommendation of 41 per cent by the 15th Finance Commission. -PTI

Six Maoists killed in Telangana

Hyderabad: Six cadres of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) including two women were killed after an exchange of fire between the ultras and police in Bhadradi Kothagudem district of Telangana on Thursday, police said. Two commandos of the Greyhounds, the elite anti-naxal force of Telangana Police, were also injured in the exchange of fire and were shifted to a hospital and their condition is out of danger, they said. The exchange of fire took place at around 6.45 am in the forest area of Mothe village under Karakagudem police station limits when the armed CPI (Maoist) cadres opened fire indiscriminately on the police party which was on patrol, a release from police said. After warning the Maoist cadres to stop fire and in self-defence, as the firing from the Maoists did not stop, the police party also returned fire. After the firing stopped from CPI (Maoist) armed cadres, the police party searched the area and found six bodies. -PTI



Nuns offer prayers during observance of the death anniversary of Mother Teresa, at Missionaries of Charity in Kolkata on Thursday. Pic: PTI

AI to improve delivery of services

Hyderabad: Recognising the transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence in promoting Sustainable Development Goals, Telangana intends to improve service delivery for over one crore citizens and enhance productivity of the government employees by more than 20 per cent over the next 3 years. A report- AI Powered Telangana Strategy Document and Implementation Roadmap- released by the Chief Minister A Revanth

Reddy said six critical pillars have been identified to enable an AI-powered state. "The government intends to improve service delivery for 1Cr+ (over one crore) citizens and enhance productivity of government employees by more than 20 per cent over the next 3 years, setting the benchmark for AI-driven governance across India. The government will set an example by integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI)

across its operations to enhance efficiency and generative AI will be leveraged to power interventions aimed at solving the most critical governance challenges across domains including education, healthcare, agriculture, and service delivery, the report further said. Addressing the gathering after releasing the report at the ongoing Global AI Summit here, Reddy said nothing will change

society, and lives of people, as technology and innovation. "Our commitment to artificial intelligence is not new. We have already taken big steps for AI. We want to lay a strong foundation for our future," he said. Telangana AI Mission, or T-AIM, in partnership with Nasscom, will help implement the AI framework in the state, he added. IT Minister D Sridhar Babu also spoke at the

event. The state government intends to promote the development of datasets and models that allow AI to account for state-specific nuances including language and culture, besides government departments and selected early-stage startups will be provided subsidised access to compute capacity to level the playing field for innovation, specifically for socially conscious solutions, the report further said. -PTI

Woman allegedly raped, murdered

Bidar: A case of rape and murder has been registered after the body of a 19-year-old woman was found with multiple injuries days after she went missing from her home at Gunateerthawadi village in this district of Karnataka, police said on Thursday. Three people have been arrested in connection with the incident which allegedly happened on August 29, they said. She was allegedly killed after being hit on her head with a stone and later her body was dumped in the bushes, police said, adding, they suspect she was sexually assaulted. However, investigators are awaiting

medical reports for confirmation. Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H K Patil expressed outrage over the incident. "Karnataka will bring in some very strong laws to prevent all these kinds of activities," Patil said. Police said the victim was missing since August 29 and her parents lodged a complaint at Basavakalyana police station two days later. "We registered a missing case and we started investigating. On September one, her body was recovered with multiple injuries on her body including head. We registered a case of

murder initially and the accused were unknown. Then based on the technical evidence, we started searching for the accused and we found three people who were in contact with her on the day of her disappearance," a senior police officer said. One of them, who also hails from the same village, was in direct contact with her. "So, we picked the accused and during interrogation, he confessed to murdering her. During interrogation, he said that he went along with two others who were guarding him from far away during the incident," he said. -PTI

14th suicide in Kota this year

Kota (Rajasthan): A 21-year-old student preparing for NEET-UG in Kota allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself from the ceiling of a rented room in a house on Wednesday night. This is the 14th case of suicide by a student in the coaching hub Kota this year since January, while 26 cases of death by suicide were reported in the city in 2023. The father of the deceased held the alleged NEET-24 exam scam responsible for the extreme step taken by the youth.

However, he did not level any allegation in the report to the police in the matter. No suicide note was recovered from the room in which the student stayed. The deceased, identified as Parshuram Jatav (21), a resident of Barsana in Mathura district of Uttar Pradesh, last spoke to his father on Wednesday around 1.15 pm and expressed his wish to return home. His father, Khacharmal, asked him to come back home. However, the son did not attend to his calls after that. -PTI

Ceasefire with NSCN-K Niki extended

New Delhi: The Centre on Thursday extended the ceasefire agreement with a break-away faction of the Naga insurgency group NSCN for another year. The NSCN (K) Niki group is led by Niki Sumi against whom the National Investigation Agency (NIA) had announced a reward of Rs 10 lakh for allegedly killing 18 Indian Army soldiers in Manipur in 2015. The ceasefire agreement is for a period of one year with effect from September 8, 2024 to September 7, 2025, an official statement said.

Railway Board wants contractual staff verified

New Delhi: Crime data suggests that contractual staff have been found to be involved in a large number of cases of molestation, theft of passengers' belongings and railway property, so their pre-employment police verification should be mandatory, the Railway Board said. The board said that on checking the records, it has been found that police verification was not done in many of these cases. In a circular addressed to the general managers of all 17 railway zones and the chairman and managing director of the Indian Railway

Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), the board said, "Security (Crime) data has highlighted that several incidents have been reported over IR (Indian Railway) wherein contractual staff have been found to be involved in a large number of cases of theft of passengers' belongings, molestation, theft of railway property etc." The board said, "In view of the above, Zonal Railways and IRCTC are advised that police verification for 100% of the catering and vending staff being engaged over IR in trains as well as stations should be mandatory." -PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY



S. Somanath, Chairman, Indian Space Research Organisation

"With the rapid advancement of technologies like AI, robotics, 6G and quantum computing, the risks we face are escalating. There is an urgent need for innovative approaches to address these emerging threats."

BJP poaches MLAs, MPs; Hemant Soren

Gumla: Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Thursday slammed the BJP, accusing it of "poaching" MLAs and MPs of other parties. Soren also asserted that the BJP would be "driven out" from the state "forever" after the assembly elections this year. "Even if the people reject them, they poach MLAs, MPs and use agencies like the ED and CBI against opposition leaders or put them behind bars to

form government," he alleged. The CM was speaking at 'Apki Yojana, Apki Sarkar Apke Dwar' (Your Scheme, Your Government at your doorstep) programme here, where he inaugurated and laid the foundation of 347 projects worth over Rs 1,000 crore for Gumla and Lohardaga districts. "As fish cannot survive without water, our opposition (BJP) feels the same without power... They have been after me and our

MLAs for the past two years. But, we are neither saleable nor are we scared," Soren said. He also alleged that when BJP's "local leaders failed" in Jharkhand, it is now "importing" leaders from Chhattisgarh, Assam, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. "These leaders are flaring communal tension here among various communities," the chief minister said. Soren blamed the saf-



ron party for creating hurdles in implementation of his government's welfare schemes. "They do not want the benefits of the schemes to

reach people. But, we have decided this time we shall drive out our opposition from Jharkhand forever," he said. -PTI

Funding For Climate Change

India ahead of many rich nations

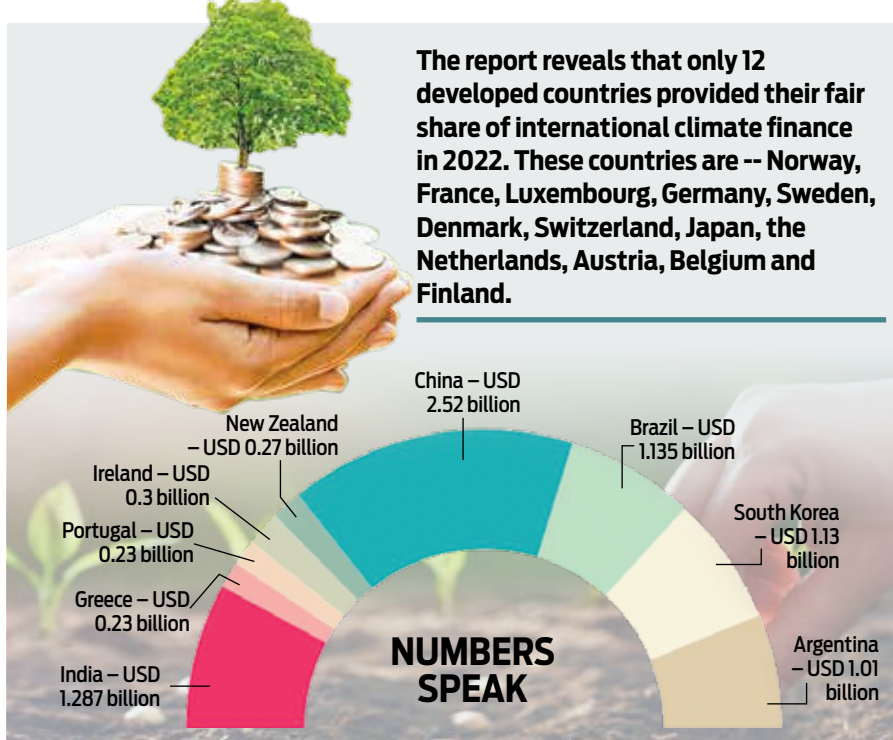
New Delhi: India contributed USD 1.28 billion in climate finance through multilateral development banks (MDBs) in 2022, surpassing the contributions of many developed countries, according to a new analysis.

The analysis, conducted by the UK-based think tank ODI and the Zurich Climate Resilience Alliance, comes amid a renewed push by some developed countries to broaden the donor base for climate finance to include developing countries like China and Saudi Arabia.

Researchers noted that the significant gap in climate finance is largely due to the United States failing to contribute its fair share. Australia, Spain, Canada and the United Kingdom also performed relatively poorly in this regard.

The analysis has identified the top 30 non-Annex II countries that provided substantial climate finance to developing countries in 2022 through multilateral contributions to development banks and climate funds.

This group includes former economies in transition like Poland and Russia, countries that have achieved high-income status since 1992, such as Chile, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and South Korea, and middle-income countries with large populations, including Brazil, China, In-



The report reveals that only 12 developed countries provided their fair share of international climate finance in 2022. These countries are -- Norway, France, Luxembourg, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Japan, the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium and Finland.

dia, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, the Philippines and Pakistan.

According to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), adopted in 1992, high-income, industrialised countries (referred to as Annex-II countries) are responsible for providing finance and technology to help developing countries combat and adapt to climate change. These countries, including the US, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and European Union (EU) member states, such as Germany, France and the UK, have historically ben-

efitted from industrialisation and contributed the most to greenhouse gas emissions.

At COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009, these developed countries pledged to jointly provide USD 100 billion each year by 2020 to help developing countries mitigate and adapt to climate change. However, this target has not been fully met, leading to a significant finance gap. This shortfall has eroded trust and hindered climate action in developing countries.

In May, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) claimed that developed

countries had met the long-standing USD 100 billion-a-year promise by providing nearly USD 116 billion in climate finance to developing countries in 2022, with nearly 70 per cent of the money given in the form of loans.

The ODI researchers pointed out that many developed countries, despite performing well in terms of climate-finance contributions, would make "markedly less progress towards meeting their fair share if the finance provided was accounted for in grant-equivalence terms" -- in other words, if it reflected their real fiscal

effort.

The report calls for the inclusion of a "burden-sharing mechanism" in the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) to provide clarity on each country's obligations and hold countries accountable.

The NCQG refers to the new, larger amount that developed nations must mobilise annually, starting 2025, to support climate action in developing countries. Countries are expected to finalise the NCQG at this year's UN climate conference -- COP29 -- in Baku, Azerbaijan in November.

The current USD 100 billion annual climate-finance goal is a collective commitment by developed countries. Its collective nature has meant that individual developed countries are not accountable for specific sums of money, potentially reducing the overall amount of climate finance provided due to the lack of individual scrutiny. The inclusion of a burden-sharing arrangement among developed countries could potentially strengthen the NCQG by fostering greater accountability and trust among parties, according to the ODI researchers.

Many developing countries, including India, have recently advocated for such an arrangement to enhance accountability among developed countries.

- PTI

Karnataka HC emphasises need for swift conclusion

Bengaluru: The Karnataka High Court has emphasised the need for expeditious trials in cases under the Wildlife Protection Act, expressing concern over lengthy delays in bringing offenders to justice.

A single judge bench of Justice M Nagaprasanna made this observation while rejecting a petition by Abdul Rehman and others, who faced charges for killing a spotted deer in the Bandipur forest in 2008.

Despite 16 years having passed, the trial against the accused is still ongoing. The court criticised the prolonged proceedings, stating: "Why such a long time? Why do you take 16 years to conclude a forest offence? This is not correct if you book under the Forest Act for killing a deer in 2008 and it is still being tried in 2024. What is this?"

The bench attributed the delay to the accused evading court appearances, leading to repeated adjournments.

Rehman and his co-accused had sought quashing of the proceedings, arguing that they faced "double jeopardy", as a separate case related to the illegal possession of meat and unlicensed arms was filed against them in Kerala.

The court dismissed this argument, noting that the deer was killed in Karnataka, where the Wildlife Protection Act applies. The case in Kerala, involving the seizure of 35 kg of deer meat and weapons, falls under the Arms Act.

-PTI

Impact of huge gale, cloud burst
About 50,000 trees uprooted in Telangana

Hyderabad: In an ecological disaster, an estimated 50,000 trees spread over about 500 acres in the forests of Mulugu district in Telangana were uprooted following a huge gale and a sudden cloud burst.

This happened on the night of August 31 because of local climatic conditions that suddenly developed there due to cloud formation, a senior forest official said on Wednesday.

"We never saw such an incident in our lives," the official told PTI. With the massive wind and water gushing (in a particular width and length), it has destroyed the forest and big trees have been uprooted, he said.

The other reason why the trees got uprooted was that the plants do not develop a very deep root system as moisture and nutrition are easily available for them in the area, he said.

In some places, the root system is developed within one foot, he added.

Had it been a very deep root system, the damage would have been less, the official said. In some places, the top part was broken as one tree fell on another tree or the top might have got broken due to any "injury" to the tree.

The forest department

has started an enumeration of the damage, which is expected to be completed in about a fortnight once the ongoing rainfall subsides.

The official said though cloud bursts have been reported from places like Himachal Pradesh, he has not come across damage to the forest on such a large extent of land.

The forest department would prepare a report and also urge experts or agencies like the Meteorological department to throw light on the reasons for the weather phenomenon that led to the massive damage to the forest, he said, and added that they would plan on how to rejuvenate the area to bring back the glory. Though the forest is home to bison and spotted deer, no wildlife casualty has been reported, he said.

Telangana Panchayat Raj Minister Danasari Anasuya expressed anguish over the loss of trees on about 500 acres. There would have been widespread destruction had the incident occurred in villages, she said in a release. She said Union Ministers from Telangana G Kishan Reddy and Bandi Sanjay Kumar should depute special teams from the Centre to ascertain the reasons for the incident.

- PTI

In 2024 so far, 68 killed in wild animal attacks in Odisha

Bhubaneswar: At least 68 people were killed in attacks by elephants and other wild animals in Odisha during the current year, state Forest Minister Ganesh Ram Singkhuntia told the Assembly on Tuesday.

While replying to a written question of BJD legislator Arun Kumar Sahoo, the minister said besides human casualties, 1,087 houses and crops over 2315.79 acres were also damaged in incidents of the human-wildlife conflict in different forest divisions of the state during the current year.

To prevent human habitations located near forest areas from elephant and other wild animal attacks, the government has been taking steps for the roll-out of an artificial intelligence (AI) supported e-surveillance project at Bharatpur

NUMBERS SPEAK	
1,087	No of houses damaged
2315.79	Acres where crops damaged

area in Chandaka forest division, Hindol of Dhenkanal division and Bantala in Angul division on a pilot basis, he stated.

With the help of AI, the forest officials can monitor the movement of wild animals and accordingly, human habitations can be put on alert in advance, the minister said.

A maximum of 14 people were killed in such wild animal attacks in the Dhenkanal forest division, while eight such deaths were reported from the Keonjhar forest division, the minister said.

Similarly, wild animal attacks claimed six human lives in each of the Bonai and Rourkela forest divi-

sions, five people were killed in such attacks in the Angul forest division.

The Athagarh and Baripada divisions reported four human deaths each. Ram Singkhuntia has informed that the government has so far received 9,168 complaints seeking compensation for the loss incurred due to elephants and other wild animals.

For commercial crops, the compensation amount is Rs 25,000 per acre, he said. According to official sources, the forest department is also providing an ex-gratia of Rs 6 lakh to the next of kin of the person, who died in the wild animal attack in the state.

- PTI

Elephant kills man in CH

Korba: A 60-year-old man was trampled to death by a wild elephant in Chhatisgarh's Korba district, officials said on Thursday.

The incident occurred on Wednesday night at Thadpakan village under Pali forest sub-range when Mewa Ram Dhanu was at his house, said Kumar Nishant, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Katghora forest division.

On sensing the presence of the tusker, the man went to his vegetable garden behind the house but came face to face with the pachyderm, he said. The elephant caught hold of Dhanu with its trunk and trampled him to death, he said. Earlier on Wednesday, the same tusker had attacked and killed a bull in nearby Mudabhata village, he said.

- PTI



South Korean environmental activists wearing masks of Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, bottom right, and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol perform during a rally against Kishida's planned visit in Seoul, South Korea

India leads world in generating plastic waste

The country produces 10.2 million tonnes a year

New York: India leads the world in generating plastic waste, producing 10.2 million tonnes a year, far more than double the next big-polluting nations, according to a new study.

According to researchers at the University of Leeds in the UK, the world creates 57 million tonnes of plastic pollution every year and spreads it from the deepest oceans to the highest mountaintop to the inside of people's bodies. The study also said more than two-thirds of it comes from the Global South.

It's enough pollution each year to fill New York City's Central Park with plastic waste as high as the Empire State Building, according to researchers. They examined waste produced on the local level at more than 50,000 cities and towns across

the world for a study in Wednesday's journal Nature.

The study examined plastic that goes into the open environment, not plastic that goes into landfills or is properly burned. For 15 per cent of the world's population, government fails to collect and dispose of waste, the study's authors said -- a big reason Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa produce the most plastic waste. That includes 255 million people in India, the study said.

India leads the world in generating plastic waste, producing 10.2 million tons a year, far more than double the next big-polluting nations, Nigeria and Indonesia. China, often villainised for pollution, ranks fourth but is making tremendous strides in reducing waste, Velis said. Other top plastic polluters

The United Nations projects that plastics production is likely to rise from about 440 million tonnes a year to more than 1,200 million tonnes, saying "our planet is choking in plastic."

are Pakistan, Bangladesh, Russia and Brazil. Those eight nations are responsible for more than half of the globe's plastic pollution, according to the study's data. The United States ranks 90th in plastic pollution with more

than 52,500 tonnes and the United Kingdom ranks 135th with nearly 5,100 tonnes, according to the study.

In 2022, most of the world's nations agreed to make the first legally binding treaty on plastics pollution, including in the

oceans. Final treaty negotiations take place in South Korea in November.

The study used artificial intelligence to concentrate on plastics that were improperly burned -- about 57 per cent of the pollution -- or just dumped.

In both cases incredibly tiny microplastics, or nanoplastics, are what turn the problem from a visual annoyance at beaches and a marine life problem to a human health threat, Velis said.

Several studies this year have looked at how prevalent microplastics are in our drinking water and in people's tissue, such as hearts, brains and testicles, with doctors and scientists still not quite sure what it means in terms of human health threats.

"The big time bomb of microplastics are these microplastics released in the Global South mainly," Velis said. "We already have a huge dispersal problem. They are in the most remote places ... the peaks of Everest, in the Mariana Trench in the ocean, in what we breathe and what we eat and what we

drink."

The study misses the significance of the global trade in plastic waste that has rich countries sending it to poor ones. The study said plastic waste trade is decreasing, with China banning waste imports. But Karlsson said overall waste trade is actually increasing and likely plastics with it. She cited EU waste exports going from 110,000 tonnes in 2004 to 1.4 million tonnes in 2021.

Velis said the amount of plastic waste traded is small. Kara Lavender Law, an oceanography professor at the Sea Education Association who wasn't involved in the study, agreed, based on US plastic waste trends. She said this was otherwise one of the more comprehensive studies on plastic waste.

-AP

Taslima Nasreen Says Situation Is Alarming

Islamic radicals want to make B'desh another Afghanistan

By Mona Parthasarathi

New Delhi: Expressing concern that Bangladesh might go the Afghanistan way, writer-activist Taslima Nasreen has said that Islamic radicals are brainwashing and indoctrinating youths to make them "anti-India, anti-Hindu and pro-Pakistan".

Nasreen said she and others had initially supported the students' movement in Bangladesh against an "autocratic government".

However, the recent actions like violence against Hindus, targeting of journalists and the release of "terrorists" from jails showed it was not a students' movement but was "planned and funded by Islamic jihadis", she said.

"When students protested against the quota system in July, we supported them... people who believe in women's rights, human rights and freedom of expression.

She said they had hoped that a fair election would be conducted to democratically form a new government.

"We realised that after they started demolishing everything, all the statues, sculptures, museums. The way Hindus were attacked and killed; it was a nightmare.

"Now these people are filing cases against journalists and people who were close to Hasina. They are gradually showing their real faces and motives. All the terrorists, who were in

“Hindus are leaving now and they are left with less than seven per cent. Islamic radicals attack Hindus during elections, puja or to grab their properties. Hasina allowed them to give religious sermons everywhere that were always anti-women and anti-Hindus. When you brainwash youths like this, they would become a generation who are against Hindus, against India, against women and are pro-Pakistan, pro-jihad, pro fanatics.



“Sheikh Hasina was an autocrat who always encouraged fundamentalists and curbed freedom of expression. People were angry with her. She also destroyed the education system by making madrasa degrees equivalent to university degrees so the people who only studied Quran and Hadis went to universities and even became teachers. They made it compulsory for women to wear hijabs and burkas. It was all created by Hasina.

“Afterwards we realised that it was not a students' movement. It was planned and funded by Islamist jihadis and banned terrorist organization.

jail, are released. It was not at all a students' movement," said the author.

The 'Lajja' author has not returned to Bangladesh since her exile and has been living in India since 2005 (except from 2008 to 2010).

She also expressed apprehensions that Bangladesh could become another Afghanistan or Iran, going by the way the current interim government was operating under the guidance of Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus.

"Yunus says that they are celebrating their victory. People are burning houses of Hindus. What kind of celebration is this? They are destroying everything. All the statues of freedom fighters have been demolished including that of the father of the nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

"But the Pakistan Army's statues are intact - (the army) which killed 30

million people during the war and raped millions of women," said the 62-year-old writer, who is known for being an outspoken critic of radical Islamic elements.

She said that Yunus knew "very well that the country would be ruled by jihadis and he has no problem with it".

"While we thought that he would conduct an election. It didn't happen. They

are not talking about secularism and they want to make Bangladesh like Afghanistan or Iran which is very scary," she said.

She also blamed Hasina for the current situation and said that the rise of Islamic radicals was not sudden. "I blame Hasina for that because she chose religion to stay in power forever. She built 560 model mosques and madrasas instead of secular schools to appease the Islamists.

Nasreen said that anti-India sentiment "is high" in Bangladesh at present.

"I was thrown out of Bangladesh in 1994 by Khaida Zia and when Hasina came in power she did not allow me to enter the country.

Muhammad Yunus Says India Is Captive Of Narrative

Hasina must stay silent till B'desh seeks extradition

By Pradipta Tapadar

Dhaka: Muhammad Yunus, the head of Bangladesh's interim government, has said that former prime minister Sheikh Hasina making political remarks from India is an "unfriendly gesture", asserting that she must remain silent to prevent the discomfort to both countries until Dhaka requests her extradition.

In an interview with PTI at his official residence in Dhaka, Yunus, who was appointed the country's Chief Advisor after Hasina's ouster, stressed that while Bangladesh values strong ties with India, New Delhi must move "beyond the narrative that portrays every other political party except Awami League as Islamist and that the country will turn into Afghanistan without Sheikh Hasina."

Yunus was apparently referring to Hasina's statement on August 13 in which she demanded "justice", saying those involved in recent "terror acts", killings and vandalism must be investigated, identified and punished.

"It is not good for us or for India. There is discomfort regarding it," he told PTI.

Following unprecedented anti-government protests that peaked on August 5, Hasina resigned as prime minister and fled to India. Her presence in India for nearly four weeks has fuelled speculation in Bangladesh.

When asked whether Bangladesh has communi-

“No one is comfortable with her stance there in India because we want her back to try her. She is there in India and at times she is talking, which is problematic. Had she been quiet, we would have forgotten it; people would have also forgotten it as she would have been in her own world. But sitting in India, she is speaking and giving instructions. No one likes it.



“The way forward is for India to come out of the narrative. The narrative is that everybody is Islamist, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is Islamist, and everyone else is Islamist and will make this country into Afghanistan. And Bangladesh is in safe hands with Sheikh Hasina at the helm only. India is captivated by this narrative. India has to come out of this narrative. Bangladesh, like any other nation, is another neighbour.

cated its stance to India, Yunus said it has been conveyed verbally and quite firmly that she should keep quiet.

"Everyone understands it. We have said quite firmly that she should keep quiet. This is an unfriendly gesture towards us; she has been given shelter there and she is campaigning from there. It is not that she has gone there on a normal course. She has fled following a people's uprising and public anger," he said.

Yunus stated that the interim government is committed to ensuring justice for the people of Bangladesh against the atrocities, and justice requires that she be brought back to the country.

"Yes, she has to be brought back or else the people of Bangladesh won't be at peace. The kind of atrocities she has committed, she has to be tried in front of everyone here," he emphasised.

Discussing the future of

the India-Bangladesh relationship, Yunus expressed a desire for good ties with India but insisted that New Delhi must abandon the narrative that only Hasina's leadership ensures the country's stability.

Referring to the recent incidents of alleged attacks on Hindu minorities in the country and India raising concerns about it, Yunus said this is just an excuse.

"The issue of trying to portray the conditions of minorities in such a big way is just an excuse," he said.

The minority Hindu population has faced vandalism of their businesses and properties, as well as the destruction of Hindu temples, during the student-led violence that erupted fol-

“If India wants to keep her until the time Bangladesh (government) wants her back, the condition would be that she has to keep quiet.

lowing the ouster of Hasina.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his Independence Day address from the ramparts of the Red Fort on August 15, expressed hope that the situation in violence-hit Bangladesh would return to normal soon and stated that 1.4 billion Indians are concerned about the safety of Hindus and minorities in the neighbouring country.

Chinese migrants flock to Mexico

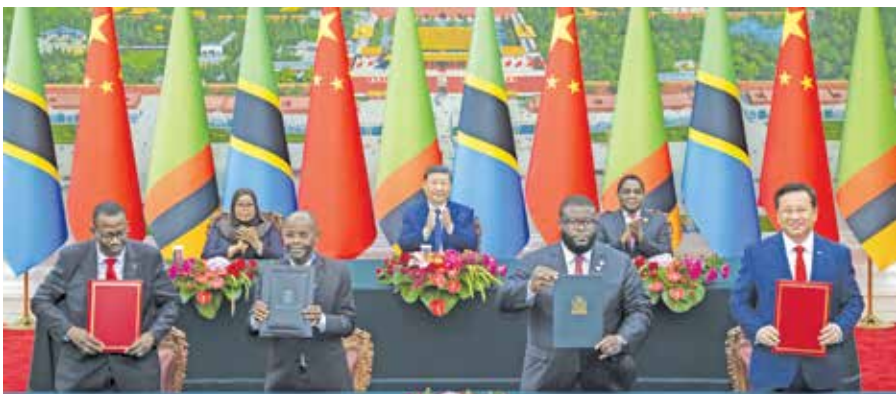
Mexico City: Despite her well-paying tech job, Li Daijing didn't hesitate when her cousin asked for help running a restaurant in Mexico City. She packed up and left China for the Mexican capital last year, with dreams of a new adventure.

The 30-year-old woman from Chengdu, the Sichuan provincial capital, hopes one day to start an online business importing furniture from her home country.

"I want more," Li said. "I want to be a strong woman. I want independence."

Li is among a new wave of Chinese migrants who are leaving their country in search of opportunities, more freedom or better financial prospects at a time when China's economy has slowed, youth unemployment rates remain high and its relations with the U.S. and its allies have soured.

While the U.S. border patrol arrested tens of thousands of Chinese at the U.S.-Mexico border over the past year, thousands are making the Latin American country their final destination. Many have hopes to start businesses of their own, taking advantage of Mexico's proximity to the



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, real from left, Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu Hassan, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Zambia President Hakainde Hichilema applaud as they witness the signing of a memorandum

Last year, Mexico's government issued 5,070 temporary residency visas to Chinese immigrants, twice as many as the previous year — making China third, behind the United States and Colombia, as the source of migrants granted the permits.

Families move to Thailand against pressure cooker schools

Chiang Mai (Thailand): There is a wave of Chinese flocking to Thailand for its quality international schools and more relaxed lifestyle. While there are no records tracking how many are moving abroad for education, they join other Chinese expats leaving the country, from wealthy entrepreneurs moving to Japan to

protect their wealth, to activists unhappy with the political system, to young people who want to opt out of China's ultra-competitive work culture, at least for a while.

Jenson Zhang, who runs an education consultancy, Vision Education, for Chinese parents looking to move to Southeast Asia, said many middle-class families

choose Thailand because schools are cheaper than private schools in cities like Beijing and Shanghai. A 2023 survey by private education company New Oriental found Chinese families also increasingly considering Singapore and Japan for their children's overseas study. But tuition and the cost of living are much higher than in Thailand.

the southern Chinese province of Guangdong, the new arrivals are more likely to come from all over China.

Data from the latest 2020 census by Mexico's National Institute of Statistics and Geography show that Chinese immigrants are

mainly concentrated in Mexico City. A decade ago, the census recorded the largest concentration of Chinese in the northern-most state of Baja California, on the U.S.-Mexico border across from California.

The arrival of Chinese

multinationals is leading an influx of "people from eastern China, more educated and with a broader global background," said Andrei Guerrero, academic coordinator of the Center for China-Baja California Studies.

-AP

Putin says in touch with India

Moscow: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday named India among the three countries he is constantly in touch over the Ukraine conflict and said they are sincerely making efforts to resolve it, state-owned TASS news agency reported.

Reporting on his remarks at the plenary session of the Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) in Vladivostok, US media outlet Politico reported him as also saying, "If there is a desire of Ukraine to carry on with the negotiations, I can do that."

Putin's remarks came within two weeks after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's historic visit to Ukraine where he held talks with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

"We respect our friends and partners, who, I believe, sincerely seek to resolve all issues surrounding this conflict, primarily China, Brazil and India. I constantly keep in touch with our colleagues on this issue," Putin was quoted as saying by the Russian news agency.

- PTI

Trump's crypto business could create conflicts

Washington: Donald Trump is promising to make America the "crypto capital of the planet" if he returns to the White House. Fulfilling that promise would likely pay off for him personally.



Amidst his run for president, Trump has launched a new venture to trade cryptocurrencies that he's promoting on the same social media accounts he uses for his campaign. His two eldest sons, Donald Jr. and Eric, are also posting about their new platform, called World Liberty Financial, as is his daughter-in-law, Lara Trump, who is married to Eric and also serves as co-chair of the Republican National Committee.

Trump has long melded his political and business interests, promoting his hotels and golf courses in the White House while selling sneakers, Bibles and shares in his social media company during his current campaign. Now, Trump has launched a new moneymaking venture that could explode in value if he's elected and gets the power to push through legislative and regulatory changes long sought by crypto advocates.

"Taking a pro-crypto stance is not necessarily

troubling; the troubling aspect is doing it while starting a way to personally benefit from it," said Jordan Libowitz, a spokesperson for the government watchdog group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington. "The success of this could be very tied to American economic policy," Libowitz said.

Cryptocurrencies are forms of digital money that can be traded over the internet without relying on the global banking system. They are commonly traded on exchanges, which are marketplaces that can be used to buy, sell and trade cryptocurrencies. Exchanges often charge fees for withdrawals of Bitcoin and other currencies. World Liberty Financial is expected to be a borrowing and lending service similar to recently hacked Dough Finance, an app built by four people listed as World Liberty Financial team members.

-AP

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Anwar Ibrahim, Prime Minister, Malaysia

"We have said that we will not transgress other people's borders. They know our position. They have claimed that we are infringing on their territory. That is not the case. We say no, it is our territory. But if they continue with the dispute, then okay, we will have to listen, and they will have to listen."

Focus on cooperation in semiconductors

Singapore: India and Singapore on Thursday elevated their bilateral ties to a "comprehensive strategic partnership" and signed four MoUs, including on cooperation in semiconductors, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks with his counterpart Lawrence Wong.

During his opening remarks, Modi said Singapore is not only a partner nation but it is an inspiration for every developing country. "The leaders agreed to

elevate the ties to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. They extensively reviewed various facets of the bilateral relationship covering areas of Advanced Manufacturing, Connectivity, Digitalisation, Healthcare & Medicine, Skills Development and Sustainability," Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in a post on X after the meeting.

The MEA in a statement said both leaders reviewed the progress of India - Sin-

gapore bilateral relations.

The PM highlighted that Singapore with an investment of around USD 160 billion in the Indian economy, is a leading economic partner for India. He further noted that rapid and sustained growth in India has opened up immense investment opportunities for Singaporean entities, it added.

They also reviewed existing cooperation in the fields of defence and security, maritime domain awareness, education, AI, Fin-



tech, new technology domains, science and technology and knowledge partnership. The two leaders called for strengthening connectivity between the

countries to enhance economic and people-to-people ties. They also called for acceleration in green corridor projects.

- PTI

EDITORIAL

Peace Gambit

The Modi government's recent signing of a peace accord with the insurgent group, the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT), marks another step in its broader strategy to quell decades-long insurgencies in Northeast India. This move, following similar agreements in Nagaland, Assam, and Mizoram, is part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ambitious plan to stabilize the restive region that has been marred by ethnic strife, insurgency, and underdevelopment for decades. The accords, while celebrated as milestones of reconciliation, are also calculated political manoeuvres aimed at consolidating the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) influence in a region where its presence was once minimal.

The accord with the NLFT, which once terrorized Tripura with a campaign of violence and extortion, promises a new era of peace and development. In exchange for the cessation of hostilities, the government has pledged to stabilize the group's cadres with rehabilitation packages, including financial assistance and skill development programs, as well as greater autonomy for tribal communities. The accords have been touted as symbols of Modi's resolve to bring "lasting peace" to the Northeast, a region that has historically been sidelined in the national consciousness.

However, the flurry of agreements raises critical questions about the political objectives and long-term ramifications of such deals. These accords are not merely about peace but also about political capital. The Northeast, home to over 45 million people and a mosaic of ethnic identities, represents an untapped electoral reservoir. The BJP's rapid rise in the region, driven by developmental promises and strategic alliances, uses these accords to diminish armed opposition and bolster its political foothold.

The Tripura agreement is emblematic of this strategy. By bringing the NLFT into the mainstream, the Modi government not only diffuses a source of armed resistance but also co-opts a segment of the tribal vote bank that has long been alienated from state politics. This approach aligns with Modi's broader narrative of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas' which aims to project the BJP as a party of inclusivity, even in regions with complex ethnic and political landscapes.

The Northeast is a region of fractious identities, where multiple groups with competing claims have often found themselves at odds, not just with the central government but also with each other. The peace accords, while promising an end to violence, also risk stoking new tensions by emboldening certain groups over others. In Assam, for instance, the signing of the Bodo Accord in 2020 led to discontent among other ethnic communities who felt sidelined. For Modi, these agreements are political capital, useful in projecting his government as a peacemaker ahead of national elections. Yet, the true test will be in delivering tangible changes on the ground as the success of this peace gambit hinges on more than just signing on the dotted line.

AGE OF EXTREMES

Battleground of the Deep: Geopolitical Storm in South China Sea

By
Shoumojit Banerjee

In his splendidly evocative 2014 book *Asia's Cauldron*, master geo-strategist Robert D. Kaplan begins his geopolitical study of the South China Sea with a dazzling prologue on the ancient kingdom of Champa, its Hindu legacy.

In his trademark lapidary prose which has come to define his many works, Kaplan observes that Vietnam's nearly one-thousand-mile-long coast lay astride two great civilizations: those of India and China with the South China Sea being "the maritime heart" of the Indo-Pacific region.

Long before the Cold War fault lines of North and South Vietnam, Kaplan notes there was a similar one in ancient times with the Sinicized Dai Viet, which established itself in Hanoi in North Vietnam clashing with Hindu Champa in the South. Dai Viet ultimately gobbled up

As tensions flare up again between China and its Southeast Asian neighbours in the maritime heart of the Indo-Pacific, India's Act East policy bolstering ASEAN defence cooperation will be key in ensuring regional stability

Hindu Champa.

Fittingly, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's historic visit to Brunei this week resurrects the legacy of Champa and the Indian influence to counter a truculent China in the Indo-Pacific and the flashpoint that is the South China Sea.

His meeting coincides with heightened tensions between China and its neighbours in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly the Philippines and Malaysia.

Last week, a Chinese coast guard vessel's ramming of the Philippine flagship BRP Teresa Magbanua brought the confrontational environment in the South China Sea region into sharp relief. The Philippines has intensified its maritime patrols, only to face increasing provocations from China. The aerial domain is also becoming contentious, with the Philippines' increased air patrols prompting warnings from Chinese think tanks about potential clashes.

Meanwhile, China recently demanded that Malaysia halt its oil exploration activities near the Luconia Shoals citing encroachments on its areas marked by the so-called 'Ten-Dash Line'. This, despite Malaysia's efforts to placate China, including remarks by Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim emphasizing mutual benefit.

In this charged diplomatic atmosphere, India's role comes as a *deus ex machina* in defusing tensions and rallying the Southeast Asian nations to counter China. During his meeting in Brunei, PM Modi reiterated India's support for The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) centrality and peaceful resolution of disputes. The trip, marked by discussions on strengthening defence ties, exploring cooperation in liquefied natural gas (LNG) and renewable energies, and enhancing long-standing space partnerships, is indicative of India's intent to deepen its engagement with Southeast Asia to counterbalance China's domineering influence in the region.

The South China Sea, covering approximately 3.5 million square kilometres, is one of the world's busiest mari-



time trade routes which accounts for a third of global shipping traffic.

Its resource-rich waters, with vast reserves of oil and natural gas buried beneath its seabed, make it a prime geopolitical prize – a veritable waterborne 'Constantinople' to which China, along with Malaysia, Brunei, Taiwan, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam are among the seven claimants to parts of the South China Sea.

For nearly two decades, China's aggressive assertion over the South China Sea has been marked by a campaign of artificial island-building, military fortification, and assertive maritime patrols. Beijing justifies its expansive claims with the so-called 'Nine-Dash Line' – a vaguely defined demarcation that cuts into the exclusive economic zones of several Southeast Asian nations, including Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei. These nations, along with the self-governing territory of Taiwan, find themselves in a precarious position as they confront a rising China intent on rewriting the rules of maritime conduct.

India, under its 2014 Act East Policy, has increased its engagement in the region, highlighting the importance of freedom of navigation and the rule of law, including

adherence to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). By aligning with ASEAN nations like Brunei, India reinforces the call for a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea, advocating for a rules-based order and peaceful resolution of disputes – a veiled critique of China's expansionism.

The policy's ten-year milestone was marked by increased diplomatic engagements, including visits from the prime ministers of Vietnam and Malaysia to India, and President Droupadi Murmu's trips to Fiji, New Zealand, and Timor-Leste.

In the midst of the China-U.S. rivalry, as Southeast Asian nations struggle to navigate tensions. But ASEAN's long-sought Code of Conduct for the South China Sea continues to be stalled by diverging member priorities and chiefly by China's reluctance to compromise.

Political scientist John Mearsheimer, in his classic work, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* claims that global hegemony is made difficult by the "stopping power of water." As tensions in the South China Sea persist, it will need more than water to halt China's hegemony. That counter could be in the form of India's Act East strategy with its emphasis on a rules-based order.

BY INVITATION

Uncle-Nephew Alliance Shaping Political Future

By
Mamta Sen

When I met Shyamsunder (name changed), a full-time loyalist and Man Friday of a certain political heavyweight cabinet minister from New Delhi, he was bursting with enthusiasm. He confided that his boss had been holding very important closed-door meetings with prominent leaders of key political parties in Maharashtra last week. One meeting he admits stretched well for over two hours, and if things go well as planned, his boss may be the next Chief Minister of Maharashtra.

The two-hour meeting of this cabinet minister, he says, is part of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's plan to bring his boss to Maharashtra to collaborate with another heavy-weight Maratha strongman in the state to form the new government post the upcoming state assembly elections. The base of this collaboration is not political compromise or newfound trust but a business joint

The political grapevine is abuzz about a certain Mama (maternal uncle) who is going all guns to ensure his bhanja (nephew) is anointed as the next Chief Minister of Maharashtra.



venture of supply of auto components with foreign investment between the companies of both the cabinet minister and the Maratha leader, which, according to Shyamsunder, is valued over crores. With the two already in a business partnership with each other, it makes sense for them to politically align as well.

Not hard work, not talent, but dynasties and connections will once again play a role in the appointment of the next Chief Minister of one of the richest states of the country. The cabinet minister, with strong connections to Nagpur (the base of the RSS), is interestingly also said to be the nephew of one of the key leaders of the RSS and is expected to take over the new position once the assembly state elections are over.

Maharashtra has been and will always remain an important state for the BJP, as it brings in well over 40% of the revenue of the entire country. The status of a Chief Minister of Maharashtra, says Shyamsunder, is almost equal to that of being a Deputy Prime Minister of India, and with the list of contenders rising within the BJP and its coalition partners, it was time to devise a new plan to stop this 'race' by bringing in a veteran face that would not only be accepted across all parties (even new coalition partners) but would also put in place any ambitious leaders within the BJP.

If this happens, one can expect to see changes in the political fortunes of many prominent leaders not only within the BJP and RSS but also with other political parties and their factions as well.

With the delay in seat-sharing forums between political parties of both Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi and Mahayuti taking longer than expected, more leaders within the BJP are expected to defect over the next few days. The exit of BJP leader Samarjitsingh Ghatge to Sharad Pawar's Nationalist Congress Party is only the beginning.

The RSS has always been known to be one step ahead in planning and executing political strategies both for the organisation and the state. The BJP has been largely supported by the RSS, its parent body. Although RSS office bearers may deny the relation between the two, a large number of BJP party workers over the years have been promoted and elevated to various political positions with the support of the RSS. A book by the organisation titled 'About RSS—Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh' mentions that the RSS was established in 1925 and conducts social work across all states and districts of the country through its 40,000 shakhas.

Interestingly, an excerpt from the book reads, 'The RSS has its own vision and concept about our national development. And our Swayamsevak naturally are inclined to political parties who share this Sangh view and will be supportive of them.' As the BJP shares this vision of the RSS, naturally, it receives the cooperation and the backing of Swayamsewaks. And judging from the plans currently in motion, it looks like the whole nation is Maharashtra for now!

(This is a senior journalist. Views personal.)

GLOBAL WATCH

Unchecked Menace in the Sahel

The latest attack in Yobe, Nigeria, on August 4 which left at least 100 people dead, serves as a grim reminder of Boko Haram's enduring threat. More than a decade after the group first rose to prominence, the militant Islamist organization continues to destabilize the Sahel region, underscoring the failure of international efforts to curb its violent campaigns. Despite numerous military offensives, regional alliances, and international aid interventions, Boko Haram's presence looms large over northern Nigeria and its neighbouring countries laying bare the frailties of both local governance and global counterterrorism strategies.

Boko Haram (which loosely translates to "Western education is forbidden") emerged in 2002 in northeastern Nigeria under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf. Initially a small sect preaching a return to puritanical Islam, it mutated into a violent insurgency following Yusuf's death in police custody in 2009. Under the ruthless command of Abubakar Shekau, the group escalated its attacks, targeting schools, markets, and villages, sowing fear through mass abductions, including

As the militant group continues to spread terror, the international community urgently needs to come up with a more holistic approach that combines security measures with long-term development goals.



the infamous kidnapping of 276 Chibok schoolgirls in 2014. Boko Haram's brutality and its pledge of allegiance to the Islamic State in 2015 positioned it as one of the deadliest terrorist organizations in the world. The Sahel region (the semi-arid belt stretching from Senegal to Sudan) has long been plagued by underdevelopment and weak state institutions which have provided a fertile ground for Boko Haram's insurgency, allowing the group to exploit local grievances and evade capture.

Complicating this grim situation are the military responses from Nigeria and its neighbours – Niger, Chad, and Cameroon – which have often been heavy-handed and plagued by corruption, thus failing to win the hearts and minds of afflicted communities.

Instead, these efforts have sometimes spurred recruitment into Boko Haram as abuses by security forces pushed marginalized youth into the arms of militants.

Besides Boko Haram, the rise of other militant groups like Jama'at al-Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), and Islamic State in the West African Province (ISWAP), reflects a broader collapse of counterterrorism support and a weakening of leadership within regional efforts. This vacuum has not only allowed these groups to thrive but has also exacerbated the ongoing humanitarian crisis, posing significant security and financial risks to the

United States, Europe, and beyond.

International organizations and foreign governments have poured billions of dollars into counterterrorism initiatives across the Sahel, yet the results have been underwhelming. The United Nations, the African Union, and the European Union have all backed various military and humanitarian interventions, including the establishment of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in 2015, comprising troops from Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Benin. Yet, coordination issues, funding shortfalls, and divergent national interests have hampered these efforts.

Moreover, while the MNJTF has claimed tactical victories, such as the recapture of key territories, Boko Haram's insurgency has morphed and splintered, with factions such as the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) gaining prominence.

The failure of international interventions can be attributed to a myopic focus on military solutions at the expense of addressing the root causes of extremism. Boko Haram's appeal lies not only in ideology but also in the absence of alternative opportunities and governance in a region marked by poverty, unemployment, and neglect. Counterterrorism strategies have often neglected the socio-economic dimensions of the conflict, failing to provide the much-needed investments in education, healthcare, and infrastructure that could undercut Boko Haram's influence.



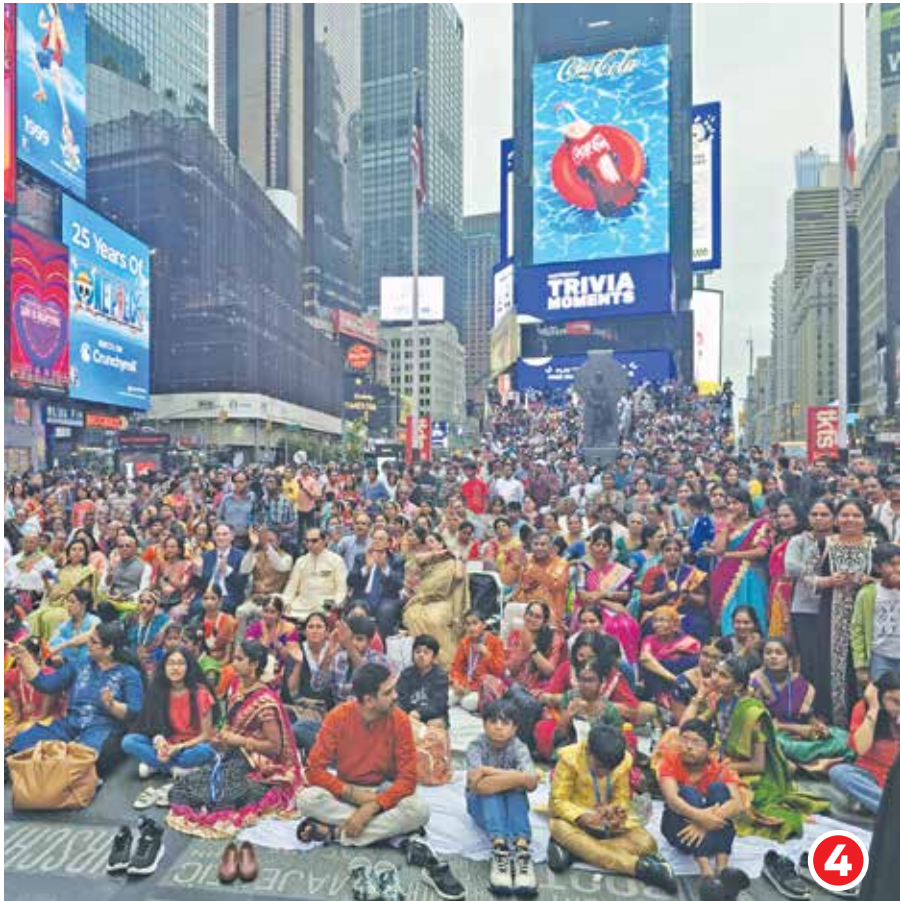
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KALEIDOSCOPE

- 1 A Harbour Air seaplane takes off past the Brockton Point Lighthouse as a marine layer hangs over Burrard Inlet, in Vancouver, British Columbia on Wednesday.
- 2 Devotees light earthen lamps (Diya) at the Golden Temple premises on the occasion of the installation (Parkash Purab) of Guru Granth Sahib, in Amritsar on Wednesday.
- 3 Fans of actor-turned politician Vijay celebrate the release of his film 'The Greatest of All Time', better known as 'GOAT', outside a theatre in Chennai on Thursday.
- 4 Indian-American Telugu community members during the Telugu Cultural Festival organised by the Telugu Literary and Cultural Association (TLCA) at Times Square over the weekend.
- 5 Tourists visit the Taj Mahal during rains, in Agra on Wednesday.



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All Pictures PTI, AP

TALK OF THE TOWN

The Narrative Building Around Religion



By
Abhijit Joshi

Entertainment and sports are meant to be free from religious bias, as we've always believed in India. But it's painful to see that certain narratives in films and sports still play into religious stereotypes. For example, a badge with the number 786 is portrayed as a protective symbol, while Hindu characters like a crooked Munimji or a temple priest are shown in a negative light. If sports truly have no religion, then why did the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, show more love to India, or why did players from other countries express support for the Indian community in tough times? Filmmakers often try to appease minorities, assuming the majority won't object. This has been the trend for years, but when movies like the Kashmir Files or The Tashkent Files show a different side of the story, liberals quickly raise objections.

Let me be clear: I'm against both kinds of narratives. Why bring religion into any story at all? If it's fiction, don't use it to push an agenda; if it's based on real events, just tell the real story—nothing more, nothing less.

Take Netflix's IC 814 series, which is

an adaptation of the book Flight into Fear: The Captain's Story by Captain Devi Sharan and Srinjoy Chowdhury. It's based on the December 24, 1999, hijacking of an Indian aircraft by five terrorists, just 40 minutes after the plane took off from Kathmandu. The series, however, presents a half-truth. By the time this article is published, Netflix might have added a disclaimer with the real names of the hijackers to pacify the outrage. But why did this happen in the first place? Was it a PR stunt to gain attention? Why did the creators play the religion card, instead of following the principle that entertainment should be free of religion?

The series doesn't discuss Pakistan's role—why? If they briefly show Pakistan in a negative light, it seems like there could be a hidden agenda. The story focuses on Afghanistan and Kandahar while conveniently ignoring Pakistan's involvement and the role of its intelligence agency, the ISI. Why?

The captured terrorist in the show talks about the brutality of Indian forces in Kashmir, but there's no mention of what these people were doing in the valley. Why?

Respected actors like Naseeruddin Shah, Pankaj Kapur, and Kunal Singh portray politicians and bureaucrats behaving childishly. Why? They were supposed to be on a mission, in a war-like situation, yet they're shown gossiping about other departments. This portrayal could give the younger generation a wrong impression of how officials work—do you want to create such a reflection?

The pilot, who was unfairly criticized for things he didn't do, doesn't get a positive portrayal. Why? His wife reassures their children that the world will know the truth, but the series doesn't clarify his side. Why?

The terrorists are shown as decent, not just in appearance but in behavior too.

Why? They're seen playing Antakshari—really? But there's no mention of how one of the terrorists asked passengers to convert to Islam (an incident documented in the public domain). Why?

The terrorists use fake names, with two of them called Bhola and Shankar, which could have easily been Engineer or Professor. Is this a PR strategy to demean Hindu names and get away with it?

The worst part of the Netflix series is how it tries to humanize the terrorists involved in the hijacking. They repeatedly say they don't want to harm any passengers, but they killed innocent Rupin Katyal and slashed another passenger's neck. Despite this, they're shown as considerate enough to allow an air hostess to call home to check on her father.

The negotiations with the terrorists, which should have been serious and emotionally disturbing, are depicted comically, portraying the negotiator as incompetent.

Overall, the series has many loopholes, and the actors weren't used effectively—any actor could have played these roles. However, the most problematic part

comes at the end, where the released terrorists are shown celebrating with Osama Bin Laden. It's suggested that Osama kept ISI away from the celebrations, implying

that ISI wasn't involved in the hijacking and that it was all Osama's idea. Why? This could have been a great story if it had been told from an Indian perspective, rather than from another viewpoint.

(The writer is a communication professional. Views personal)



FILMS & ME

Sexual Harassment Of Women In Films



By
Shoma A. Chatterji

The main functions of cinema are—entertainment, education, information and social change. How does sexual harassment enter into this medium that has been bringing colour and sound and music and romance into our lives for ages? But this is true and has made its invisible but strong presence felt not only by those who are involved in the industry, men, women and children but also by the audience in the country which produces the largest number of films in the world.

Broadly stated, sexual harassment is defined as any attention of a sexual nature in the context of the work situation which has the effect of making a woman uncomfortable on the job. It can manifest itself in looks, jokes, gestures, bawdy

In this three part series, I am going to explain how women are subjected to sexual harassment in the film industry and what could be done to stop this harassment.

remarks or plain propositions. A large section of women employees faces sexual harassment in varied degrees. Some are presented with the unpleasant alternative of putting up with it, possibly giving in to it, or looking for another job or a less attractive posting without any guarantee that the same thing would not happen at the new place.

The biggest drawback is that its threat keeps many women out of certain occupations and places where such behaviour is implicit in the very nature of the job itself. For young girls and women of all ages, cinema is the most potent field for sexual exploitation protected from any kind of legal penalisation because the victims are unified by an unspoken wall of silence.

"Degi Kya?" asks a filmmaker of an assistant who approaches him to espouse the cause of a young girl aspiring for stardom. He brushes away her talent and beauty with two simple words.

This scene from Madhur Bhandarkar's Page 3 exposes the ugly face of stardom, especially for the female of the species. The starlet, who refuses to compromise, is seen coveting with the same filmmaker later in the film.

Interestingly, Bhandarkar himself happened to be in the eye of a storm when an aspiring starlet Preeti Jain accused him of 'using' her under false promises of marriage. Why did the furore against Bhandarkar fade away with the girl being made to look as if she was making false accusations? Because Bhandarkar was famous and powerful while Jain no one had heard of till she came out with this accusation. Bhandarkar gave up his plans to go ahead

with his film Casting Couch, a logical extension of Page 3. But this came out in a later film Fashion.

On the eve of Women's Day, it would be interesting to unfold contradictions that sustain within the woman question to find out whether women are still more sinned against than sinning.

Many years ago, Parveen Babi, when asked whether she was a virgin, retorted—'there are no virgins in filmdom. If you believe there are, you would still find men doing female roles.' Veteran actress Nadira said that the word 'industry' linked to film gave it a dignity it does not deserve. "It is a racket, not an industry," she said.

Among the quitters, one recalls Savita Dhanrajgir, a beautiful model from a royal family who wanted to make it in films. She recorded her bitter experience about the casting couch where one had to go bed hopping, from financier to producer to director to hero. The small ones do it for any role. The big names do it for plum ones.

In Clap-Trap, a documentary on junior artistes, Jill Misquitta shows how female 'extras' are sexually exploited by the middle-men who give them their daily contract. This is sexual harassment where sex is not consensual at all but forced.

In the film Luck By Chance, we find a young runaway girl who came down to Mumbai to become an actress, persuaded to sleep with a director under the false promise that she will be the main female lead in his next film. This never happens and we find her doing cameos in television soaps and serials and accepting her fate.

(Tomorrow: What Hema Committee Report changed?)

ONE ARROW AT A TIME

The
making of
Paralympic
champion



Harvinder Singh of India, center, Lukasz Ciszek of Poland, left, and Mohammad Reza Arab Amiri of Iran celebrate on the podium after the men's Individual Recurve Open, during the 2024 Paralympics in Paris on Wednesday.

Paris: Dealing with the unexpected, whether in archery or life in general, is no big deal for Harvinder Singh. He has aced the anticipation game thanks to the hard lessons that came his way.

The 33-year-old from Haryana, who scripted history by becoming the first Indian archer to win a Paralympic gold, has impaired legs owing to a dengue treatment gone wrong when he was just one year old but instead of lamenting his fate, he chose to become bigger than

his circumstances.

Harvinder's journey to Paralympic glory began with a bronze three years back in Tokyo, which made him the first Indian to fin-

ish on the Games podium.

On Wednesday, he showed neither fatigue nor nerves to secure five back-to-back wins in a day to bag his second successive Para-

lympic medal in recurve open category, bettering the previous performance by quite a margin.

All his achievements are a first in Indian archery. And when he is not shooting down medals, Harvinder is busy pursuing a Ph.D in economics.

"In the last few months, I was shooting very well in practice, more than the world record in qualification. Here, I finished ninth (in the ranking round), and my confidence went a little bit down. Anyway, I focused

on the matches because anything could happen," Harvinder was quoted as saying by 'World Archery'.

"Archery is a game of unexpected. Everything can happen. I focused on every arrow. Only the next arrow counts," said Harvinder, who reserved his best for the final, nailing three 10s in his last four arrows to knock out his 44-year-old opponent from Poland Lukasz Ciszek 6-0 (28-24, 28-27, 29-25).

His was India's second medal in archery at the on-going Games after Sheetal

In Tokyo, I won bronze, so I'm happy I could change the colour of my medal. Before the (Paris) Games, everybody told me I had a chance to reach gold, and I'm happy I was able to.

Devi and Rakesh Kumar combined for the compound mixed team bronze.

Harvinder what works best for him is to stay in the moment and think too

far ahead.

Three years back in Tokyo, Harvinder who hails from Ajitnagar in Kaithal district of Haryana, could not realise his dream of a

gold. He said his teammates had a role to play in instilling belief in him that he could aim for the top podium finish.

Harvinder's consistency and his monk-like demeanour ensured that he lost no more than three points in each of his matches. The archer, who started taking interest in the sport after watching the action on TV during London Olympics, said that he felt "blessed".

Harvinder's mantra is to always aim for a '10' with his final arrow, something he says, helped him achieve his goal in Paris.

"If you have confidence, you can learn the arrow. Sometimes it can slip to nine, but you always have to finish with a 10, because it's your last arrow. In my matches and many situations, I landed my last arrow in a 10. I focused on my last arrow," he said.

The champion archer dedicated the gold medal to his country and his late mother, who died just before the 2018 Asian Para Games were due to begin in Jakarta. As a tribute to his mother, he went on to win gold at the continental games six years back.

-PTI

Accidental chess player Vidit Gujrathi

New Delhi: A self-proclaimed accidental chess player, Indian Grandmaster Vidit Gujrathi says he thought of sports as a more "stable" career option after watching his doctor parents being called to work at odd hours, an "error of judgement" that has ultimately "worked out well" for him.

The 29-year-old from Nashik will be turning up for Mumba Masters in the second season of the Global Chess League, a joint venture between Tech Mahindra and FIDE, from October 3 to 12 in London.

Gujrathi was around six when he was advised to put his ambition of playing cricket on hold till he was older by a local club. He decided to pursue chess in-

stead as he was already familiar with the sport after spending considerable time playing with his father.

"I saw it as a good opportunity to learn and beat him. It was a complete accident, but a happy one," Gujrathi recalled in a press release issued by the event organisers.

Having seen his doctor parents work at odd hours due to late-night emergencies, Gujrathi said he wanted a relatively easy-going life and thought of sports as the right option.

"I did not realise then that sports can be more volatile. I made a judgment error, but it worked out well," he quipped, referring to long hours he has to devote to training.

Karunakaran, Subramanian in QF

Taipei: India's Sathish Kumar Karunakaran and Sankar Subramanian reached the men's singles quarterfinals of the Taipei Open badminton tournament but women's singles players had to deal with disappointment here on Wednesday.

In men's singles, Karunakaran was made to work hard for a win but he eventually prevailed over Kantaophon Wangcharoen from Thailand 24-22, 23-21 to make the quarterfinals.

Subramanian also had to toil but the Indian shuttler got the better of his Finnish opponent Joakim Oldorff, winning his round of 16 match 21-12, 19-21, 21-11.

In another round of 16 men's singles contest, Kiran George was in the lead when he won the first set.

Dharambir dedicates gold to Amit

Paris: Paralympics gold medallist in men's club throw F51 event Dharambir has dedicated his medal to teammate and coach Amit Kumar Saroha, hoping that his feat inspires the next generation of para athletes to take the legacy forward.

The 35-year-old Dharambir on Wednesday broke the Asian record with a throw of 34.92m en route to the gold medal at the Paralympics with Pranav Soorma clinching the silver with a throw of 34.59m.

Saroha, however, failed to make it to the podium finishing last in the event.

"I am feeling very proud. For any athlete, winning a medal at the Olympics (Paralympics) is a dream and my dream has come true with this. My guide Amit Kumar Saroha has played a

big role in it," Dharambir said.

"We came into the sport after getting to know about him (Amit Saroha), I hope the next generation (of athletes) will see us and get into this sport," he added.

Dharambir, who has taken guidance from the 39-year-old Amit, dedicated the award to the veteran sportsperson.

"I dedicate this award to my guru Amit Saroha. His blessings are with me since the start and that is why I was able to win this medal," he said.

Dharambir suffered a serious injury when he misjudged a dive into a canal and was left paralysed from waist down after he hit the rocks. In 2014, he found his way into para games and trained in club



throw with Amit.

While he will return home as one of India's gold medallists at the Paralympics,

Dharambir was in for trouble when he fouled the first four throws.

Under pressure, Dhar-

ambir look towards Amit, who gave him an assuring look and things fell in place for him.

"Our category is the lowest. The fingers don't work, so we have to stick (the club with glue) and throw. At the start I made a few fouls because the gum (glue) had not set in," he said.

"Pressure is also a major factor and when you commit fouls, the mind stops working. I made eye contact with my coach and the fifth throw came out well.

"I am feeling very proud that the Asian record has also come with this medal. Pranav Soorma had beaten the record previously and now I hold it. He is a very good athlete and our fight will continue like this," Dharambir added.

-PTI

Yashasvi can learn from Rohit

Bengaluru: Yashasvi Jaiswal hinges his hopes of touching new heights in his fledgling Test career on batting alongside skipper Rohit Sharma, an experience he termed as incredibly educational.

Jaiswal, who made his debut last year against the West Indies, has played nine Tests with Rohit and has already forged a successful combination at the top with his captain, erecting multiple century stands.

"It is an incredible experience whenever I go out and bat with him. He has shared his experiences with me. I think the way he controls the game and understands the wicket, it is spot on and there are a lot of things (to learn from him)," said Jaiswal here on the eve of the Duleep Trophy.

"You can learn from him things like adjusting your batting to seaming or turning tracks or change your batting when a wicket or two fall," he added.



Jaiswal, who has completed a year in top-flight cricket, said he has become a lot more aware about his own game in the last 12 months or so.

"Now, I can see a lot of scenarios and shift my game (accordingly) for the team and read the situations. I think these are very important for me in the last one year. When I was playing domestic cricket, I was not aware of many things.

But since I started playing international cricket, the communication and the reading of the game have improved a lot. I just want to keep learning."

The 22-year-old said new head coach Gautam Gambhir backs players to the hilt, something he said helps the players produce their natural game.

"Yes, I have spoken with him during the Sri Lanka series. He really backed us saying just go out and play

freely and enjoy the game and we will be with you. It gives us a lot of confidence and helps us to play fearlessly," he noted.

The left-handed batter said he wanted to use Duleep Trophy as a training platform to hone his skills ahead of the upcoming two-match series against Bangladesh.

"I am working hard at nets ahead, first for the Duleep Trophy and then for the Bangladesh series. It's not about setting personal goals, as you know in cricket you have to be consistent and keep working on your skills.

"Domestic tournaments like Duleep Trophy and Irani Trophy are very important games and it gives me a lot of confidence and helps me prepare for those (international) games," he said.

"I try to remain in my zone and contribute to the team's winning cause.

-PTI

Arshad, Jyoti finish cycling

Paris: India's Arshad Shaik and Jyoti Gaderiya finished 11th and 16th in their respective cycling events at the Paralympics here on Wednesday.

Gaderiya finished the 5.8km women's C1 individual time trial in 16th and last position with a time of 30 minutes and 0.16 seconds.

Germany's Maik Hausberger won the gold, clocking 21:30.45 ahead of Britain's Frances Brown and Sweden's Anna Beck, who came up with 21:46.18 and 21:54.71 respectively.

In the men's C2 time trial, Arshad finished 11th and last with a time of 25:20.11. The gold was won by France's Alexandre Leaute with an effort of 19:24.25 ahead of Belgium's Ewoud Vromant and Australia's Darren Hicks, who ended with 19:26.45 and 19:26.61 respectively.

-PTI

Sharath Kamal rules out retirement in near future

New Delhi: Indian table tennis great Sharath Kamal was expected to chalk out his retirement plans post his fifth appearance at the Olympics but the 42-year-old on Wednesday committed to another season on the professional tour.

Sharath was on Wednesday named captain of the Indian men's team for the Asian Championships in Astana next month.

Speaking to PTI, India's flag-bearer at the Paris Olympics said he would also be competing in the China Smash later this month before travelling to Kazakhstan for the Asian Championships beginning October 7.

The highest ranked Indian at 37 is also aiming to play in the 2025 World Championships in Doha.

"For the next nine months to one year I would still be an active player. But



at the same time, I will be exploring options in IOC and ITTF. At home with TTFI, I would try to help create a structure and bridge the gap between SAI and TTFI and bring in more corporate sponsorships into the game," said the veteran.

Sharath is the first Indian to be elected into the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) athletes' commission. He is also part of the athletes' body in the Indian Olympic Association and in future, he is

aiming for a seat on the athletes' commission of the International Olympic Committee.

He ruled out competing in the 2028 Olympics but the 2026 Asian Games remains a possibility.

"I would like to take a call on the Asian Games next year. The body is holding up fine post the Olympics. I got some time off and UTT is in Chennai. I am able to balance personal life as well," said Sharath, who is currently busy with Ultimate Table Tennis League.

Sharath and the Indian team did not have the best of times in the Paris Olympics.

Sharath exited the individual events early before India, playing the team championship for the first time, could not do much against the mighty China in the pre-quarterfinals.

-PTI