

THE PERFECT VOICE



'Palkhi marg's' to be treated as green highways
... pg 2



Gaganyaan should proceed with caution: ISRO chief
... pg 6



Pant, Gill put India in command
... pg 10

Modi reaches USA for Quad summit

The PM will hold bilateral meeting with President Biden

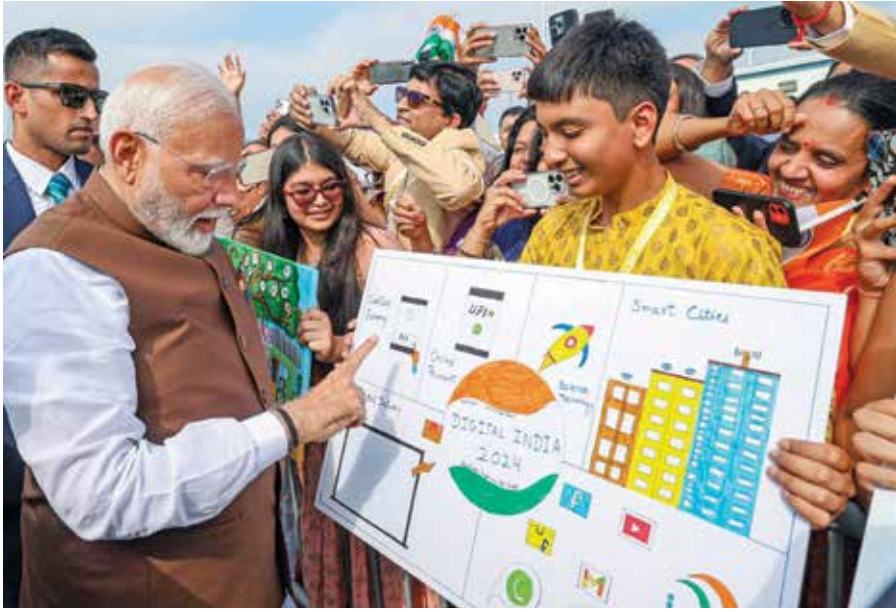
New Delhi/Washington: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday arrived in the US on a three-day visit to "further strengthen India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership," attend the Quad summit and address a key convocation at the United Nations.

Modi will also hold separate bilateral meetings with US President Joe Biden and other world leaders on the margins of the Quad summit in Wilmington, Delaware, and the 'Summit of the Future' at the UN General Assembly in New York.

Modi landed at Philadelphia for his onward journey to Wilmington.

At the Philadelphia International Airport in Pennsylvania state, he was greeted by a large gathering of the Indian diaspora. Modi greeted the group of people dressed in their traditional wear with many of them holding the Indian tri-colour. He walked along the fenced area, signed autographs for some of them and shook hands with some others.

The annual Quad summit at Wilmington, which is President Joe Biden's



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being welcomed by members of the Indian community upon his arrival at Philadelphia airport, USA on Saturday. Pic: PTI

hometown, is expected to roll out a series of new initiatives to boost cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and explore ways to find peaceful solutions to the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza.

The PM's other engagements include joining an Indian diaspora event at Long Island and participating in a round table with CEOs of American firms

working on cutting-edge technologies such as AI, quantum computing and semiconductors.

In his departure statement at New Delhi, Modi said he looked forward to joining his colleagues President Joe Biden, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Prime Minister Fumio Kishida for the Quad Summit.

"The forum has emerged as a key group of like-minded countries to work for peace, progress and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region," he added.

The four-member Quad, or the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, advocates upholding a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific. Beijing sees it as an ant-China grouping.

Amar Preet Singh to be new CoAS

New Delhi: Air Marshal Amar Preet Singh, a fighter pilot with more than 5,000 hours of flying experience, will take charge as the chief of the Indian Air Force after incumbent Air Chief Marshal V.R. Chaudhari retires on September 30.

Air Marshal Singh is currently serving as the Vice Chief of the Air Staff. "The government has appointed Air Marshal Amar Preet Singh, PVSM, AVSM, presently serving as Vice Chief of the Air Staff, as the next Chief of the Air Staff, in the rank of Air Chief Marshal, with effect from the afternoon of September 30," the defence ministry said.

As Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Singh's priorities are expected to be the procurement of new fighter fleets and advancing the modernisation agenda of the force in view of the fast-evolving regional security landscape, including challenges along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China.

The number of the IAF's fighter squadrons has come down to around 30 as against the authorised strength of at least 42.

The air marshal is a recipient of the Param Vishisht Seva Medal and Ati Vishisht Seva Medal. -PTI

Israeli strike on school kills 22

Deir al-Balah (Gaza Strip): An Israeli strike on a school in northern Gaza on Saturday killed at least 22 people, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, while the Israeli army said it targeted a Hamas' command centre in what used to be a school.

Another 30 were wounded in the strike on the school in the Zeitoun area of Gaza City, the ministry said in a statement. Most of the casualties were women and children, it said.

The Israeli army said earlier Saturday it struck Hamas' "command and control centre, which was embedded inside a compound that previously served" as a school. It said steps were taken to limit harming civilians, including the use of precise munitions and aerial surveillance.

"The Hamas terrorist organisation systematically violates international law by operating from inside civilian infrastructure," the army said, an accusation it has repeatedly made.

Since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war, the Israeli army has struck a number of schools, packed with tens of thousands of Palestinians driven from their homes by Israeli offensives and evacuation

1200
No of people killed when Hamas-led fighters strike in Israel on October 7, 2023

250
No of people abducted by Hamas

100
No of Israelis held hostages by Hamas

41,000
No of Palestinians killed in Israel's attack

stinian medical officials. The Israeli military said it was targeting Hamas militants planning attacks from inside the school.

In July, Israeli airstrikes hit a girls' school in Deir al-Balah, killing at least 30 people sheltering inside. Israel's military said it targeted a Hamas command centre used to direct attacks against its troops and store "large quantities of weapons".

Also Saturday, the Gaza Health Ministry said five of its workers were killed and five others injured by Israeli fire that struck the ministry's warehouses in the southern Musbah area.

Tensions soared in the region on Friday after an Israeli airstrike on a Beirut suburb in Lebanon killed 31 people, including civilians and Ibrahim Akil, who was in charge of Hezbollah's elite Radwan Force. Also killed was Ahmed Wahbi, another senior commander in the group's military wing.

The strike came hours after Hezbollah launched one of its most intense bombardments of northern Israel in nearly a year of fighting. Israel's Iron Dome missile defence system intercepted most of the rockets. -AP

CM Atishi vows to bring back Kejriwal



Delhi Lt. Governor V.K. Saxena with former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal during the swearing-in ceremony of CM-designate Atishi on Saturday.

New Delhi: Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, along with five cabinet ministers, took the oath of office on Saturday and requested people to ensure that her predecessor, Arvind Kejriwal, returns to the top post again.

Atishi also hit out at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for hatching a "conspiracy" against Kejriwal.

Addressing a press conference here soon after taking oath, Atishi said it is an "emotional day" for her as her "guru" and Delhi's son Kejriwal will not continue

to be the chief minister.

"It is an emotional moment for me as he will not be the chief minister. He understood the pain of every person. He ensured free treatment for people, worked to improve the lives of the students of government schools, brought the provision of free bus rides for women," she said.

The people of Delhi need to make Kejriwal the chief minister again to ensure that the free services, including free electricity and water, continue, Atishi

said, accusing the BJP of implicating the AAP national convenor in a false case and alleging that the saffron party tried everything to break him.

Lieutenant Governor V.K. Saxena administered the oath of office and secrecy to Atishi.

After taking oath Atishi took Kejriwal's blessings by touching his feet at the Raj Niwas. Former deputy CM Manish Sisodia, Delhi Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel, Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Vijender Gupta and Police Commissioner Sanjay were among the guests at the event.

Atishi is the 17th woman to hold the CM's post in independent India.

Among Atishi's Council of Ministers, Saurabh Bharadwaj was the first to take oath, followed by Gopal Rai, Kailash Gahlot, Imran Hussain and Mukesh Ahlawat, a new entrant in the cabinet.

Atishi has retained the 13 portfolios she held in the Kejriwal government, including education, revenue, finance, power and PWD. -PTI



People visit a painting exhibition organised in protest against the alleged rape and murder of a trainee doctor in Kolkata on Saturday. Pic: PTI

Will consult pontiffs, sages, priests: CM Naidu

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday said the government will consult pontiffs, sages, priests and other top Hinduism experts on the future course of action to be taken following allega-

tions of animal fat adulteration in Tirupati laddus.

The CM said after consultation, the government will take its decision with respect to the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), the official custodi-

an of world-renowned Sri Venkateswara Swamy temple in Tirupati.

"We are discussing what to do next and how to go forward with respect to TTD. After deliberating with pontiffs, priests and Sanatana Dharma (Hinduism) ex-

perts, we will decide on how the samprokshana (ritualistic sanitisation) should be done," said Naidu.

The CM noted that many people tried to make better prasadams (consecrated food) but failed at it. -PTI

Alok Ranjan appointed NCRB chief

New Delhi: Senior IPS officers Alok Ranjan and Amit Garg were on Saturday appointed as the chiefs of National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) and Hyderabad-based Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy (SVPNPA) respectively, according to an official order.

Ranjan, a 1991-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of Madhya Pradesh cadre, succeeds his service and batchmate Vivek Gogia, who has been repatriated to AGMUT (Arunachal Pradesh-Goa-Mizoram and Union Territory) cadre.

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the appointments of four senior IPS officers, all from 1993 batch - Rithwik Rudra (Himachal Pradesh cadre), Mahesh Dixit (Andhra Pradesh cadre), Praveen Kumar (West Bengal cadre) and Arvind Kumar (Bihar cadre) as Special Director in the Intelligence Bureau (IB).

All these officers were working as the Additional Director in the IB. -PTI

Hold MU senate elections on Sept 24, says HC

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court on Saturday directed the holding of the University of Mumbai's senate elections on September 24 after staying a state government circular postponing the polls which it noted was a last minute intervention.

In a special hearing, a division bench of Justices A.S. Chandurkar and Rajesh Patil initially directed that the senate elections be held on September 22 as scheduled. The bench amended its order after the varsity flagged practical difficulties in holding elec-

tions on short notice. "The order issued to postpone the elections sine die is stayed until further orders. The elections shall proceed as per schedule," the high court stated in its operative order and posted the matter for further hearing on September 26.

The petition was filed by election aspirants- Milind Satam, Shashikant Zore and Pradeep Sawant who challenged the state government's circular temporarily staying the graduates senate elections under Rule 8 (7) of the Maharashtra Public Universities Act.



After the HC passed the order to hold elections on schedule on September 22, counsels for the varsity requested the high court to allow conducting the elections on September 24 as necessary arrangements would have to be made. The bench allowed the varsity's request.



The University of Mumbai was represented by senior counsel Anil Sakhare and advocate Manish Kelkar. The elections would be held on September 24. The senate elections for ten seats representing the university's registered graduates have been pending for two years.

Considering the practical difficulties expressed on behalf of the University and the fact that a short notice, arrangements would have to be made within a period of few hours, we are inclined to accept the request made by the University.

- The Bombay High Court

Allegations of discrepancies and state interference have clouded the polls, originally scheduled for September 13, 2023. They were suspended after the govern-

ment requested an inquiry into claims of duplicated entries on the electoral rolls.

The HC, on Saturday, said the exercise of consti-

tuting a one-member enquiry committee and submission of its report as per the September 19 circular has not been stayed.

"That exercise can continue," the court said, adding that its order was subject to the final outcome of the petition.

The elections were postponed over alleged irregularities and a reduction in the eligible voters list.

Noting that the election notification was issued in August, nomination forms were accepted and the entire process was completed the same month, the bench

said the varsity was aware of the total number of eligible voters whose names were included in the list.

"Prima facie, it has not been shown as to what steps were taken either by the University or by the Department of Higher and Technical Education on noticing the reduction in the number of registered voters," the bench said.

Only on September 19, which is three days prior to the conduct of the elections has the Department of Higher and Technical Education chosen to intervene, the HC said.

'Palkhi margs' to be treated as green highways



By Correspondent

Pune: The Sant Dnyaneshwar and Sant Tukaram 'palkhi margs' (highways with palanquin walkways on either sides) have been completed and the former will be inaugurated by December, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said here on Saturday.

He said 42,000 trees have been planted along the four-lane Sant Dnyaneshwar Maharaj Palkhi Marg from Hadapsar-Diveghat to Mohol and Sant Tukaram Maharaj Palkhi Marg from Patas to Tondale-Bondale and the state government must go in for more plantation to make these "green highways".

Gadkari also said Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation and Pune MP Murlidhar Mohol had suggested that Pune Airport be

named as Jagadguru Sant Tukaram Maharaj Airport.

"After talking to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we will pass this naming proposal," the Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways told the gathering.

Gadkari said the teachings of Sant Tukaram and Sant Dnyaneshwar play a huge role in his life and he tries to not use religion, caste and creed when it comes to work.

"I believe a person gets bigger by the work he has done," Gadkari said, adding he decries those who invoke caste for petty gains.

Speaking about Pune, Maharashtra's second largest city, he said scooters, cars and buses must run on ethanol as it is the best way to curb pollution here.

"In the coming days, even

aviation fuel must have ethanol," he added.

Gadkari said development work costing Rs 1.5 lakh crore will begin in Pune district by December.

He and Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis were here for an event in which several projects were inaugurated.

'Palkhi margs' were envisaged to provide easy movement to devotees on their way to temple town Pandharpur.

About 221 kilometres of Sant Dnyaneshwar Maharaj Palkhi Marg (NH 965) from Diveghat to Mohol and 130 kilometres of Sant Tukaram Maharaj Palkhi Marg from Patas to Tondale-Bondale are being four-laned with dedicated walkways for 'palkhis' on either side.

Thane imp to make Maha USD 1.5 trillion economy: CM

Thane: Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Saturday said focus must be on eight strategic areas to make the state a USD 1.5 trillion economy by 2047 and asserted Thane has to play an important role to achieve this target.

Addressing the MMR Thane Development Conference 2024, Shinde said his government was working to ensure the economy of Mumbai Metropolitan Region touches the USD 300 billion mark by 2030.

These eight strategic areas have been suggested by the NITI Aayog and a mechanism involving monthly reviews, dedicated war rooms etc is in place to achieve them, he added.

The areas include AI and robotics, global capacity centres and data centres.

52 per cent
Share of Maharashtra in FDI in the first quarter of 2024-25

Rs 5.8 lakh crore
Value of MoU for semiconductor and other high technology sectors

The CM said projects like the Atal Setu, the coastal road and eastern freeway will enhance regional connectivity and boost the economy of the region.

He said various tests and trials at the Navi Mumbai international airport will commence by the end of September, while plans are afoot to bring about air connectivity to Palghar and establish a mega port in Vadnavan. He said all efforts must be taken to ensure Thane's economy touches the USD 150 billion mark by 2030 and assured stakeholders full support of his government.



Cars during a vintage car rally organised as part of arts festival 'Nagpur Kala Sangh' in Nagpur on Saturday.

Pic: PTI

PMLA restrictions cannot override fundamental right, says HC

Mumbai: Stringent conditions under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act can not override the fundamental right to liberty under Article 21, the Bombay High Court has said while granting bail to a 72-year-old man.

The trial in the case of alleged bank fraud, for which applicant Suryaji Jadhav was arrested, was not likely to conclude any time soon and he was suffering from cancer, Justice Madhav Jamdar noted in his order of September 19. The copy of the judgement became available on Saturday.

Restrictions imposed by laws such as the PMLA "melt down" where an accused has suffered long in-



carceration and the trial is inordinately delayed, the judge said.

"Despite the restrictive statutory provisions like section 45 of the PMLA, the right of an accused under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution cannot be allowed to be infringed," Justice Jamdar held.

Under section 45 of the PMLA, a court, while granting bail to an accused in a money laundering

case, must be satisfied that there are reasonable grounds to believe that he is not guilty, and/or is above 60 years of age, or a woman or is sick or infirm.

Article 21 protects the fundamental right to life and personal liberty.

Jadhav was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for alleged fraud of the Pune-based Shivajirao Bhosale Sahakari

Bank in March 2021. He and others were accused of misappropriating funds and fraudulent disbursement of loans.

Jadhav had sought bail on the grounds of long incarceration and delayed trial. The court noted that more than 250 witnesses were proposed to be examined by the prosecution, and the trial was yet to start.

Jadhav had completed more than half of the maximum punishment he could get in the case, the HC said.

"In such a situation, statutory restrictions will not come in the way of the court to grant bail to protect the fundamental right of the accused under Article 21," the court said. -PTI

CRIME WATCH

Couple commits suicide in Thane district

Thane: A couple in their 20s allegedly committed suicide by hanging themselves at their house in Thane district, police said on Saturday.

Bodies of Haresh Ugade (28) and his wife Neelam (25) were found hanging in their apartment in the Nadgaon area of Shahapur on Thursday, an officer said.

Neighbours alerted the police, following which the bodies were sent post-mortem at a government hospital, he said.

As per preliminary information, the couple had entered a suicide pact as they were frustrated that they could not have a child, the officer said.

Two children missing from govt-run home

Thane: Two hearing and speech-impaired children have been reported missing from a government-run children's home in Maharashtra's Thane district, police said on Saturday.

The children, aged 14 and 17, went missing from the establishment in Ulhasnagar on Thursday morning, an official said.

The duo have been in-mated at the children's home in March 2023. They fled the facility around 6.30 am, taking the mobile phone of a security guard with them, he said.

Man beats stray dog to death

Thane: Police have registered a case against a man for allegedly killing a stray dog in Thane, an officer said on Saturday.

The incident occurred on Thursday at Mogarpada in Ghodbunder locality, and a social activist lodged a complaint in this connection, the police said.

"As per the complaint, the accused Gokul Thore mercilessly thrashed the dog with a bat in which it suffered severe wounds. The dog was taken to different veterinary hospitals, but died during treatment on Friday afternoon," the complaint said.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"PM Modi will inaugurate the new Pune Metro route and perform the 'bhumi puja' of another route on September 26.

Murlidhar Mohol has proposed the Pune airport be named after Sant Tukaram Maharaj. The proposal will be sent to the Centre now."

-Devendra Fadnavis, Deputy Chief Minister



Shinde, Jarange trying to suppress OBCs

OBC leader Laxman Hake levels serious allegations.

Jalna: Activists of Maratha and OBC groups faced off against each other on Saturday amid growing tension over separate hunger strikes by Manoj Jarange and Laxman Hake in Jalna district of Maharashtra.

Hake, who has been on fast since September 19 for the "protection" of the OBC quota, accused Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Jarange of "trying to suppress the OBC reservation movement".

Earlier in the day, hundreds of Maratha activists took out a two-wheeler rally, passing through the protest site of Hake in Wadigodri village and raising slogans, promptly countered by members of OBC communities.



Police prevented a potential law and order situation by dispersing supporters of Hake and Jarange, an official said.

Notably, Hake and Jarange have been observing fasts at Wadigodri and Antarwali Sarati villages,

situated 3 km apart, in Jalna district.

Jarange launched a fresh hunger strike on September 17 for the implementation of the draft notification declaring blood relatives of Marathas as Kunbis based on historical

documents from the Satara, Bombay, and Hyderabad gazetteers.

Jarange's main demand is the grant of the OBC quota to Marathas in government jobs and education.

Hake and Navnath

Waghmare launched a counter-hunger strike to safeguard the OBC quota and scrap the draft Sage Soyare notification.

Speaking to reporters, Hake accused the Maratha reservation activists of trying to intimidate OBC protesters.

"Chief Minister Eknath Shinde is responsible for creating the tense atmosphere. Maharashtra is not the personal property of either Jarange or Shinde," he said, adding that OBCs would respond strongly to any threat.

"We will give the state government and Jarange a befitting reply. The government is protecting Jarange. We will not tolerate the mob rule," Hake added.

Boy killed in leopard attack

Chandrapur: A 7-year-old boy was killed in a leopard attack in Maharashtra's Chandrapur district, a forest department official said on Saturday.

The body was recovered from WCL area this morning, while the attack took place on Friday, he added.

"Bhaves Thakur, a resident of Sinala village, had gone out to answer nature's call when the incident took place. A resident alerted police and forest department personnel about the presence of a leopard in the area. A search through the night failed to locate Thakur. His body was found in the morning," the official said.

The kin of the deceased have been given Rs 1 lakh as initial compensation, while teams are out to track and capture the leopard, he added.

Boy, youth commit suicide

Thane: Two people ended their lives in Thane district after questioned over their relationship with female friends.

An 11-year-old boy allegedly committed suicide in Kalyan East in Thane district after being questioned by his parents on the presence of a girl in the house, a police officer said on Saturday.

He hanged himself on Friday, the Kolsawadi police station officer said.

In Dombivali, a 23-year-old man ended his life after he travelled from Kolhapur to meet a girl he was in love with but she rejected his proposal, a Manpada police station officer said.

"He jumped from the fourth floor of the girl's house here on Friday. Further probe is underway," the officer said.

VBA announces 11 candidates

The list includes a transgender from Raver

By Correspondent

Mumbai: After being ignored by the third front leaders, Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) leader Prakash Ambedkar put up a brave face and on Saturday declared the first list of 11 candidates of VBA.

VBA president, who announced the candidates at a press conference on Saturday, said, "Shamibha Patil, a transgender from the Leva Patil community, will contest from Raver assembly seat in Jalgaon district of north Maharashtra. Staying true to our sacred ideology, we have given representation to the deprived, 'bahujan' groups with the aim of gaining true representation and political power, and breaking the hegemony of families of certain castes".

"The party has named candidates from different social communities, which have been socially and po-

litically excluded by the mainstream parties and their successive governments," he said. Ambedkar, also announced two candidates of the VBA's alliance partners Bharat Adivasi Party (BAP) and Gondwana Gantantra Party (GGP).

It may be recalled that before the Lok Sabha election, Ambedkar tried to show that he was with the MVA. He continuously spoke about saving the Constitution. He also kept MVA hanging and finally chose to follow a different path. Against this backdrop the third front leaders Former Rajya Sabha member Sambhajiraje Chhatrapati, MLA Bachchu Kadu, Raju Shetti of Shetkari Sanghatana have bolted the doors on VBA leader. At the very initial stage the leaders gave calls for unity, Ambedkar showed little interest in joining forces. After this



MVA leaders turned their back towards him.

According to sources, three leaders Bachchu Kadu, Sambhajiraje Chhatrapati and Raju Shetti have been active in the state's electoral politics in recent years. Three leaders met in Pune to shape what could potentially emerge as a new 'Third Front' in Maharashtra's upcoming assembly elections. This meeting has sparked widespread speculation in political circles about how such an alli-

ance could alter the dynamics of the election.

While forging this front they ensure that Prakash Ambedkar and MIM will not be included in this new outfit. The leaders strongly felt that Ambedkar might back out anytime after making exorbitant demands in the form of seats, the sources added further. These leaders are also in talks with Maratha reservation activist Manoj Jarange.

Bachchu Kadu said, "announcing the candidates name is a comparatively easy task. What is more important is choosing the proper candidates. We have now undertaken this task. We think people are fed up with politicians switching sides, being disloyal, not delivering results. We think Maharashtra needs cultured politics. So, we have started the effort of a third alliance which will have fresh candidates and these new faces will be honest".

CHANGE OF NAME

I the undersigned Meghashyam Kanoji Kocharekar, mentioned that my previous name was Meghashyam Kanoji Kocharekar; My new name is Meghashyam Kanoji Kocharekar will be known in future.
sd/-
Meghashyam Kanoji Kocharekar

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to public at large that my client Mr. Khayyum Abdul Ali Sayyad Resident of B-5, Parizad Apartment, Dindayal Nagar, Vasai West, Taluka Vasai District Palghar - 401202 have wrongly mentioned his name as Khayyum Abdul Aziz Sayyad in Birth Certificate of his daughter Hurriya Fatima Khayyum Sayyad. The correct spelling and name of my client is Khayyum Abdul Ali Sayyad and same should be consider for all purpose.

Dated: 22/09/2024
Place:- Vasai

Sd/-
Adv. Ramzanali Malik
Having office at:
Sanrkuti Apartment Shop No.15, Court road, Near G. G. College, Vasai West, Tal. Vasai, Dist. Palghar Pin No. 4041201.
Mobile No.8369183620

Dharavi locals stop BMC from razing illegal portion of mosque

The civic body grants time as trustees willing to remove illegal portion



Mumbai: Tension prevailed in Dharavi slum colony on Saturday morning after hundreds of residents blocked a road to oppose the Mumbai civic body's plan to demolish an alleged illegal portion of a mosque, an official said.

Some residents stopped civic officials from entering the lane where the mosque is located and soon hundreds of people assembled outside the Dharavi police station and squatted on the road.

As the situation became tense, trustees of the mosque held talks with officials of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). They sought four to five days to remove the encroached portion, which was agreed upon by authorities.

Additional police personnel were deployed in the area to prevent any untoward incident, a police officer said.

"A team of BMC officials from G-North



administrative ward reached the 90 Feet Road around 9 am to demolish the alleged illegal portion of Mehboob-E-Subhani masjid. Soon, residents gathered at the spot and stopped the civic officials from entering the lane where the mosque is located," he said.

"Later, hundreds of people also assembled outside the Dharavi police station and squatted on the road to protest against the civic body's move," he said.

A civic official said the BMC's G north ward had

issued a notice to remove the encroached portion of the mosque and said the action would be taken according to this notice.

Later, people assembled outside the Dharavi police station protested against the notice and stopped officials from carrying out the demolition, he said.

In a joint meeting with the civic officials and Dharavi police, trustees of the mosque asked the BMC to give them four to five days to remove the illegal part of the structure, the official said.

He said the trustees submitted a written request to the BMC's deputy commissioner and assistant commissioner of the G north division stating that they would remove the construction on their own during this period.

The civic body has accepted the request, the official said.

Dharavi, a densely-populated colony, is considered the largest slum sprawl in the country.

Meanwhile, Shiv Sena (UBT) MLA Aaditya Thackeray accused the Eknath Shinde-led government of trying to create a communal discord as a "last ditch" attempt before upcoming assembly elections.

"The masjid issue in Dharavi is the last attempt by the BJP and Shinde government to create discord between Hindus and Muslims. People of Dharavi had stood against the redevelopment project," he said.

Belly Dance Festival from Thursday

Mumbai: The International Belly Dance Festival is all set to take place from September 26 to 29, 2024, presenting performances from over 100 belly dancers from India and around the world. The event will feature master classes, workshops, competitions, and gala shows.

Participants will have the opportunity to learn from three international faculties, Jasirah from Poland, Mohamed Shahin from Egypt, and Deb Rubin from the USA. The festival aims to highlight belly dance as both an art form and a means of self-expression.

Speaking about the festival, Payal Gupta, Show Organizer said, "Our International Belly Dance Festival is more than a celebration of mesmerizing movements. It's a commitment to elevate the art and unite passionate hearts. Through an array of master classes, workshops, thrilling competitions, and enchanting gala shows, we not only celebrate the present but also nurture the future of belly dance. It will feature more than 100 participants from across different cities and states of India showcasing an amazing lineup of incredible dancers."

According to Abhishek Shukla, Show Organizer, "There will be 20 hours of workshops and masterclass and fun activities will be conducted during the event. The participants will be able to learn from globally recognized faculty. The participants can clear their doubts with question and answer sessions with our International Faculty."



First day of auction of offerings received at Lalbaug Cha Raja Ganpati Pandal held at Lalbaug in Mumbai won Saturday. Pic: Bhushan Koyande

Maha Assembly polls to influence country's political landscape

Former J and K Governor Satya Pal Malik slams BJP

Mumbai: Satya Pal Malik, the last governor of the former state of Jammu and Kashmir, said on Saturday that the upcoming assembly elections in Maharashtra will significantly influence the political landscape of the country.

Speaking at a civil society event in Mumbai, Malik, who played a crucial role in the abrogation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status, asserted that the results of the Maharashtra polls would serve as "the last nail in the BJP's coffin."

Malik's remarks came during an event attended by notable political figures, including Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut and Samajwadi Party's Abu Azmi.

"Maharashtra will give direction to the country

(after the assembly polls)," Malik said.

He criticised the central government for delaying elections in Maharashtra and Haryana, suggesting it stemmed from fears of losing to opposition parties.

In his analysis of the political dynamics, Malik predicted that Congress could secure around 60 seats in Haryana, while the BJP might only achieve about 20.

Furthermore, Malik reiterated his call for a comprehensive investigation into the 2019 Pulwama terror attack, which claimed the lives of 40 CRPF personnel.

"I demand a probe into the Pulwama attack to reveal how our soldiers died and who was responsible. Not a single individual has faced

consequences for this tragedy," he stated.

Malik, who has served as governor in five different states, claimed he faced harassment from the central government, noting he was transferred five times during his tenure.

He alleged that his security was withdrawn despite threats and that he was denied accommodation. Additionally, he accused the government of misusing central agencies against him.

Malik also expressed his concerns regarding the government's handling of the farmers' protests near Delhi, claiming he was prepared to resign over the issue but was dissuaded by a Union Minister. He criticised the government for failing to implement the promised MSP.



Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray held public meeting to addressing Worli citizens as "Vision Worli" for Worli constituency's future development plan at Jambori Maidan in Mumbai on Saturday. Pic: Bhushan Koyande

Special status to prasad demanded

By Swapnil R Mishra

Mumbai: The All Food and Drug Licence Holders Foundation (AFDLHF) has demanded that Prasad offered in temples all over the state should be given special status in FSSAI rules and regulations.

Abhay Pandey, President of AFDLHF, has given FSSAI a week to implement these demands, warning of protests or legal action if ignored. This move aims to safeguard the health and well-being of millions who consume Prasad as an offering to the divine.

Pandey said, "I request

Key Demands

- Classification of Prasad: AFDLHF wants Prasad to be categorised separately, recognising its cultural and religious significance
- List of Approved Foods: AFDLHF requests a list of approved foods for making Prasad, ensuring only safe and suitable ingredients are used
- Mandatory Testing: AFDLHF demands regular testing of Prasad distributed at temples to guarantee its quality and safety

you with folded hands that the "Prasad" distributed by all the temples in the country should be tested. Within a week, a special category of "Prasad" should be created in the FSSAI rules. It should be completely controlled, and maximum harsh

punishment should be provided for those who violate it."

The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 (FSSA) is a legislation enacted by the Indian Parliament to consolidate and amend various food safety and standards laws.

Contractor shortage delays affordable housing project under PMAY

By Anand Mishra

Thane: Despite multiple extensions, Thane Municipal Corporation (TMC) is struggling to find contractors for its affordable housing project under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY). The ambitious project, set to be constructed on two government-allotted plots in Betawade, Diva, aims to build 1,441 affordable housing units through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. However, the lack of interested developers has posed a significant challenge, with the project's tender deadline being extended three times.

The TMC had initially set a profit margin of 16 per cent for developers, but this was recently increased to 20 per cent to attract more contractors. In addition, the corporation has relaxed some conditions, allowing construction companies from sectors beyond housing, including those with experience in road and bridge construction, to participate in the bidding process.

However, concerns about the project's location in Betawade, an underdeveloped area with limited infrastructure, and the stringent requirement for developers to have experience working on five lakh square meters of construction, are deterring potential bidders. A TMC official highlighted that Betawade's location, beyond Diva, offers less favorable rates compared to the more developed city center, making it less appealing for developers seeking higher returns.

Project Details

The project, which includes constructing 1,441 flats of 30 square meters each, is targeted at the economically weaker section (EWS) and project-affected beneficiaries. Of the total beneficiaries, 1,253 will receive affordable housing at subsidized rates, while 188 others will receive flats by contributing 2 lakh each. The project, estimated to cost Rs 36.85 crore in development fees, also allows developers to commercially exploit the remaining plot area by



Key Impacts on the Project

- Project Delays
- Increased Costs
- Beneficiary Uncertainty
- Developer Reluctance Due to Location
- Potential Revisions to the Scheme
- Public Trust and Confidence

constructing and selling additional flats and blocks.

Profit Margins and Revised Tender Conditions

A TMC official, involved with the project, told "The Perfect Voice" that in order to revive interest, we have allowed developers to sell parts of the plot commercially, potentially earning Rs 127.90 crore through this venture.

Conditions laid down in the tender are unrealistic and tough that make entire exercise unviable. Considering the uncontrollably increasing cost of construction, the profit margin for the contractors or builders will be abysmally low. Provision to sell 50% of inventory, that to on the rate decided by the authorities, is another deal breaker. In addition to this, the location (Betawade) is too farther without any existing infrastructure, that will make developer's task more complex and expensive.

Jitendra Mehta, President - Thane MCHI

Additionally, the new tender conditions have been designed to open up the bidding process to a wider pool of contractors. The Municipal Corporation now allows firms from various construction sectors to bid, offering the possibility of higher profits and greater flexibility.

"We remain optimistic that the revised tender conditions will spur interest from developers,

helping to accelerate the project, which is crucial to fulfilling the Prime Minister's vision of affordable housing for all," official added. The combination of location challenges and stringent tender requirements continues to be a barrier, leaving TMC hopeful that its latest relaxations will attract the necessary contractors to move the project forward.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The biggest test of democracy is that the king tolerates the strongest opinion against him and introspects over it. We are neither rightist, nor leftist. We are opportunists. It is expected from writers and intellectuals that they express their opinions without any fear."



-Nitin Gadkari,
Union Minister, Road Transport and Highways

TISS students protest suspension of PhD scholar

Mumbai: Students of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) have alleged police action when they staged a protest during a convocation ceremony on its campus here against the suspension of PhD scholar Ramadas Prini Sivanandan.

The students staged the protest on Friday also in solidarity with 119 teachers and staff "who may lose their jobs by December 31 or have already lost," said a statement signed by Sara Bardhan, silver medallist, MA in Urban Policy and Governance, Sreyas Valsan, MA in Urban Policy and Governance,

and others.

They alleged that even though the protest was carried out peacefully without disrupting any other proceedings, the administration repeatedly discouraged students from exercising their right to free speech and many police personnel were called to the venue of the convocation ceremony.

"We chose to raise banners in solidarity with Ramadas Prini Sivanandan, a Dalit PhD scholar and a student activist who is denied access to education for the last 156 days due to the



arbitrary suspension, and 119 teachers and staff who may lose their jobs by December 31 or have already lost," the students said.

When Arghya Das, graduating student of MA in Women's Studies, was registering his protest by raising a placard seeking revocation of Sivanandan's suspension and job security for teachers and staff, he was forcibly taken off the stage by guards and police, they claimed.

The police kept Das in custody away from the Convocation Hall till the ceremony ended and all degree certificates were taken away, the students alleged.

In April, the TISS suspended Sivanandan for two years for allegedly indulging in activities

which are "not in the interest of the nation" and referred to instances like him participating in a protest in Delhi under the PSF-TISS banner.

A Mumbai police official said there was some issue over suspension of Sivanandan inside the TISS campus and an internal enquiry has been ordered by the institute.

An inquiry will be conducted on Monday, he said, adding that the police have not got any formal complaint.

Police are keeping a vigil on the developments inside the campus, the official added.

NCLAT rejects tax claim against RCom

New Delhi: The NCLAT has set aside a petition filed by the state tax department claiming dues from Reliance Communications (RCom) observing that it was based on the assessment made after the initiation of insolvency resolution process against the debt-ridden firm.

A two-member NCLAT bench upheld the earlier order passed by the Mumbai bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), which had rejected the state tax department's second claim of Rs 6.10 crore.

Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) against RCom was initiated on June 22, 2019. The state tax department had filed two claims.

The first claim was filed on July 24, 2019 for Rs 94.97 lakh and a second claim was filed on November 15, 2021 for Rs 6.10 crore, which arose out of an assessment order dated August 30, 2021.



The NCLAT had admitted the first claim, which was passed before the initiation of CIRP. However, it did not accept the claim which was based on an assessment order passed in 2021.

The Committee of Creditors (CoC) of RCom also approved the plan on March 2, 2020, and the subsequent claim was filed by the state tax department on November 15, 2021.

The said order was challenged by the state tax department before the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), contending that NCLAT ought to have accepted the entire claim.

However, it was also rejected by NCLAT observing that the subsequent claim was filed after the approval of the plan of CoC. It upheld the view taken by NCLAT that delay in filing the second claim cannot be condoned.

"Apart from the reasons given by the Adjudicating Authority (NCLT), we are of the view that the claim which was on the basis of the assessment made subsequent to the initiation of CIRP could not have been admitted," said the NCLAT bench comprising Chairperson Justice Ashok Bhushan and Arun Baroka. -PTI

Educators to procure AI-powered innovation

New Delhi: Indian educators will procure more than 1,000 AI-Powered EdTech innovations showcased at Didac India 2024 exhibition, according to a statement.

The 14th edition of Didac India, an exhibition and conference focused on education and skilling resources, was organised by Messe Stuttgart India from September 18 to 20 at Yashobhoomi, New Delhi.

The event witnessed the unveiling of a diverse array of futuristic solutions and resources with exhibitors from over 20 countries showcasing more than 5,000 Edtech products and innovations, the statement said.

"Over 1000 cutting-edge AI products are going to be procured by Indian educators to transform India's education and skill sector," it stated.

MONEY MATTERS

Term Life Insurance - Why and How Much?



By Kautubh Kale

"Jo bachchon se kare pyaar, woh term insurance ko kaise kare inkaar!" - If you love your family, term life insurance is indispensable. Securing your loved ones financially in case of an untimely demise is crucial. Term insurance offers this protection at an affordable rate.



Term Insurance vs. Insurance + Investment Plans

Term insurance is a straightforward efficient type of life insurance. Unlike other policies that merge investment opportunities with life coverage, term insurance focuses solely on offering financial protection. Insurance + Investment plans like endowments, traditional policies don't beat inflation and offer low returns (whether private insurers or LIC). Opting for term life insurance with mutual funds proves to be a more advantageous choice.

For example, a healthy individual in their 30s can obtain ₹1 crore coverage for as little as ₹15,000-₹20,000 annually. This makes term insurance one of the most affordable solutions to safeguard your family's financial future.

Do You Need Term Insurance?

Consider term insurance if: You have dependents (spouse or parents). You want to secure your children's education or lifestyle. You have outstanding loans (home, car, or personal loans).

How Much Term Insurance Do You Need?

To determine the right amount of

coverage, you should:

Step 1 - Consider family expenses: First, assess your family's current annual expenses. Let's say your family spends ₹10 lakhs annually. If your goal is to provide for them for the next 15 years, you would need a minimum of ₹1.50 crore just to cover these basic living expenses.

Step 2 - Account for loans: Next, factor in any outstanding debts. Many families are burdened with home loans, car loans, or personal loans. Without term insurance, your family would be left to handle these repayments. If you have a home loan of ₹35 lakhs and a personal loan of ₹5 lakhs, you should add ₹40 lakhs to your required coverage. So, your total amount is now ₹1.90 crore.

Step 3 - Secure future of children: Whether it's college or overseas education, these costs can be high. More children, higher the cost. For example, if you estimate that your children's education will cost ₹50 lakhs, you would add this to your coverage needs. At this stage (continuing above example), you're looking at ₹2.40 crore.

Step 4 - Consider your dependents: If

your spouse or parents are financially dependent on you, it's essential to include their living expenses. Estimating this can vary depending on how long they might need financial support. If you feel that in your absence you would want to leave them (parents and spouse) with ₹20 lakhs, you should now be looking at around ₹2.60 crore in total coverage.

Step 5 - Adjust for Inflation: Finally, inflation will erode the value of money over time. To ensure your family has enough to cover rising costs, it's wise to add an inflation buffer at each of the above steps (as necessary).

Conclusion

Life is unpredictable, but your family's financial future doesn't have to be. Whether it's paying off loans, covering living expenses, or securing your children's education, term insurance offers peace of mind and security for your loved ones when you're not around.

(The writer is a Chartered Accountant and CFA (USA). Financial Advisor. Views personal.)

India, Myanmar discuss ways to promote trade

New Delhi: India and Myanmar on Saturday discussed ways to promote bilateral trade through their local currencies rupee and kyat.

The issue was discussed during the meeting between Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Kan Zaw, Myanmar's Minister of Investment and Foreign Economic



Union Minister Piyush Goyal during a meeting with Myanmar's Minister of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations Kan Zaw in Vientiane, Laos. Pic:PTI

Relations, on the sidelines of the 12th East Asia Summit Economic Ministers' Meeting at Vientiane, Laos.

"Discussed potential cooperation in areas like lentils, diesel, gasoline, electric vehicles, etc and ways to promote bilateral trade including through Rupee-Kyat currency mechanism, between our nations," Goyal said in a post on social media platform X.

India-Mayanmar bilateral trade stood at USD 1.75 billion in 2023-24.

India is looking at promoting trade in local currencies with various other countries including UAE, African nations and Russia.

-PTI

India's exports to Myanmar dipped to USD 670.4 million in 2023-24 from USD 807 million in the previous year. Imports however increased to USD 1.07 billion last fiscal from USD 954.74 million in 2022-23.

Congress slams SEBI over RTI rebuff

New Delhi: The Congress has slammed SEBI's refusal to disclose instances when its chairperson Madhabi Buch recused herself due to conflict of interest and said that this makes a "mockery" of public accountability and transparency.

The cases where Buch recused herself due to potential conflict of interest is not "readily" available and collating them would "disproportionately divert" its resources, the securities market regulator said in an RTI response on Friday.

In the response furnished to transparency activist Commodore Lokesh Batra (retd), the regulator also refused to provide copies of Buch's declarations to the government and SEBI Board on the financial assets and equities held by her and her family members on the grounds of these being "personal information" and that their disclosure may "endanger" personal safety.

Reacting to the development, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, "The multiple conflicts of interest of the SEBI Chairperson that have been revealed so far

are shocking in themselves. Now in a move that adds more fuel to the raging fire, SEBI has simply refused to divulge information to a RTI activist on instances of the SEBI Chairperson recusing herself on issues where there have been potential conflicts of interest."

"This makes a mockery of public accountability and transparency as far as SEBI is concerned," he said in a post on X late last night. The SEBI has also denied to disclose the dates on which the disclosures were made. The SEBI Central Public Information Officer (CPIO) used the grounds of "personal information" and "safety" to deny a copy of those declarations.

"Since the information sought do not pertain to you and the same relates to personal information, the disclosure of which has no relationship to any public activity or interest and may cause unwarranted invasion into the privacy of the individual and may also endanger the life or physical safety of the person(s). The same is, therefore, exempt in terms of Section 8(1)(g) and 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act, 2005," the RTI response said.

Fuel price cut before Maha elections?

New Delhi: International oil prices continue to be extremely volatile, falling on one day and rising thereafter, a top oil ministry official said explaining the reason behind no reduction in petrol and diesel prices despite softening in input cost, but could not say if the rates will be cut before Maharashtra elections.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures fell below USD 70 per barrel last week -- the first time since December 2021 -- but gained thereafter. Brent was trading at USD 74.58 per barrel on Thursday while West Texas Intermediate advanced to trade at USD 71.71.

A decline in price of crude oil -- which is converted into fuels like petrol and diesel at refineries -- had rekindled hopes for a reduction in petrol and diesel rates that have been on a freeze for over two years now barring a pre-election reduction earlier this year.

"Oil prices continue to be volatile. They fell one day last week to below USD 70 but rose the day after," the official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told reporters here.

Bangladesh reverses hilsa export ban ahead of Durga Puja

By Anisur Rahman

4,000 tonnes Quantity of fish Bangladesh had allowed 79 companies to export to India

Dhaka: Bangladesh's interim government on Saturday said it would export 3,000 tonnes of hilsa fish to India, coinciding with the upcoming Durga Puja, revising its earlier decision.

Durga puja will be celebrated from October 9 to 13. The development comes days after the interim government, led by Professor Muhammad Yunus, earlier this month imposed a ban on hilsa

export to India to meet domestic demand, discontinuing a long-standing tradition of Bangladesh as a "goodwill gesture" to its neighbour.

"Against the backdrop of appeals by the exporters, approval has been given to export 3,000 tonnes of hilsa fish (to India), fulfilling the specific conditions on the occasion of the upcoming Durga Puja," the commerce

ministry said in a statement.

The ministry asked applicants to contact its relevant wing to obtain export permission.

The previous Awami League government led by deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina had allowed hilsa exports to India between September and October every year as a goodwill gesture, a tradition

that had been nurtured for years. Bangladesh is the world's largest hilsa producer but it restricts the export of the fish due to high local demand. However, during the Durga Puja festival, it usually relaxes the ban on the export of the fish, which is a much sought-after delicacy of Bengalis.

India's Fish Importers Association earlier this month urged Bangladesh Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain to allow the export of hilsa to India.

Horticulture production falls slightly

New Delhi: The country's horticulture production is estimated to fall marginally by 0.65 per cent to 353.19 million tonne in 2023-24 as compared to the previous year.

Fruit production is expected to increase by 2.29 per cent to 112.73 million tonne in 2023-24 (July-June), driven by higher outputs of mango, banana, lime/lemon, grapes, and custard apple. However, production of apple, citrus fruits, guava, litchi, pomegranate, and pineapple is likely to fall.

Rs 3 lakh cr needed to achieve green energy target

New Delhi: An investment of over Rs 3 lakh crore is needed every year in the renewable energy sector to take India's installed green capacity to 440 gigawatt, ICRA experts said on Friday.

"We expect India to have 440 gigawatt installed capacity of renewable energy by 2030," Vikram V, Vice President & Co-Group Head - Corporate Ratings, ICRA Ltd said at a media roundtable.

The estimated capacity would require incremental investment of at least Rs 3 lakh crore every year over the next five to six years, Girish Kumar Kadam, Group Head Corporate Sector Ratings at ICRA Ltd.

He further said to meet the renewable purchase obligation (RPO) target of 43 per cent by 2030, the renewable energy capacity should be more than double to 440 GW from the current level of 200 GW.

The government's target is to have 500 gigawatt of installed renewable energy capacity by 2030.

Sharing his outlook for the RE sector, Kadam said India has made significant progress in renewable energy capacity addition with a strong policy focus, but factors such as energy storage, grid integration, and fully-integrated renewable energy equipment manufacturing pose challenges, given the increasing share

of renewables in the energy mix.

The evolving landscape presents both risks and significant investment opportunities, especially as the demand for cleaner energy sources intensifies. The sector's growth potential is immense, provided the government addresses these pressing issues expeditiously, he said.

In a presentation, ICRA experts said that by FY2030, electric two-wheelers will

account for 25 per cent of new vehicle sales, while electric three-wheelers and buses will constitute 40 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively.

The EV sector is expected to attract substantial investments, with nearly Rs 25,000 crore anticipated to be poured into charging infrastructure and localisation of EV components over the next three to four years, they said.

-PTI

Stanford dropout to billionaire in three years

By Mangesh Kulkarni

Mumbai: Kaivalya Vohra, who left Stanford University's prestigious computer science program at 18 to pursue entrepreneurship, is now a co-founder and Chief Technology Officer at Zepto, an Indian startup that has achieved unicorn status. Together with his friend Aadit Palicha, Kaivalya founded Kiranakart, an online grocery delivery service that promised to deliver

goods within 45 minutes. This venture set the stage for Zepto, which boomed during the pandemic as online shopping and delivery services became increasingly popular. Zepto was recognized as India's first unicorn of 2023, catapulting Kaivalya to the status of India's youngest billionaire.

Born in Bangalore, India on March 15, 2003, Kaivalya completed his early education in India before moving to Dubai. He attended Dubai College,



where he excelled in subjects like mathematics, physics, and computer science, demonstrating leadership skills through roles such as deputy head boy, captain of the under-19 basketball team, and

founder of the school's Computer Society.

Inspired by the rise of technology and the success of apps like Uber and Ola, Kaivalya considered working for a multinational company to gain experience before starting his own venture. However, he quickly realized that the concept of offering quick, door-to-door grocery delivery was perfectly suited to the current situation during the pandemic.

Kaivalya has been

honored as the youngest individual on the Hurun India Rich List 2024, with a net worth of approximately 3,600 crore. This marks his third appearance on the list, where he is recognised as the youngest among India's wealthiest people. Additionally, he has been featured on Forbes' influential 30 under 30 Asia list.

Zepto, India's fastest-growing e-grocery company valued at \$1.4 Billion, has seen significant growth following its latest

fundraising round of \$200 Million from global investors such as StepStone Group, Goodwater Capital, Y Combinator Continuity, Kaiser Permanente, Nexus Venture Partners, Glade Brook Capital, and Lachy Groom. The company's success is attributed to its advanced technology, efficient business model, and a network of strategically located delivery centers across its 10 locations, which are transforming the Indian grocery market.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The term 'sustainable energy transition' takes on a new quality when Germany and India combine their unique capabilities, setting a positive example not only in their own countries but also globally."



Uwe Gehlen, Head, German Development Cooperation in India

Sanctity of 'laddu prasadam' restored, unblemished, says TTD

Tirupati (Andhra Pradesh): Amid concerns among devotees on the quality of ghee used in the famous Tirupati 'laddu prasadam', the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has said sanctity of the sacred sweetmeat has been restored.

In a social media post on Friday night, the TTD, which manages the Sri Venkateswara Swamy temple, on the hills of Tirumala said the divinity and purity of Srivari Laddu is unblemished now.

"The divinity and purity of Srivari laddu is unblemished now. TTD is committed to protecting the holiness of Laddu Prasadam to the satisfaction of all the devotees," the temple board said in the post.

The temple body managing the super-rich shrine on Friday revealed it has come across sub-standard ghee and presence of lard in samples tested for quality, echoing claims first

made by Andhra Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu two days ago.

With the fingers of accusation being pointed at the previous YSRC regime over the issue, former CM Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy described the matter as "diversion politics," and slammed it as a "concocted story."

The Centre has sought a report on the matter from the Andhra Pradesh government and promised suitable action after examining it.

Citing a lab report on Friday, the TTD stated that there was presence of 'lard' (pig fat) and other impurities in the ghee.

TTD Executive Officer J Shyamala Rao said lab tests have revealed the presence of animal fat and lard in chosen samples and the board was in the process of blacklisting the contractor who supplied 'adulterated' ghee and initiating a legal action.

Will take desecration to logical end: Joshi

Union Minister for Food and Consumer Affairs Pralhad Joshi on Saturday said the Centre has taken the issue of desecration of famous Tirupati Laddu seriously and will take the matter to its logical end.

The Minister also said the allegations cropped up after the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) stopped using the Nandini Ghee of the Karnataka Milk Federation.

"We have heard a very serious allegation of adulteration in the auspicious Tirupati Laddu. The previous (Andhra Pradesh) government was using Nandini Ghee. Once they stopped using Nandini products, they started procuring Ghee from different sources. Since then, these incidents have taken place and the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has released the lab report as well," Joshi, who

Why this happened only during Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's tenure? There is foreign Christian Padre's role. Jagan Mohan Reddy is a converted Christian. The desecration of Tirupati Laddu is a conspiracy against the Hindus.

- K.S. Eshwarappa, former Deputy CM, Karnataka

also holds public distribution portfolio, said.

"Now that the lab report has come out, a detailed investigation has to take place. Whoever has committed wrong should be punished. We will take it seriously and we will take this case to the logical end."

Prabhu for setting up food testing labs

Former Union Minister Suresh Prabhu on Saturday called for setting up food testing labs by FSSAI at all public places where 'prasadam' is distributed to ensure quality, amid the Tirupati laddu row. The cost of these testing labs can easily be borne by organisations, who run such mass feeding programmes, he said. -PTI

FIR against some X users

Ahmedabad: Police on Saturday registered a case against seven users of social media platform 'X' for allegedly spreading misinformation that the "low quality" ghee used for making laddus at the Tirupati temple belonged to the 'Amul' brand, an official said.

Anand-based Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), which markets its milk and dairy products under the brand name 'Amul', has denied having supplied ghee (clarified butter) to Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), which manages the temple.

As per the FIR, X users of seven different handles spread misinformation that ghee with animal fat used for preparing laddus for Tirupati Balaji temple belonged to the 'Amul' brand with the intention of harming the reputation of the GCMMF, the cyber-crime police station officer said.



BJP workers protest against Congress leader and LoP in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, near Congress Bhawan in Chandigarh on Friday. Pic:PTI

Sexual Assault In Custody Opposition ups ante against govt

Bhubaneswar: The women's wing of opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) on Saturday staged a demonstration in front of Raj Bhawan here in protest against the "sexual assault" on a woman in police custody.

Congress activists, on the other hand, attempted to gherao the official residence of Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, demanding his resignation over the incident. Majhi also holds the home portfolio.

Holding placards and banners, hundreds of women members of the BJD staged a dharna outside the governor's house and raised slogans against the state's BJP government, which it accused of failing to protect the residents,

particularly women.

They demanded a court-monitored SIT probe and judicial inquiry into the alleged torture of an army officer and his fiancée at Bharatpur police station in Bhubaneswar.

"We will submit a memorandum addressed to the President through the governor," BJD leader Leekshree Samantasinghar said.

"The state government does not have control over the administration and police. This is evident from the Bharatpur police station incident where an army officer and his woman friend were physically and sexually assaulted. This is not acceptable in a civilised society," Samantasinghar said.

BJD leader and Bhubaneswar Mayor Sulochana Das, who took part in the demonstration said, "CCTV cameras were installed at Bharatpur police station during its inauguration. However, now the police claimed there was no CCTV camera at the police station. This indicates how the government was trying to hush-up the incident," she alleged.

BJD MP Sulata Deo said the party has decided to seek President Droupadi Murmu's intervention in the matter as "she is also a woman and can understand the plight of the army officer's fiancée" who was allegedly sexually assaulted in police custody.

Meanwhile, youth and students activists of the

Congress staged a demonstration and attempted to gherao the official residence of the CM, demanding his resignation. Majhi also holds the home portfolio.

The agitators were seen hurling tomatoes and eggs at the Chief Minister's residence. However, the projectiles did not hit the intended target, the CM's residence, as the protesters were stopped by the police metres away from it.

The alleged incident took place on September 15 when an army officer posted in West Bengal and his fiancée approached Bharatpur police station to lodge a complaint of road rage in which they were allegedly harassed by some local youths. -PTI

Junior docs resume duties partially after 42 days

Kolkata: Junior doctors on Saturday morning rejoined their duties partially at various government-run hospitals in West Bengal after a hiatus of 42 days.

They were on 'cease work' agitation in protest against the rape and murder of an on-duty woman doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital.

The junior doctors rejoined their duties in essential and emergency services at all state-run hospitals but not in the outpatient department (OPD).

"We have started rejoining duties today. Our colleagues have started returning to their respective departments since this morning only in essential and emergency services, but not at the OPDs. Please do not forget that this is only a partial resumption of duties," Aniket Mahato, one of the agitating doctors, told PTI.

He said his other colleagues have already left

for flood-hit districts of the state where they would start 'Abhaya clinics' (medical camps), to demonstrate their commitment to public health even amid ongoing protests.

The agitating doctors said that they would wait for another seven days for the administration to fulfill their demands for justice for the deceased doctor and the removal of state health secretary or else they would start another round of 'cease work'.

The doctors have been protesting since August 9 when the body of a woman medic was found at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, demanding justice for the deceased doctor as well as removing key officials from their posts alleging their involvement in the case.

The CBI, which is investigating the case, has arrested several people, including former principal of the RG Kar Hospital, in connection with its investigation into the matter.



Relatives of patients admitted at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital wait inside the hospital premises, in Kolkata on Saturday. Pic: PTI

CBI questions close aide of Sandip Ghosh

Kolkata: CBI sleuths on Saturday started questioning another doctor, allegedly close to arrested former principal of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital Sandip Ghosh, in connection with their probe into the rape and murder of a woman doctor at the medical establishment, an officer said.

Birupaksha Biswas, who was recently transferred by the West Bengal Health Department from Burdwan Medical College and Hospital to remote Kakdwip hospital in South 24 Parganas

district, appeared before officers of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) at its CGO Complex office in Salt Lake area.

Biswas, allegedly part of a 'North Bengal lobby' operational in medical colleges, was seen at RG Kar Hospital on August 9, when the body of the woman medic was found, the CBI officer said.

The 'North Bengal lobby' is being referred by medics in West Bengal to a group of doctors and officials posted at state-run medical estab-

lishments who allegedly threatened students.

"He is being questioned about his presence at RG Kar Hospital on August 9 despite having no official engagement, apart from other queries," the officer told PTI.

An FIR has been lodged against Biswas and two other doctors - Avik De and Ranjit Saha - with Bowbazar police station for allegedly threatening students at different medical colleges and hospitals across West Bengal.

Second round of technical survey at Ratna Bhandar

Puri: The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) on Saturday afternoon began the second round of technical survey of the Ratna Bhandar of Puri's Jagannath temple, officials said.

Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) barred devotees from having a 'darshan' of the sibling deities from 1 pm to 6 pm during the three-day survey of the treasury. The main gates of the temple will be closed for devotees during the survey.

SJTA chief administrator Arabinda Padhee



sought cooperation from devotees in this matter.

Ratna Bhandar Inventory Committee Chairman Justice Biswanath Rath, who also entered the temple to take part in the survey, said, "The ASI will undertake the survey on September 21, 22 and 23 during which it will be as-

certained whether there is any hidden chamber or tunnel inside the Ratna Bhandar. They have brought sophisticated radar for this purpose."

The first round of the survey was held on September 18, when a 17-member technical team of ASI led by its Additional Director General Jahnnavi Sharma conducted the preliminary inspection of Ratna Bhandar and its laser scanning in the presence of Padhee and Justice Rath.

The team also comprised experts from CSIR.

Female student found dead

Patna: A female student of the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Patna was found hanging inside her hostel room on the campus located in Bihta on the outskirts of the Bihar capital, police said on Saturday.

The body of the woman, who hailed from Andhra Pradesh, was found hanging from the ceiling fan of her hostel room. A suicide note was also found at the spot.

Muktesh Pardeshi new envoy to Turkiye

New Delhi: Seasoned diplomat Muktesh Kumar Pardeshi has been appointed as India's new ambassador to Turkiye -- a country that has emerged as an influential player in the resolution of regional conflicts, including in the Middle-East.

Pardeshi, a 1991-batch Indian Foreign Service officer, is currently serving

as a secretary at the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). Pardeshi was a key member of a group of top officials who played a key role in India's successful hosting of the G20 Summit in September last year.

The post of India's ambassador to Turkiye has been lying vacant since June after the demise of incumbent Virander Paul following illness. -PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Those who are trying to frighten us were sitting at home during the freedom struggle. Our people fought and gave their lives. The Gandhi family has a history of sacrifice, tell the people what your contribution was."



Mallikarjun Kharge, President, Congress

Dushyant Chautala sets eyes on bigger goal

By Sanjay Ganjoo

Chandigarh: JJP leader Dushyant Chautala, whose party is contesting the October 5 Haryana assembly polls jointly with Azad Samaj Party, predicts a hung assembly but exudes confidence that their alliance will win enough seats to emerge as a key player after the results.

The JJP had won 10 of the 90 assembly seats in the 2019 Haryana assembly polls, the BJP 40 and the Congress 31. Chautala, 36, the great

grandson of former deputy prime minister Devi Lal, predicts that no single party will be able to cross the 40-seat mark in the assembly elections.

No single party can form government on its own. There are chances that nobody crosses the 40-seat mark. So, there will be parties with numbers and some Independents too who will win, former deputy chief minister Chautala told PTI.

"Our alliance will win enough number of seats and emerge as a strong player in



the scenario," he said. Asked whether they will support any other outfit in case of a hung assembly, Chautala quipped, "Why go behind somebody. Why can't somebody come behind us. Anybody can form

a good alliance in which we lead... rest of the things we can comment when results are out," he said.

"We have seen that in Delhi, Jharkhand and in Bihar, (Chief Minister) Nitish Kumar (JDU) has only 44 MLAs," he said.

Former MP Ajay Singh Chautala-led JJP and Chandra Shekhar Azad-led Azad Samaj Party (Kanshi Ram) had recently announced their alliance for the Haryana polls. While the JJP is fighting on 69 seats, the ASP has fielded 16 candidates.

From Dabwali segment, the JJP has fielded Dushyant's brother Digvijay Singh Chautala.

The JJP-ASP alliance has extended support to three Independents on Rania, Meham and Pundri seats while not fielding any candidates in two constituencies.

In the 2019 assembly polls, the JJP had won 10 of the 90 assembly seats, the BJP 40 and the Congress 31. Emerging as a 'kingmaker', it entered into a post-poll tie-up with BJP, which had fallen short of majority.

The JJP was part of the coalition government led by former Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar from October 2019 to March 2024.

However, the JJP-BJP alliance ended after the saffron outfit replaced Khattar with Nayab Singh Saini as the chief minister in March. Khattar is now a Union minister. Chautala is seeking re-election from Uchana Kalan segment and is up against former Union minister Birender Singh's son Brijendra Singh, a Congress leader. -PTI

Gaganyaan should proceed with caution: ISRO chief

Bengaluru: Although Gaganyaan is ready for launch by the end of the year, we should proceed with caution, said Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman S Somanath on Friday. Gaganyaan, which is among the projects approved by the Union cabinet on Wednesday, is India's first human mission. "I don't want what happened to the Boeing Starliner, so we should be very careful," added Somanath.

The first test flight of Boeing Starliner spacecraft with astronauts, launched by NASA on June 5 returned to Earth on September 7, but without the astronauts. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the astronauts - Sunitha Williams and Butch Wilmore - were forced to extend their eight-day stay in the International Space to eight months, as they will now be picked up by SpaceX Crew Dragon in February. Somanath also stressed the importance of exploring Venus.

Rs 1,236 cr.
money
ALLOCATED
FOR THE VENUS
ORBITER MISSION



"Tomorrow Earth may become inhabitable due to some reasons. So if you do not study what is happening in Mars and Venus, possibly our future generation will be affected. Venus is also important because India has successfully gone to Mars and Moon," said Somanath.

As it will take seven years to develop the Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV), the launch vehicle being built by ISRO to replace currently operational systems, since the Venus mission is expected to be launched in March 2028, it will be launched from the existing vehicles, said Somanath.

According to him, although Venus is our nearest planet, it is more

Russia, China and Japan are also sending missions to Venus by 2030. So, by 2028, we have decided to launch our Venus mission.

S. Somanath,
Chairman, ISRO

challenging.

"Though we went to Mars, which is a little far away earlier, Venus is closer, but it is more challenging than Mars. Because the atmosphere of Venus has 100 times more pressure than that of Earth," Somanath told PTI Videos at the fringes of the press conference.

Venus mission will be India's second interplanetary mission after the Mars Orbiter Mission that was launched on November 5, 2013, and entered the Martian orbit on September 24, 2014.

Somanath also expressed his delight at the growing popularity of the Space Expo as well as the interest being shown by startups to invest in space sector.

"When I saw some of the stalls today, I was really impressed by the work done by the industries. The transition has already happened. Today, we can see many startups building their own satellites. This is the change we are seeing," he said.

-PTI

Support to waste recycling start-ups

Mumbai: Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav on Saturday said the Centre will provide financial support to the waste recycling start-ups, and also focus on saving energy and water along with banning single-use plastic.

The minister was speaking after taking part in a Beach Cleanup Campaign at the Juhu beach here as part of the International Coastal Clean-up Day.

"The central government will support start-ups for recycling. My ministry has given guidelines for one-time financial support to such start-ups," he said.

"Our focus will be on saving energy, water, banning single-use plastic and stopping wastage of food, promoting healthy lifestyle and e-waste disposal," Yadav said.

India calls for global shift to sustainable living

New Delhi: Adopting sustainable lifestyles could tackle many of the challenges posed by climate change and global success is more likely if affordable solutions are offered, India has said at the United Nations "Summit of the Future".

Addressing the summit in New York on Friday, Leela Nandan, secretary in the Union environment ministry, also said that climate change discussions often focus solely on emission reductions, but "we are more likely to succeed if we offer affordable solutions, not simply impose decisions".

The Summit of the Future brings together world leaders, policymakers and other stakeholders to discuss global challenges and strengthen multilateral

30 to 35 million
No of jobs the
clean energy sector
in India could
generate by 2047

750 million
No of saplings
planted in three-
and-a-half

cooperation to tackle emerging threats.

Citing an estimate by the International Energy Agency, Nandan said, "If we were to put our actions into the right context in terms of saving energy, saving water, reducing waste, reducing e-waste, adopting sustainable food systems, we would have reduced annual global emissions by 2 billion tons

by 2030." "This is such a significant step that would actually resolve a lot of the issues that are facing us today in the climate change scenario," she added.

Nandan said that earlier this year, at the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) in Nairobi, Kenya, India's resolution on sustainable lifestyles was unanimously adopted.

She also said that over one million schools in India are now connected to eco-clubs aimed at raising awareness about sustainable lifestyles.

"Through these eco-clubs, constant sensitisation about the environment in general and our actions, in particular, is happening on a real-time basis," Nandan said.



Protesters shout slogans as they cross the Brooklyn Bridge during a Youth Climate Strike march to demand an end to the era of fossil fuels in New York on Friday.

AP/PTI



Aerial view of an area inundated with water of the swollen Ganga river in Patna on Saturday.

Pic: PTI

Two Russians set record for longest single stay

Moscow: Two Russians on Friday set a record for the longest continuous stay on the International Space Station, according to Russia's space agency. Roscosmos said Oleg Kononenko and Nikolai

Chub broke the old record of 370 days, 21 hours and 22 minutes, which was set in September 2023 by Russians Sergei Prokopyev and Dmitry Petelin and American Francisco Rubio. Chub and Kononenko

will add several days to their total before their scheduled return to Earth on Monday. The 59-year-old Kononenko holds other space duration records, including the most cumulative time in space.

in the journal Nature, has been dubbed "Porphyryon" (a giant in Greek mythology) by its discoverers at the California Institute of Technology in the United States. It dwarfs NGC2663's jet in actual size and is over 20 times larger - a true colossus.

Astronomers just detected biggest black hole jets ever seen

By Luke Barnes

Sydney: The largest known black hole jets, 23 million light years across, have been discovered in the distant universe. This pair of particle beams launched by a supermassive black hole is over a hundred times larger than our galaxy, the Milky Way.

In 2022, we announced the discovery of one of the largest black hole jets in the night sky, launched from a (relatively) nearby galaxy called NGC2663. Using CSIRO's Australian Square Kilometre Array Pathfinder (ASKAP) in Western Australia, we confirmed that NGC2663's jet is one of the largest in the sky. In other words, it appears to be the largest when viewed from Earth.

The new jet, announced



heads: how can something 23 million light years across be almost perfectly straight?

Seeing invisible light Porphyryon was discovered by astronomers using the International LOFAR Telescope, a network of radio sensors centred in the Netherlands, and stretching from Sweden to Bulgaria, and from Ireland to Latvia. Radio telescopes like ASKAP and LOFAR can see light that is invisible to our

eyes: radio waves. What launches the jet in the first place? At the centre of the jet, researchers see a galaxy, and at the centre of the galaxy, they find evidence of a supermassive black hole.

As matter is pulled towards the black hole, various fates await. Some matter is eaten entirely. Some orbits around the black hole, forming a disk. And some of it becomes twisted and tangled in intense magnetic fields, until it is released into two opposing jets, blasting at almost the speed of light.

We've seen black hole jets before, even ones that stretch many millions of light years. What's striking about Porphyryon is that it looks almost perfectly straight.

-AP

Early breeding shows Project Cheetah doing well

New Delhi: Early and successful breeding of cheetahs brought from Africa shows that the reintroduction project is progressing well and habitat conditions in India are conducive for supporting a stable and thriving cheetah population, according to a government report.

The report, released by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) on the completion of two years of Project Cheetah on September 17, also revealed that the Indian authorities had prepared a standard operating procedure (SOP) to ensure successful reproduction by the cheetahs.

The SOP includes meticulously managing mating instances within enclosures.

In a major boost to the project, 17 cubs were born on Indian soil in two years, with 12 surviving.

Breeding usually signifies that the animals have adapted well to the new environment, are healthy, and are able to meet their basic ecological needs, said the report prepared by the NTCA, the Wildlife Institute of India and the Madhya Pradesh forest department.

Cheetah breeding is notoriously challenging due to several factors, including their low genetic diversity, which leads to reduced fertility and increased vulnerability to diseases.

These spotted felines also have a complex mating system, where females are solitary and only seek out males during estrus, making successful breeding

less frequent. Stress-related complications can also affect reproductive health, further complicating breeding efforts.

Therefore, experts and officials involved in the project developed an SOP under the aegis of NTCA, outlining the essential criteria, actions, and precautions to be followed at the field level in the cheetah introduction sites when managing pre- and post-breeding situations in cheetahs in India.

The SOP includes guidelines for monitoring mating individuals, pregnant and lactating females, neonatal care, and the supervision of cubs born in the wild.

The report said that mating instances in Kuno National Park were meticulously managed

20 No of cheetahs translocated, eight from Namibia in September 2022 and 12 from South Africa in February 2023

8 No of adult cheetahs - three females and five males died

17 No of cubs born in India, with 12 surviving

24 No of cheetahs in Kuno at present

within large, specially designed acclimatisation enclosures to ensure the survival and well-being of the founder population.

"Genetically unrelated male and female cheetahs were housed in the same enclosure for a short duration under close supervision, with considerations given to factors such as reproductive

status, age, health, and genetic compatibility of each pair. Behavioural cues and natural instincts were also particularly observed to assess the readiness and willingness of each pair," the report said.

"Although initial introductions were managed to facilitate mating, the subsequent mating activities and

birthing processes occurred naturally. After confirming the mating events, the cheetah pairs were separated, and the females were kept in large acclimatisation bomas with minimal disturbance," it added.

Throughout the gestation period, which typically lasts around 90 to 95 days, pregnant cheetahs

The fact that cheetahs have been able to reproduce in Kuno so early on in the project is a strong indication that the habitat conditions are suitable for their survival. This early success suggests that the reintroduction efforts are progressing well and that the environment in Kuno is conducive to supporting a stable and thriving cheetah population.

National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) Report

received comprehensive care and attention. Regular visual monitoring sessions were conducted by the veterinary team to track the pregnancy progress, it said. The large acclimatising enclosures in Kuno, where the pregnant cheetahs were housed, is a natural environment with adequate natural prey, thus

creating a self-sustaining, safe, stress-free setting that supported the cheetahs' instincts and behaviours, while also ensuring privacy for the expectant mothers.

During the advanced pregnancy stage, human disturbances were minimised to facilitate a stress-free denning and birthing process.

-PTI

Deadliest Israeli airstrike kills 31 in Lebanon

11 Hezbollah operatives including in-charge of elite force killed

Beirut: The death toll from an Israeli airstrike on a Beirut suburb has risen to 31, including seven women and three children, Lebanon's health minister said on Saturday.

Firass Abiad told reporters 68 people were also wounded of whom 15 remain in hospital, adding that search and rescue operations were still ongoing, with the number of casualties likely to rise.

The rare strike — the deadliest targeting the Lebanese capital since the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war — hit a densely populated southern neighbourhood on Friday afternoon during rush hour as people returned home. Israel said it killed 11 Hezbollah operatives, including Ibrahim Akil who was in charge of the group's elite Radwan Force. The militant group members were in a meeting in the basement of the building that was destroyed.

Netanyahu shortening US trip
Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has shortened a planned trip to the U.S. because of rising tensions with Hezbollah, according to an Israeli official. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media on the matter. Netanyahu is supposed to travel to the U.S. ahead of a planned speech at the U.N. General Assembly on Thursday.

overnight Friday that 15 of its operatives were killed by Israeli forces, but did not elaborate on the location of these deaths.



Emergency workers use excavators to clear the rubble at the site of Friday's Israeli strike in Beirut's southern suburbs on Saturday. Pic: APPTI

Humanitarian chief calls for investigation into device explosions

The UN humanitarian chief told an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council that weaponising communications devices represents a new development in warfare and said targeting thousands of Lebanese people using them without their knowledge is a violation of international human rights law. Volker Turk called for an independent investigation of this week's mass explosions of Hezbollah pagers and walkie-talkies that killed at least 37 people and wounding about 3,000 others. The attacks have widely been attributed to Israel.

Five health workers killed in Gaza

The Gaza Health Ministry said Saturday that five of its workers were killed, and five others injured, by Israeli fire that struck the ministry's warehouses in the southern Musbah area. Israel's bombardment of Gaza has already killed at least 41,000 Palestinians, according to the Gaza-based Health Ministry, which doesn't differentiate between fighters and civilians. -AP

Weaponising ordinary devices violates international law

Weaponising ordinary communication devices represents a new development in warfare, and targeting thousands of Lebanese people using pagers, two-way radios and electronic equipment without their knowledge is a violation of international human rights law, the United Nations human rights chief said Friday.

Volker Turk told an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council there must be an independent and transparent investigation of the two attacks in Lebanon on Tuesday and Wednesday where these devices exploded, reportedly killing 37 people and injuring more than 3,400 others. "Those who ordered and carried out these attacks must be held to account," he said.

done off the area preventing people from reaching the building that was knocked down as members of the Lebanese Red Cross stood nearby to take any recovered body from under the rubble. On Saturday morning, Hezbollah's media office took journalists on a tour of the scene of the airstrike where workers were still digging through the rubble.

The Minister of Public Works and Transport Ali Hamie told reporters at the scene that 23 people are still missing.

The airstrike on the crowded Qaim street knocked out an eight-story building that had 16 apart-

ments and damaged another one adjacent to it. The missiles destroyed the first building and cut through the basement of the second where the meeting of Hezbollah officials was being held, according to an Associated Press journalist at the scene.

In a nearby building, shops were badly damaged including one that sold clothes and had a sign in English that read: "DRESS LIKE YOU'RE ALREADY FAMOUS."

Friday's deadly strike came hours after Hezbollah launched one of its most intense bombardments of northern Israel

in nearly a year of fighting, largely targeting Israeli military sites. Israel's Iron Dome missile defence system intercepted most of the Katyusha rockets.

The militant group said its latest wave of rocket salvos was a response to past Israeli strikes on southern Lebanon. However, it came days after mass explosions of Hezbollah pagers and walkie-talkies killed at least 37 people — including two children. Some 2,900 others were wounded in the assault which has been widely attributed to Israel.

The Lebanese health minister said Saturday

hospitals across the country were filled with the wounded.

Israel has neither confirmed nor denied involvement in the attack which marked a major escalation in the past 11 months of simmering conflict along the Israel-Lebanon border.

Israel and Hezbollah have traded fire regularly since Hamas' Oct 7 assault on southern Israel ignited the Israeli military's devastating offensive in Gaza. But previous cross-border attacks have largely struck areas in northern Israel that had been evacuated and less-populated parts of southern Lebanon.

Ukraine bans Telegram because of Russian threat

Kyiv: Ukraine has banned government officials, military personnel and other defence and critical infrastructure workers from installing the popular Telegram messaging app on state-issued devices, describing the move as necessary for national security during the war with Russia.

Ukraine's National Cybersecurity Coordination Centre said it issued the ban for the official devices of government employees, military personnel, security and defence workers, and critical infrastructure employees. The ban was announced Friday by Ukraine's Security and Defence Council in a statement on Facebook.

During a meeting on Thursday, the Security Service of Ukraine and the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said Telegram is actively used by Russia for cyberattacks, phishing, spreading malware, establishing user locations and calibrating missile strikes.

An exception to the ban will be allowed for people

who use the app in their official duties. Ukrainians are free to use the app in their personal devices.

The app is widely used in Ukraine not only for texting but also for reading news, including updates on Russian air attacks. It is also the primary way Ukrainian officials, including President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, engage with the public and relay war developments. Zelenskyy is likely to continue using Telegram in his public communications since it is in his official capacity.

Ukraine's intelligence chief, Kyrylo Budanov, said Russian intelligence services are able to access the personal messages of app users, including deleted messages, as well as their personal data, according to the statement.

"I have always advocated and continue to advocate for freedom of speech, but the issue of Telegram is not a matter of freedom of speech; it is a matter of national security," Budanov said, according to the statement.

Pak police arrest four ISIS terrorists

Lahore: Four alleged ISIS terrorists have been arrested in Pakistan's Punjab province, police said on Saturday.

A spokesperson of Punjab Police's Counter Terrorism Department said that acting on a tip-off, the CTD raided the hideouts of terrorists in four cities of Punjab -- Lahore, Toba Tek Singh Bahawalpur and Minawali -- and arrested as many terrorists belonging to Daesh (ISIS).

The terrorists were identified as Amjadur Rehman, Sher Ali, Zahabullah and Tayyab Raees. Police recovered 2,570 grams of explosives, three detonators, 18.7 feet of safety fuse wire, a Kalashnikov rifle with 40 rounds of ammunition, a 30-bore pistol with 20 bullets, four hand grenades, and banned literature of ISIS from their possession.

The CTD spokesperson said the arrested terrorists had planned to target important installations and personalities.

Voting in Sri Lankan polls peaceful

Colombo: Polling concluded in Sri Lanka on Saturday with no violence or security breaches reported anywhere from all 22 electoral districts in the crucial presidential elections, the island nation's first since its worst economic meltdown in 2022.

Officials are yet to release the final voting percentage. By 2 pm, more than 60 per cent of the 17 million eligible people had voted, they said.

Observers said voting in the northern district of Jaffna was on a slow trickle by mid day. A Tamil minority headline group had discouraged people from voting in the run up to the election.

The counting of postal votes commenced immediately after the voting closed at 4 pm, officials said.

Postal votes were cast by

government employees mostly election officials, military and police. The postal voting was conducted four days earlier.

The election saw the deployment of nearly 8,000 polls observers local and foreign. This included 116 international observers from the EU, Commonwealth, Asian network of elections and seven from the south Asian countries.

The People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL), the leading local group, deployed 4,000 local observers.

The election will be a test for incumbent President Ranil Wickremesinghe who has claimed credit for putting the country on the road to economic recovery.

Analysts said this elec-



Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe along with his wife shows his ink-marked finger. Pic: PTI

tion is the most keenly contested of all presidential elections since 1982 with 38 candidates in the fray.

Some 17 million people were eligible to vote at over 13,400 polling stations. Over 2,00,000 officials were deployed to conduct the election. Buddhist temple halls, schools and community centres were converted into polling stations.

The three-cornered electoral battle saw Wickremesinghe facing stiff competition from Anura Kumara Dissanayake, 56, of the National People's Power (NPP), and Sajith Premadasa, 57, of the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) and the main Opposition leader.

Wickremesinghe, 75, is seeking re-election for a five-year term as an independent

candidate, riding on the success of his efforts to pull the country out of the economic crisis, which many experts hailed as one of the quickest recoveries in the world.

Sri Lanka had plunged into an economic crisis when the island nation declared sovereign default in mid-April of 2022, its first since gaining independence from Britain in 1948. Almost civil-war-like conditions and months of public protests led to the fleeing of the then president Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

Wickremesinghe was appointed as president by Parliament a week after.

Under Wickremesinghe, the rupee has stabilised, inflation has slowed to near zero from over 70 per cent during the peak of the economic crisis, economic growth has turned to positive from contraction, and government revenue has jumped sharply after new taxes and an increase in value added tax (VAT).

Though Wickremesinghe's recovery plan to tie rigid reforms linked to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout was hardly popular, it helped Sri Lanka recover from successive quarters of negative growth. Dissanayake and Premadasa want to tinker with the IMF programme to give more economic relief to the public. This time, the minority Tamil issue was not on the agenda of any of the three main contenders, instead, the nation's battered economy and its recovery had taken centre stage with all three front runners vowing to stick with the IMF bail-out reforms.

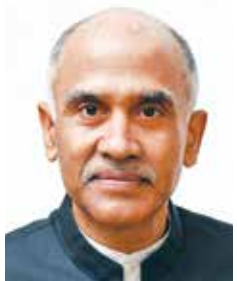
Sri Lanka's crisis proved to be an opportunity for Dissanayake, who had seen a surge of support due to his pledge to change the island's "corrupt" political culture.

After the counting, if no candidate receives more than 50 per cent of the votes, a second preferential vote count will be conducted.

No election in Sri Lanka has ever progressed to the second round of counting.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"We have never shirked in making available whatever we have achieved, the kind of digital platforms, technologies we have harnessed to make it available to our friends in the Global South. We have not patented them."



Parvathaneni Harish, India's Permanent Representative to the UN

Shocking rape trial highlights struggles

Avignon (France): The trial of dozens of men accused of raping an unconscious woman whose husband repeatedly drugged her over the course of nearly a decade has highlighted the difficulties that sexual violence victims can face in France.

Dominique Pelicot, 71, and his 50 co-defendants face up to 20 years in prison if they're convicted at a trial that has shocked the world and riveted the French public. Pelicot tearfully acknowl-

edged in court that he's guilty of the allegations against him, and he said all of his co-defendants understood exactly what they were doing when he invited them to his home in Provence between 2011 and 2020 to have sex with his unconscious and unwitting wife, who divorced him after learning what he had done to her.

Despite evidence including meticulously archived photos and videos that Pelicot shot of the alleged rapes, some of the defendants' law-

The co-defendants range in age from their 20s to their 70s and represent a cross-section of French men: There is a firefighter, a journalist, a nurse, a prison guard and a construction worker. Some are retired, some are unemployed and many have families of their own. One knew he had HIV when he raped Gisèle Pelicot on six occasions and chose not to wear a condom, according to police. She didn't contract HIV, though she was found to have other sexually transmitted diseases, a medical expert testified.

yers have scrutinized Gisèle Pelicot's private life and motives, even questioning

whether she was truly unconscious during some of the encounters. Although

they must defend their clients to the best of their abilities, the lawyers' tactics have outraged advocates for the sexually abused, who say the attorneys show that victim-blaming is alive and well in France.

Magali Lafourcade, a judge and general secretary of the National Consultative Commission of Human Rights who is not involved in the trial, said the fight against sexual violence in France has slightly improved since the start of the #MeToo movement. -AP

For a very long time, we saw the rape and killing of women by men as something that pertained to the private sphere — we thought we should not interfere with people's private lives. There has been a clear change with this perception since #MeToo.

Magali Lafourcade, GS, Consultative Commission of Human Rights

MY CORNER

Maharashtra's Scholarship Quagmire



By
Kuldeep Ambekar

In Maharashtra, a range of scholarships exists to support students from marginalized communities, primarily scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes and economically weaker sections. Both the central and state governments offer these scholarships, supplemented by autonomous institutions such as the Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Training and Research Institute (BARTI), Tribal Training and Research Institute (TRTI) and others. These institutions provide crucial financial support, including post-matriculation scholarships and stipends for higher education, yet their operations are mired in inefficiencies and growing public disillusionment.

The purpose of these scholarships is to uplift disadvantaged students through educational and economic empowerment. Institutions such as BARTI, Mahajyoti, SARATHI and TRTI are tasked with implementing these schemes, each tailored to a specific demographic. Each institution offers opportunities to 75 underprivileged students for higher education abroad and bears their entire expenses. Also, for PhD and research students, SARATHI, BARTI and Mahajyoti institutes offer stipends to 200 students, while TRTI offers stipends to 100 students. Free coaching, books and tuition are provided to meritorious students to aid preparation for the JEE and NEET exams.

In theory, this should create a framework for promoting social mobility. In practice, however, the system is riddled with contradictions, inefficiencies, and a lack of coordination.

Over the years, the state government has expanded this network with the creation of new entities like the Annabhau Sathe Training and Research Institute (ARTI) and the Minority Training and Research Institute (MARTI). However,

these initiatives remain largely inactive, further complicating an already burdened system.

A significant issue lies in the lack of transparency and uniformity among these institutions. Despite their ostensibly autonomous status, decisions are made at the government level, leaving little room for flexibility at the directorate level. Furthermore, a new policy establishing a single committee to govern all institutions, irrespective of the distinct needs and socio-economic conditions of the constituencies they serve, has been met with widespread criticism. It raises the question of whether a one-size-fits-all approach can work in such a diverse state.

Budgetary discrepancies compound the problem. The institutions' operational rules are often confusing, with varying stipends, tuition fees, and eligibility conditions. Even the most basic provisions—like free coaching for competitive exams such as JEE and NEET—require clearing preliminary examinations, creating additional hurdles for students already grappling with financial instability.

More worryingly, despite the shift to an online scholarship disbursement system in 2017, many students report significant delays. In some cases, scholarships have been withheld for over two years. These delays erode trust in the system, with many students opting out of the application process altogether as the frustration of waiting undermines the very purpose of financial aid.

For students from rural areas and backward communities, these scholarships are often the only means to break the cycle of poverty. The failure of the government to provide timely assistance pushes many students into deeper financial stress, leading them to abandon their studies entirely. Worse, delays in scholarship payments create a ripple effect of social and psychological distress, reducing future opportunities and depriving the state of much-needed talent from its underserved regions.

The government's intention to assist these students is clear, but its execution is severely flawed.

(The writer is a lawyer and president, Student Helping Hands. Views personal.)

FORGOTTEN HISTORY

From Lahore to the Stars: The Genius of Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar



By
Laurence Westwood

In the autumn of 1983, browsing through a university bookshop, I stumbled upon 'An Introduction to the Study of Stellar Structure' by S. Chandrasekhar. The name rolled off my tongue with intrigue. Little did I know that just months later, the man behind the name, Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar, would win the Nobel Prize for the insightful mathematics he done in 1930 — at the tender age of 19, while sailing from India to England to take up a scholarship at the University of Cambridge. His revolutionary discovery would forever change our understanding of the cosmos, even if it took the world many years to catch up with his brilliance.

Born on October 19, 1910 in Lahore to a family of Shaivite Brahmins, Chandra was a precocious if mischievous child. Tutored at home

The great theoretical physicist's brilliance illuminated the complexities of the cosmos, revealing truths that others blinded by their own stardom failed to see.

as his father distrusted the quality of the local schools — his mother taught him Tamil, his father English and mathematics — he did not enter formal schooling until he was eleven. By the time he was 15, at the Presidency College in Chennai, he was considered a maths prodigy. He was so devoted to his studies that his father used to admonish him, telling him to stop reading so much and get some fresh air. Then, at the age of 17, he spent the summer working in Kolkata, at his uncle's laboratory, where he broke some of the apparatus, confirming for him that he was not destined to be an experimentalist. That uncle of his was C.V. Raman, famous for his work in the physics of light scattering, winner of the Nobel Prize in 1930, the first non-White person to do so in any branch of the sciences.

It was in his uncle's laboratory that Chandra was introduced to the mathematics of the new quantum mechanics that was then transforming the world of physics, actually meeting such eminences as Arnold Sommerfeld and Werner Heisenberg. In 1929, with the help of Ralph Howard Fowler, Chandra published his first paper in the Proceedings of the Royal Society.

Fowler was to transform Chandra's life. Fowler had been thinking about white dwarfs — small, hot, and very dense remnants of stars that have burned through all their nuclear fuel. Such stellar remnants did not make sense. Such stars should undergo total gravitational collapse. But, by applying the new quantum mechanics to white dwarfs, Fowler solved the problem of their existence.

On his voyage to England to become Fowler's doctoral pupil at Cambridge, Chandra turned his mind to Fowler's work on white dwarfs. Chandra's insight was to



realise that special relativistic effects must be taken into account within a white dwarf. Working out the mathematics, he demonstrated that Fowler's explanation of the physics that stabilized white dwarfs would be true only up to a point, that there was an upper limit — now known as the Chandrasekhar Limit — to the mass of a star that could evolve into a white dwarf, about 1.4 times the mass of our sun. Any greater and the star would collapse into what we now know as a neutron star or even a black hole. Chandra's insight has to be one of the greatest scientific discoveries of the 20th century.

However, at Cambridge, Chandra's work on white dwarfs was to be ignored. As he completed his doctorate, he refined his calculations, and was pleasantly surprised when the great astronomer Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington, arranged for him to speak in 1935 at the Royal Astronomical Society in London. Expecting Eddington to support him, Chandra was shocked when Eddington spoke after him, ridiculing his conclusions, stating that something as large as a star could not simply disappear. Such was Eddington's formidable prestige it would take many years for the Chandrasekhar Limit to be accepted. And it was not until 1972, when

the first black hole, Cygnus X-1, was identified, that Chandra and his work would be fully vindicated.

Deciding that any future career path in England was now blighted by Eddington, Chandra returned briefly to India in 1936, where he married Lalitha, a physics scholar herself. It was a rare love match in those days. They would share a passion for literature and classical music. Unhappy with the political situation in India, Chandra and Lalitha left for the United States where he took up a position at the University of Chicago. There, he would stay for the rest of his working life, conducting much more ground-breaking research, and achieving fame as both an inspiring and intimidating teacher.

Although his Nobel Prize in 1983 was awarded solely for his youthful discovery, Chandra's contributions to astrophysics spanned decades of groundbreaking work. Perhaps feeling the sting of the long-delayed recognition, he ended his Nobel lecture with a poignant reflection:

"The simple is the seal of the true. And beauty is the splendour of truth."

(The writer is a novelist and retired investigator with an abiding passion for Chinese history)

NEWSMAKER OF THE WEEK

The throne of thorns in Delhi



By
Aditi Pai

The most striking image, in recent times, of Delhi's new Chief Minister Atishi Singh, was of her being wheeled away in a stretcher after her health took a turn for the worse as she embarked on an indefinite hunger strike. Her demand was to get more water for Delhi from Haryana. Atishi was using this time-tested powerful tool of protest—a hunger strike—that also played a role during the inception of her party, the Aam Aadmi Party. For those who recall the endless television coverage, in an anti-corruption movement in 2011, Anna Hazare had gone on a fast and Arvind Kejriwal, Atishi's party boss, had made headlines as he sat in protest. The feisty young politician who represents her party in television studios and at press conferences, is now the national capital's new chief minister.

A prominent face in television debates and press conferences of the AAP, Atishi, a first-time Member of the Legislative Assembly was inducted into the council of minister in March 2023 after the then deputy Chief Minister and Kejriwal's trusted lieutenant, Manish Sisodia, was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation in the excise policy case. Atishi, along with Saurabh Bharadwaj, joined the Delhi government following the resignation of Sisodia and Satyendar Jain and has since been entrusted with key portfolios such as finance, education and public works. Her work profile increased to 14 departments as senior leaders of the party were implicated in irregularities in the Delhi Excise Policy. Her responsibilities, the highest among all cabinet ministers in the outgoing AAP government, included education, fi-

nance, planning, PWD, water, power and public relations, exhibiting the faith Kejriwal has in her.

Atishi's academic credentials are impressive; an alumnus of Delhi's St Stephen's College, she's been a Cheltenham and Rhodes scholar, where she completed a Masters' degree in Education at Oxford University. She used her academic background to implement reforms in Delhi's education system which won her recognition as the architect of Delhi's education policy. Delhiites say that she's raised standards of teaching, managed to keep fees in check and is the driving force behind the 'entrepreneurship mindset curriculum' and the 'happiness curriculum' in Delhi schools. With impeccable educational pedigree, she's got her attention in the right places with environment-friendly policies such as pollution control, renewable energy and sustainability being key areas of focus for her.



At 43 years, Atishi is the third woman Chief Minister of the national capital of India joining the ranks of Sushma Swaraj and Sheila Dixit. Her journey to the top has been rapid and steady since 2013 when she was played a role in drafting AAP's election manifesto and the government's early policies. In the initial years, she was advisor to Manish Sisodia, the former deputy chief minister of Delhi where she took a keen interest in educational reforms that are believed to have brought big relief to Delhi-

ites. While she unsuccessfully contested the 2019 Lok Sabha elections and lost to BJP's Gautam Gambhir, she won the 2020 Assembly elections from Kalkaji.

However, her accession to the top job comes at a crucial time where party bosses have faced jail on corruption charges and elections are only a few months away. The Delhi Assembly elections are scheduled for February 2025, leaving Atishi with little time to make a sizable impact from the state's seat of power. With Kejriwal's resignation, his entire cabinet has resigned and Atishi may rejig the ministries as the new cabinet takes oath.

She faces a belligerent BJP that will make corruption charges against Kejriwal a top issue in the upcoming elections. The AAP's flagship scheme of doorstep delivery of services needs to be energised with implementation having slacked in recent years. In this year's state budget, Atishi had announced a financial assistance scheme to women, the Mahila Samman Nidhi Yojana, which promises a monthly amount of Rs 1000 to women above the age of 18 years. The scheme needs implementation especially in an election year.

Then there are schemes that await cabinet approval such as the Industrial and Economic Development Policy, the Electric Vehicle Policy 2.0 and Water Bill Settlement Scheme. The AAP government has promised policies to encourage employment like the Dilli Bazaar Portal and policies for start-ups and food trucks, all of which need approval with time running short.

Boards and commissions are nesting places to balance equations with political heavyweights who cannot be accommodated in the cabinet and Atishi will have to appoint senior politicians to these commissions with vacant posts.

The highest seat in government is a charming place to be in but Atishi's elevation comes at a crucial juncture in the journey of AAP. Will she be able to bring the party back to power with people-friendly schemes? The answer lies only a few months away.

SECURITY MATTERS

Growing Risks Of Cyber Warfare



By
Amol Deshmukh

In a shocking series of events, multiple coordinated explosions have rocked Lebanon and parts of Syria, killing dozens of people and injuring thousands. The blasts occurred after explosive devices, hidden inside pagers and other radio communication devices, were detonated. The targeted individuals were primarily members of Hezbollah, with the explosions taking place in densely populated areas, resulting in widespread injuries to civilians, including children.

The devices, mainly pagers, walkie-talkies, and radios, had been in the possession of Hezbollah operatives, who had acquired them months prior, under the assumption they were secure. However, Hezbollah has accused Israel's intelligence agency, Shin Bet, of tampering with the devices during transit.

According to security experts, Israel's elite secret cyber warfare unit was behind the attack. This unit, known for its global cyber operations, is also linked to the creation of the STUXnet malware, which was responsible for the failure of Iran's nuclear power plant. The pagers were rigged with explosive materials in place of a battery, and a relay switch was installed, allowing the explosions to be triggered remotely in a synchronized manner. The result was devastating injuries to the eyes, face, hands, and legs of those carrying the devices.

The incident occurred in Hezbollah strongholds areas, including the Dahieh suburb of Beirut, southern Lebanon, and parts of the Beqaa Valley, with some explosions also reported across the border in Syria. The blasts overwhelmed hospitals, as hundreds of victims sought medical help for injuries ranging from severe burns to shat-

tered limbs. The intensity of the explosions, far beyond that of ordinary battery malfunctions, indicates a highly sophisticated sabotage operation.

These explosions have not only deepened the crisis in Lebanon but have also raised critical questions about supply chain security, intelligence tactics, and the legality of using booby-trapped electronics in conflict zones.

What Are Pagers, and Why Are They Still Preferred?

Despite being old-school telecommunication technology, pagers or beepers are still used in many countries, particularly in critical sectors and organizations. Pagers primarily facilitate one-way communication, pager uses higher frequencies than car radios i.e. 400 MHz band frequency. It also used a very basic type of VHF spectrum. These devices operate in restricted areas to transfer messages, alerts, and information. These devices are considered more secure and harder to trace or track compared to mobile phones, as they only receive messages, similar to a car radio that receives signals without revealing the listener's identity or location. Additionally, pagers lack features like Bluetooth or GPS, making them more difficult to hack or compromise.

Among their many advantages, pagers are known for their long battery life and durability, making them ideal for continuous use in specific industries. There are an estimated two million active pager users worldwide. Hezbollah began using pagers after Israel successfully assassinated a high-ranking Hezbollah target by hacking his cellphone and precisely targeting him with a missile. Since then, many Hezbollah members have switched to more primitive communication devices, like pagers, to avoid being tracked via the internet.

Are Mobile Phones and Smartphones Similarly Vulnerable?

American and European security agencies suggest that, theoretically, it is possible to alter mobile phones and other smart devices to turn them into explosive devices. However, practically, it is more difficult due to the ad-

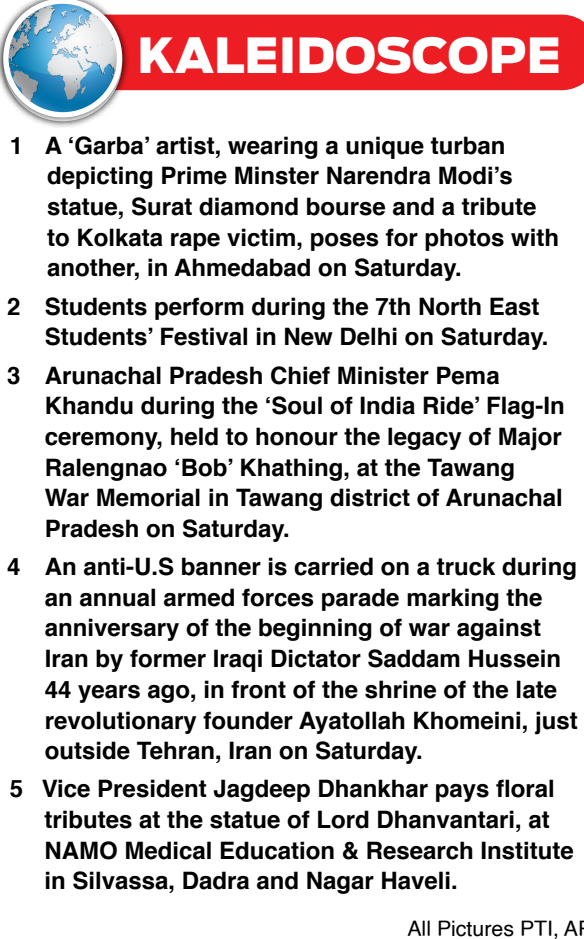
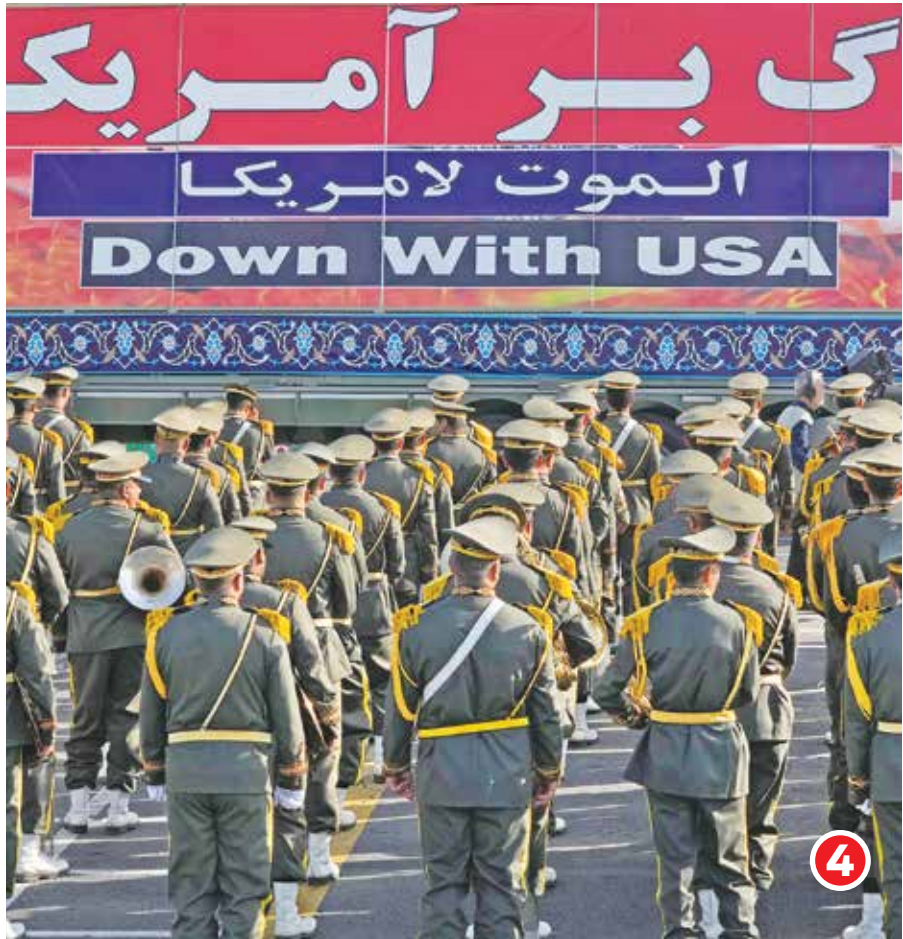
vanced security systems in modern smartphones. A hacked smartphone may exhibit various signs, such as abnormal temperature changes, slower system performance, unexpected reboots, odd sounds during calls, hung applications, or irrelevant messages and pop-ups, all of which could indicate tampering. These security systems make it more challenging to modify smartphones in the same manner as simpler devices like pagers.

New Security Challenges

The Hezbollah pager explosion serves as a wake-up call for sectors involving critical infrastructure and aviation. In an era where smartphones are network-connected and can be charged wirelessly, the possibility of tampering with batteries or embedding explosives, like HMX, PETN and other type of plastic explosives pose significant risks. During flights, even a minor explosion could result in catastrophic consequences. On the ground, the threat extends to damaging nearby aircraft, equipment, and infrastructure. Airport security may soon impose stricter regulations, potentially banning pagers, walkie-talkies, and radios, much like power banks, which are now restricted on flights. In the future, mobile phones may only be allowed in switched-off modes, placed in lithium-safe bags during flights. Suspicious devices could be handled separately in Faraday-sheet bags to block any network or signal connections.

This incident highlights the growing risks of cyber warfare and the dangers posed by everyday communication devices being exploited for sabotage. It is an alarming call for a nation's security as the treat of such critical infrastructure being handled by terrorist organizations can compromise the use of day-to-day electronics for malicious activities. As technology advances, so must the protocols for ensuring public safety, particularly in high-risk environments where even the smallest vulnerability could lead to devastating consequences.

(The writer is an eminent cyber and explosives forensic expert. Views personal.)



KALEIDOSCOPE

- 1 A 'Garba' artist, wearing a unique turban depicting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statue, Surat diamond bourse and a tribute to Kolkata rape victim, poses for photos with another, in Ahmedabad on Saturday.
- 2 Students perform during the 7th North East Students' Festival in New Delhi on Saturday.
- 3 Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu during the 'Soul of India Ride' Flag-In ceremony, held to honour the legacy of Major Ralengnao 'Bob' Khathing, at the Tawang War Memorial in Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh on Saturday.
- 4 An anti-U.S. banner is carried on a truck during an annual armed forces parade marking the anniversary of the beginning of war against Iran by former Iraqi Dictator Saddam Hussein 44 years ago, in front of the shrine of the late revolutionary founder Ayatollah Khomeini, just outside Tehran, Iran on Saturday.
- 5 Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar pays floral tributes at the statue of Lord Dhanvantari, at NAMO Medical Education & Research Institute in Silvassa, Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

All Pictures PTI, AP

LETTER FROM PAKISTAN

Pakistan-Russia Relations Enter New Phase



By Kaswar Klasra



Pakistan and Russia are warming up bilateral ties. Credit goes to Indian authorities for beautifully maintaining the relationship between Washington and Moscow. India's excellent relationship with two archrivals Russia and the US, has provided much-needed courage to Pakistani authorities to follow suit.

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk met with Pakistani officials in Islamabad in a bid to deepen economic ties and expand cooperation "across multiple sectors" as Moscow grapples with U.S. and EU economic sanctions over its war against Ukraine.

Overchuk's visit comes after two days of meetings between John Bass, U.S. acting undersecretary of state for political affairs, and Pakistani army chief General Asim Munir and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar in Islamabad.

During a joint press conference with his Russian counterpart earlier this week in Islamabad, Dar revealed that discussions centred on expanding economic ties between the two countries. Islamabad is abuzz with the speculation that Russians are helping Pakistan to build a steel mill. If true, it is going to be an excellent step in the revival of Moscow-Islamabad ties.

Pakistan's bilateral trade with Russia reached an unprecedented \$1 billion last year. The countries are committed to expanding trade ties by addressing logistical and related issues. Officials familiar with the development in the Pakistan-Russia bilateral relationship are optimistic that the two sides can enhance the volume of bilateral trade from one billion US dollars to \$5 billion in a few years. In fact, India's bid to maintain an excel-

lent relationship with arch-rivals Russia and the US has given Pakistan much confidence to follow suit. However, it is not an easy task for Islamabad to follow the Indian path. Islamabad may lose its biggest economic partner like the US if it goes ahead to develop ties with Russia.

According to officials familiar with the development, Pakistan and Russia are expanding ties in many fields, including liquefied natural gas (LNG) purchases. However, sanctions against Russia restrict cooperation between the two countries. Can Pakistan still go forward to enhance bilateral ties with Russia? It's a million-dollar question.

Pakistan views Russia as an important player in West, South, and Central Asia. Authorities in Islamabad aim to work with Moscow toward peace and stability in Afghanistan. However, it will not be an easy task for Islamabad, as Washington can be a silent spectator. Pakistan may face the wrath of going ahead with Russian plans in Afghanistan.

Also, Pakistan's army media wing said in a statement on Wednesday that Russia's Overchuk spoke with General Syed Asim Munir, chief of the army staff (COAS), in Rawalpindi.

Analysts say the Russian deputy prime minister's visit and the expansion of cooperation show Moscow is expanding its influence in the region.

"In my view, a vacuum has emerged after the U.S. exit from Afghanistan, and Russia is positioning itself to fill that void. China is also making efforts in this direction. As a result, Pakistan is working under

this policy framework to improve its relations with regional countries, including Russia," Professor Manzoor Afridi, a Pakistani academic on international relations, told VOA.

Analysts on Pakistan's foreign policy and geopolitics believe that the US may not react until warming ties in the Russia-Pakistan bilateral relationship focus primarily on enhancing trade, strengthening diplomatic relations, and developing infrastructure, particularly in the energy sector. However, the United States may react sharply if Pakistan-Russia ties go beyond that threshold. The US has restricted certain aspects of Pakistan's ballistic missile program, while tensions between Russia and Ukraine have escalated. In this context, Pakistan's relationship with Russia holds significance.

Pakistan received its first shipment of Russian liquefied petroleum gas in 2023. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif discussed the possibility of liquefied natural gas supplies earlier in July on the sidelines of a Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit at Astana, Kazakhstan.

Pakistan's bid to warm its ties with Washington is a welcome step. However, Islamabad has to pay a heavy price in case of cosying up with Russia. It may have to lose an economic partner like the US. Can Pakistan afford to lose a partner like the US? It's a million-dollar question.

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

DEEP DIVE

Pager Blasts: A Global Threat?



By Ruddhi Aditya Phadke

Imagine ending your day, exhausted, but pausing before using your phone, laptop, or car radio. In Lebanon, such hesitation is now part of daily life. A new wave of terror - reportedly triggered by Israel in its relentless campaign to cripple Hezbollah - has shaken the country, with explosive devices embedded in pagers, walkie-talkies, and even solar cells. The devastation is staggering: over 30 dead and nearly 3,000 injured. This is a conflict not fought with drones or tanks, but with the very electronics that power modern life.

The scale and sophistication of these attacks suggest a well-calculated strategy aimed at spreading fear and chaos. While the immediate target is Hezbollah, the potential for this digital warfare to spread beyond Lebanon is a terrifying prospect. As nations like Iran, Syria, and other anti-Israel forces watch with alarm, the world is left asking: is anyone safe from this new form of electronic sabotage?

What began as an isolated conflict between Israel and Hezbollah could have far-reaching consequences. The attacks on electronic devices, now a critical part of daily life, have sparked fears that the entire supply chain - spanning from manufacturers in Taiwan and Japan to retail outlets worldwide - may become tainted. Consumers, already jittery from rising global tensions, could begin to shy away from the very products that keep the world connected.

The implications are clear - a decline in consumer trust, economic shockwaves, and a scramble to implement expensive screening technologies across global markets. Yet the fear of such attacks going mainstream is what truly haunts policymakers. Israel and Hezbollah are not the only adversaries with deep-seated rivalries. With tensions simmering between Russia and Ukraine, China and its neighbours in Southeast Asia, and even India and Pakistan, it is not hard to imagine this new form of electronic sabotage becoming a favoured tactic in global conflicts.

India, with its large population and dependency on imported electronics, is particularly vulnerable. Consider the fact that a vast portion of the world's consumer electronics are made in China - a country with which India has an uneasy relationship. Moreover, Pakistan, which has long sought to destabilize India, could see this as an opportunity to stir chaos, possibly with support



from other regional players like China or Turkey.

The potential for widespread harm is clear. India has been no stranger to terrorist attacks, from the 2006 Mumbai train bombings to the 26/11 attacks. And while the country has developed a robust defence against conventional terror, the emerging threat of electronic sabotage demands new, preventive measures. If India is to avoid disaster, advanced detection systems will need to be implemented across the country - at ports, airports, and even consumer electronics stores. This will undoubtedly add costs, but in a world where electronic warfare could become the new norm, the investment is a small price to pay.

As nations worldwide grapple with the implications of Israel's latest campaign against Hezbollah, one thing is certain: the old rules of war no longer apply. With the ability to turn everyday electronics into weapons, this digital conflict is reshaping the global security landscape. Nations will need to rethink how they approach security, trade, and diplomacy in an era where any device could be a Trojan horse.

For Lebanon, the immediate aftermath is grim: a country on edge, citizens afraid of their own devices. But the rest of the world, too, must confront the unsettling reality that digital sabotage is no longer a far-off possibility. It is here to stay, and is a threat that no nation can afford to ignore.

The digital strikes against Hezbollah in Lebanon allegedly triggered by Israel signal the dawn of a new era in warfare, where everyday electronics become deadly weapons, and global security hangs in the balance.

By G Unnikrishnan

Chennai: Rishabh Pant and Shubman Gill cleansed months of hurt, anxiety and disappointments of varying nature with emotional hundreds on the third day to place India in a prime position to win the first Test against Bangladesh here Saturday.

Gill (119 not out) and Pant (109 led the hosts' run glut with an alliance of 167 for the fourth wicket that helped India, overnight 81/3, declare their second innings at 287 for 4 for an overall lead of 514.

Bangladesh showed some spunk in their second innings to reach 158 for four when play was called off at 4.25 pm due to bad light. They still need a whopping 357 runs for the result to be in their favour.

Skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto (51) and Shakib Al-Hasan (5) were manning the crease for the visitors, and the day could have ended on a better note for them have they been a slightly more judicious in shot selection against star off-spinner R Ashwin (3/63).

But let's forget the match situation and those dreary numbers for a while to cast a deeper look into the story of the day.

The hundreds by Pant and Gill stood as a testimony of these two fine young men's will to rise above towering personal obstacles that would have strangled the ordinary.

Pant's turmoil has been widely-documented after that horrifying car crash in December 2022, and the way he reacted after reaching his sixth Test hundred with a two off Shakib Al-Hasan underscored the value he attached to the knock.

Pant stood near the middle of the pitch with closed eyes, an upward tilted head and a raised bat – offering a silent prayer, perhaps, to



Pant, Gill put India in command

the Lord above for returning life and cricket to him.

Gill watched the whole scene from a fair distance, as he did not want to invade into an intensely private moment of his partner.

Soon, the two brave-hearts melted into a warm embrace as Chepauk erupted.

Perhaps, the moment stood also as a tribute to Pant equalling Chennai's very own 'Thala' MS Dhoni's record for the most Test hundreds by an Indian wicketkeeper-batsman – six.

Compared to Pant's, the struggles of Gill have been less pronounced as they were more mental than

physical in nature, stemming primarily from the lack of confidence in himself in the traditional format.

However, since making that hundred against England at Visakhapatnam earlier this year, Gill seemed to have turned a corner and he further validated that journey upwards with his fifth Test hundred, fetched through a single off Mehidy Hasan Miraz.

But while Gill, beginning from overnight 33, and Pant, starting from 12, were in the office, all these feelings were hidden as it was time to enjoy the sight of them taking down Bangla-

desh bowlers in their contrasting methods.

The left-hander started rather sedately, looking to get his eye in before opening up.

The breakaway moment came when Pant pulled off-spinner Miraz for a four around the first drinks break of the day.

Since that point, Pant's dismantling of Miraz became a feature of the innings as he brought up his fifty off 88 balls.

Once the fifty was achieved, the 26-year-old unfurled some of those typical Pant shots.

Pant moved around the crease like a trapeze artist, and his scooped six over fine leg off Hasan Mahmud

enthralled a sizeable weekend crowd here.

He was dropped on 72 by Shanto off Shakib but that was not even a deterrent. He duly completed his ton before offering a return catch to the hard-working Mehidy.

Minimalism is quintessential to Gill's batting as he plays shots with little flourish.

The short-arm pull from in front of the face or that zero follow-through punch through the covers, which he often executed off pacers Nahid Rana and Hasan, might not be out of the batting manual but were productive nonetheless.

Gill milked a further 53

Scoreboard

India 1st Innings: 376
Bangladesh 1st Innings: 149
India 2nd Innings: 287/4d
Bangladesh 2nd Innings: Zakir Hasan c Jaiswal b Bumrah 33
 Shadman Islam c Gill b Ashwin 35
 Najmul Hossain Shanto not out 51
 Mominul Haque b Ashwin 13
 Mushfiqur Rahim c Rahul b Ashwin 13
 Shakib Al Hasan not out 5
Extras: 8 (lb-4, b-4)
Total: 158/4 in 37.2 overs
Fall of wickets: 1-62, 2-86, 3-124, 4-146
Bowling: Jasprit Bumrah 7-2-18-1, Mohammed Siraj 3.2-1-20-0, Akash Deep 6-0-20-0, Ravichandran Ashwin 15-3-63-3, Ravindra Jadeja 6-0-29-0.

Ticket prices to remain same for Mumbai test



Mumbai: The ticket prices will remain same as the previous rates for the upcoming third Test of the India versus New Zealand series to be played here from November 1-5, the Mumbai Cricket Association has said.

India and New Zealand last played a Test here at the Wankhede Stadium in 2021, a contest which the hosts won by 372 runs after Kiwis' spinner Ajaz Patel created history by becoming only the third bowler in Tests to take all 10 wickets in an innings.

The ticket prices were reportedly hiked by 25 per cent for the Test three years ago, taking the price to Rs 125 for a daily ticket against Rs 100 and Rs 375 for all five days against Rs 300, compared to the rates for the match held here back in 2016.

The MCA in its Apex Council meeting has also decided to celebrate the 50th anniversary of one of the country's most iconic cricket venues, Wankhede Stadium, on January 19 next year in its golden jubilee celebration.

Among the other decisions taken in the meeting, all trainee players selected for the off-season camp in

The primary focus of this event will be on the recruitment of cricketers, providing players with career opportunities both within and outside of cricket.
- Ajinkya Naik, President, MCA

various categories — U-14, U-16, U-19 boys and U-15, U-19, U-23 senior women — will receive First-Class passes and travel allowances from the MCA.

A career fair will be organised for the MCA's players which will feature a meet-and-greet event with top executives from various corporate organisations, as well as former and current India cricketers.

"MCA will cover the match day expenses for MCA Affiliated Office Clubs participating in the Times Shield and MCA Corporate Trophy," he said.

"Dr. H.D. Kanga League awards function will be held on October 25," Naik added.

DPL Season 1.2 is off to a flying start

Rs 1 lakh prize money to the winning team

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Sixes are soaring even higher and stumps are flying even farther as Dharavi Premier League's (DPL) second season got off to a flyer on Friday morning. Not only local players but a large number of cricket enthusiasts from Dharavi were present to witness Dharavi's best cricketers demonstrate their skill in this three-day tournament where the winning team will get a prize money of Rs 1 lakh. The DPL will conclude on Sunday.

As many as 14 teams – all worthy of winning the title – are taking part in this intensely exciting and competitive cricket league that is organised by the Dharavi Redevelopment Project Private Limited (DRPPL). The matches are being played at the District Sports Complex ground in Dharavi.

The tournament's slogan is 'Apna Time Aa Gaya' and indeed for the first time,



players from Dharavi are parading their skills on the turf pitch.

The DPL Season 1, played on the lines of international T20, was held in May this year. Such was the response and the success of the league that there was a demand from local players and cricket enthusiasts to quickly have an encore and not just in Sector 1. "After the success of the first season, we have around 200 players taking part this time around. The tournament is now being organised in Dharavi Sector 2 as per the players' demand," said a spokesperson from DRPPL.

The spokesperson said

that this time around, the league is being held in six phases in different sectors of Dharavi. Teams from Kumbharwada, Soshal Nagar, Rajiv Gandhi Nagar, Jeevanjyot Rahvasi Sangh, Mahatma Gandhi Nagar and Muslim Nagar are taking part and jerseys have also been distributed to the players.

The team names too are attracting a lot of attention. With teams such as Kumbharwada Boys, Dharavi Master Blasters, Dharavi Thalaiva, Cricket Fighters, etc, the league is creating a place of its own in Dharavi.

Matches are being telecast on social media and

local cable networks and cricket fans are able to enjoy mimicry and other entertainment programmes between innings breaks. Dharavikars are also enjoying the benefits of turf pitch, action replays, and running commentary this time around.

The 14 teams played league matches on Friday. The next round of winning teams was held on Saturday. The winner will get a trophy and a cheque of Rs 1 lakh while the runners-up will get a trophy and cheque of Rs 50,000.

"We couldn't participate in the first season as it was limited to Sector 1. It was our dream to play in this league and show our skills. That dream is now coming true. I thank the organisers DRPPL as this league has provided a great platform for local players like us and it is the biggest moment of our life." Ankitdeep Saroj, 20, captain of Thunder 11 Warriors.

Prashanth, Yuki move to semifinals

New Delhi: India's Vijay Sundar Prashanth and Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan found a way to prevail over second seeds Julian Cash and Llyod Glasspool in a tough battle in the Hangzhou Open quarterfinals while Yuki Bhambri progressed to the Chengdu Open semifinals with his partner on Saturday.

In Hangzhou, Prashanth and left-handed Nedunchezhiyan lost the opening set but came back strong to emerge 6-7 (4) 7-6 (6) 10-8 winners in an energy-sapping contest that also tested their nerves.

The match lasted two hours. They next face third seeds Ariel Behar and Robert Galloway.

In Chengdu, Bhambri and his third seeded French partner Albano Olivetti also came back after losing the first set to win 5-7 6-3 12-10 against Gonzalo Escobar and Diego Hidalgo.

-PTI

Harmanpreet for FIH Player of Year

New Delhi: Skipper Harmanpreet Singh, who powered India to a second successive bronze medal in hockey at the Olympics in Paris, was on Saturday nominated for the FIH Player of the Year Award.

The 28-year-old ace drag-flicker, who was the top scorer at the Paris Olympics with 10 goals from eight matches, had previously won the award twice in a row from 2020-22.

"It is a great honour to be nominated for the FIH Player of the Year Award again," the Indian defender stated in a Hockey India release.

"While I am elated to be named among some of the best players in the world, I would like to acknowledge that it would not have been possible without the support of my team.

"All the goals I have scored in the FIH Hockey Pro League, and the Paris 2024 Olympic Games are because the team created those goal-scoring chances



for me," he added.

Harmanpreet has been nominated along with the Dutch duo of Thierry Brinkman and Joep de Mol, Hannes Müller of Germany and Zach Wallace of England.

All international matches held in 2024, including Test matches, the FIH Hockey Pro League, FIH Hockey Nations Cups, FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers and the Olympic Games were taken into consideration.

-PTI

U Mumba to hold 40-day training camp

Ahmedabad: U Mumba will hold a 40-day training camp for its 21 players here under head coach Gholamreza Mazandarani ahead of the 11th season of Pro Kabaddi League commencing on October 18.

The camp will also be attended by assistant coach Anil Chaprana. U Mumba will face Dabang Delhi in their season opener on the first day of the tournament in Hyderabad.

"The training camp will focus on strengthening the tactical understanding of their revamped defence, leveraging the strong bond between Sunil Kumar and Parvesh Bhainswal and the experience of U Mumba mainstay Rinku to counter opposition raiders," the franchise said.

"At the camp, coaches and support staff will also aim to build the understanding and bonding among players, ensuring cohesive teamwork to enhance the team's ability."

Vantika helps Indian women draw with US

Budapest: International Master Vantika Agrawal delivered the goods when it was badly needed, defeating Grandmaster Irina Krush to force a 2-2 draw against the United States while the Indian men stayed in sole lead after splitting points with Uzbekistan in the ninth round of the 45th Chess Olympiad currently underway here.

The Indian think-tank rested an out-of-form Grandmaster D Harika but it did not change the fortunes on the top board as R Vaishali went down to Gulrukhbegim Tokhirjonova.

On the second board, Divya Deshmukh settled for the peace result in an uneventful game with black against

Carissa Yip.

On the fourth board, Tania Sachdev had almost everything going in her favour but could not find the knock-out blow when the opportunity came to share the point with Alice Lee.

It was left to Vantika to equalise the score and the young girl played with a lot of heart and commitment to beat her higher-rated opponent. For the record, Krush blundered in mutual time pressure and Vantika was remorseless in her attack.

The draw took India to 15 points, and they will now probably need two victories in the last two rounds to keep the gold medal chances alive. Kazakhstan emerged as

Men split points with Uzbekistan

the new sole leader in this section on 16 points, defeating Poland 2.5-1.5. Alua Nurman played the star performer for Kazakh women as she won on the fourth board against Alicja Sliwicka after the top three boards had ended in draws.

CHESS OLYMPIAD

With Kazakhstan in front, India is in sole second position and they are trailed by as many as nine teams on 14 points each. In the penultimate round, Kazakhstan will face another stiff test against second

seed Georgia, while the Indian women will take on a depleted China.

In the Open section, the Indian men conceded the first point with four draws against defending champions Uzbekistan. After eight straight victories, the ninth win, which would have almost sealed the gold medal, was pretty much on the cards when Arjun Erigaisi's opponent Shamsiddin Vokhidov blundered. It was a mutual oversight by both players as Arjun failed to spot a tactic which he would have normally found in a few seconds.

Once Arjun slipped,

Shamsiddin did not give another chance and drew rather comfortably.

At the top of the tables, D Gukesh played out an easy draw with white pieces against Nodirbek Abdusattorov. The Sicilian defense did not yield the usual complications and the game petered out into a draw in just 32 moves vide repetition.

On the second board, R Praggananandhaa also got the same result against Javokhir Sindarov while on the fourth, Vidit Gujrathi was the first to finish his game against Jakhongir Vakhidov.



Indian men took their tally to 17 points from nine rounds and will have the all-important clash against

top seed United States, who scored a hard-earned 2.5-1.5 victory over hosts Hungary.

The US team shares the second spot on 15 points alongside Uzbekistan and China.