

# THE PERFECT VOICE



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## Govt Accepts Shinde Committee Report

# Path cleared for Marathas to get Kunbi certificates

**Around 30 lakh Marathas to get benefits of reservation**

By Abhijit Mulye

Mumbai: The Maharashtra cabinet on Monday accepted the second and third reports of the Justice (Retd) Sandeep Shinde committee on finalising the protocol for issuing Kunbi-Maratha and Maratha-Kunbi certificates based on historical records, Higher and technical education minister Chandrakant Patil said here on Monday.

Patil, in a separate meeting, revealed the information to Maratha quota activists and later told the media about the decision. "Earlier only 10 kinds of documents were being accepted to be able to get Kunbi caste certificates. Now the number has been raised to 42. Also the process has been made easy," Patil told the media.

Kunbis have been classified under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) segment in Maharashtra. The



acceptance of the reports means that a greater number of Marathas can avail of reservation benefits. Maratha activist Manoj Jarange has been seeking OBC status for the community. Whereas, several OBC leaders from other groups have been opposing the demand. However, Jarange

had been demanding blanket approval for all Marathas and had stated in the morning that he stands by his demand and won't accept any dilution.

The committee under Justice Sandeep Shinde (rtd) had submitted its second report in December 2023 and had recently sub-

mitted their third report after scrutinizing several of old documents and discussing the procedures in details with numerous committees of district collectors and other stakeholders. The two reports have made a total of 14 recommendations which have all been accepted by the

**30 lakh**  
No of estimated members of Maratha community who will get benefits of reservation

**1,77,000**  
No of Kunbi registration found by Shinde committee

state government, Patil said.

He also said that in 1882 Maratha community was being called Kunbi. But, in 1892 the community was again identified as Maratha and it continued thereafter.

The minister also said that the committee also made several things easy for the common Marathas to be able to get the Kunbi caste certificates. A website has been developed specially for the purpose wherein any common person too can verify whether they are eligible under any clauses to get Kunbi caste certificates.

## BMC probe blames Metro contractor

Mumbai: A Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC)-appointed high-level probe committee has held Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Ltd and its contractor responsible for the death of a woman, who fell into a storm water drain here during last week's downpour.

In a release on Monday, the BMC cited the committee's probe report and noted the responsibility for rectifying the faults at the accident site in Andheri in the western suburbs and surrounding areas lies squarely with MMRCL and its contractor L&T as the location had been under their control since 2015.

On September 25 night, a 45-year-old woman, Vimal Anil Gaikwad, fell into a storm water drain in the SEEPZ area of Andheri (East) amid heavy rains and lost her life.

Following the tragedy, the Mumbai civic body appointed a three-member high-level committee to investigate the circumstances of her death and submit a report within three days.

Before the tragedy, the BMC had informed L&T of the deficiencies at the incident site, and letters were sent to MMRCL on August 24 and 29, 2024, highlighting the need for corrective measures under the defect liability period (DLP), the release said.

## Kolkata Rape and Murder

# SC pulls up Bengal govt for 'tardiness'

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday expressed dissatisfaction over "tardy" progress by West Bengal government in installation of CCTVs and construction of toilets and separate resting rooms in government medical colleges, and directed the state to complete ongoing work by October 15.

The apex court was hearing a suo motu case related to the rape and murder of a postgraduate medic at the R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata.

A bench of Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud and Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra noted that no part of the work carried out by the state government was above 50 per cent.

"Why is the progress so tardy. You have to take action," the bench told senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for the West Bengal government.

Dwivedi said some progress has been made and "we need more time to finish the task".

"There has been logistical delays due to delay in release of funds, floods, etc.,"

Dwivedi said. A total of 6,178 CCTV cameras were to be installed, 26 per cent has been completed and remaining work will be done by October 10, he added.

As the hearing commenced, advocate Vrinda Grover, appearing for the victim's parents, told the bench that the parents of the deceased are disconcerted by repeated clips in social media disclosing her name and photos.

The top court said it had already passed an order on this issue and it was for the law enforcement agencies to implement the order. It clarified its earlier order and said it applies to all social media intermediaries.

"The earlier order of Wikipedia shall be applicable to all social media intermediaries and ensure that no picture, etc of the victim of RG Kar rape and murder is displayed," the bench said.

The bench noted that substantial leads have come up in the CBI investigation and it has given statements on both aspects -- alleged rape and murder and the financial irregularities. -PTI

# Mithun Chakraborty chosen for Phalke Award

New Delhi/Kolkata: Veteran actor Mithun Chakraborty, star of films such as "Mrigayaa", "Disco Dancer", and "Prem Pratigya", was on Monday named recipient of the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, the government's highest recognition in the field of cinema.

The announcement was made by Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ashwini Vaishnav.

This comes months after Chakraborty, a member of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), was awarded Padma Bhushan, the third-highest civilian honour.

Congratulating Chakraborty, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the actor is a "cultural icon" admired across generations for his versatile performances.

Chakraborty, 74, said when he got the news, his



life kept replaying in his mind, including the initial struggle for food and shelter.

"I am short of words. Neither I can laugh nor cry. It is an occasion which reminded me of the past. I went to Mumbai from Kolkata. In Mumbai, I did not have food and would sometimes sleep in the garden... This kept replaying. After all this, you get this huge honour. I have

no words. I can only say I dedicate this award to my family and to fans all over the world.

The award will be presented at the 70th National Film Awards ceremony on October 8.

The three-member jury -- comprising former Dadasaheb awardee Asha Parekh, actor-politician Khushbu Sundar and filmmaker Vipul Amrutlal Shah -- selected Chakraborty for the prestigious honour.

Chakraborty, whose real name is Gourang Chakraborty, is an alumnus of Pune's Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) who has predominantly worked in Hindi and Bengali cinema.

He made his acting debut with Mrinal Sen's 1976 film "Mrigayaa", for which he won his first National Film Award for Best Actor. -PTI

## Remains of victims recovered after 56 years

New Delhi: More than 56 years after an ill-fated AN-12 aircraft of the Indian Air Force crashed over the Rohtang Pass in Himachal Pradesh, the mortal remains of four more victims were recovered, marking a significant success in one of India's longest-running search operations.

Army officers said the mortal remains were found by a joint team comprising personnel from the Dogra Scouts of the Indian Army and Tiranga Mountain Rescue. The twin-engine turboprop transport aircraft, carrying 102 people, had gone missing on February 7, 1968 while flying from Chandigarh to Leh. "The ongoing search and rescue mission to recover the remains of personnel from the AN-12 aircraft, which crashed on Rohtang Pass in 1968, has achieved significant breakthroughs," said an officer.



Members of Hindu organisations participate in a protest against the alleged illegal construction of a mosque in Kullu district on Monday. Pic: PTI

# SC asks IIT Dhanbad to grant admission to Dalit youth

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday came to the rescue of a Dalit youth, who lost his hard-earned IIT Dhanbad seat after missing the deadline to deposit Rs 17,500 admission fees by few minutes, by asking the institute to admit him in the same batch of the B.Tech course.

Observing that "a talented student like the petitioner should not be left in the lurch", a bench headed by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud kept its promise to help the youth and took recourse of Article 142 of the Constitution to order the IIT Dhanbad to grant Atul Kumar (18) the admission in the Electrical Engineering course.

On September 25, the bench, also comprising justices JB Pardiwala and

Manoj Misra had assured him of all possible help after he claimed that on June 24 he missed the 5 pm deadline of deposit admission fees to block a seat by 15 minutes.

"We cannot allow such a young talented boy to go away," the CJ said at the outset and was irked over the objections raised by the institute.

The counsel for IIT Seat Allocation Authority said the login details of the candidate that he was logged in at 3 pm which proved that it was not a last-minute log-in as claimed.

The counsel said that repeated reminders through SMS and WhatsApp were also sent to the candidate.

"Why are you opposing so much? You should see if something could be done,"

the bench said, adding that here is a son of a daily wageer who belongs to a marginalised section of the society and a BPL (below poverty line) family.

There is no conceivable reason why the petitioner would not have paid the amount if he had the wherewithal to pay the Rs 17,500 fee, the bench said, adding, "The only thing that stopped him was the inability to pay and as the Supreme Court of India we need to see that."

The bench said the court has to take into account the social and economic background of the youth.

"We are affirmatively of the view that a talented student like the petitioner should not be left in the lurch. The power of the Court under Article 142 of



the Constitution to do complete justice is to address such situations," it said and directed, "The petitioner should be admitted to the same batch in which he would have been admitted and should be given all consequential benefits such as hostel admission".

The youth was standing in the packed courtroom

with folded hands and the CJ wished him good luck for the future.

"All the best! Acha kariye! (do well)" the CJ said and asked him about his siblings who are also pursuing engineering in other colleges.

At the outset, the bench referred to his ordeal and said he first went to the le-

gal services authority of the Jharkhand High Court which asked him to go to Chennai to approach the legal services authority there as the Madras IIT held the entrance exam this year.

Then the Madras High Court asked him to move the top court, the bench said.

Article 142 of the Constitution gives extraordinary power to the top court to pass orders and decrees to ensure "complete justice" in any case before it and these orders are enforceable throughout the country.

Earlier, Kumar had said that his parents failed to deposit the fees and had approached various authorities, including the National Commission for Scheduled

Castes, Jharkhand Legal Services Authority and the Madras high court, to save the hard-earned seat.

His counsel had told the bench that Kumar cleared the JEE Advanced in his second and last attempt and if the top court does not come to his rescue he would not be able to take another shot at the test.

After very brief arguments, the bench had issued notices to the Joint Seat Allocation Authority, IIT Admissions, IIT Madras, which conducted the test this year.

The lawyer had referred to the financial condition of the family of the youth.

It was a very tough task for the students to arrange Rs 17,500 by 5 pm of June 24, that too in just four days after allotment of the seat

**Here is a Dalit boy who is being made to run from pillar to post. He does all the hard work to get into the IIT. If he had Rs 17,500 why will he not pay.**  
D.Y. Chandrachud, Chief Justice of India

in IIT Dhanbad, the lawyer said.

Kumar, son of a daily wageer, hails from a BPL family living at Titora village in Muzaffarnagar district of Uttar Pradesh.

-PTI



# Shinde gov't speeds up infra projects ahead of elections

By Abhijit Mulye

**Mumbai:** The state government gave an impetus to various infrastructure development projects in Mumbai and other parts of the state at the state cabinet meeting held under the leadership of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde here on Monday.

The state cabinet also cleared the proposal to transfer 255.9 acres of salt pan lands in Kanjur, Bhandup and Mulund suburbs from the central government to the state government to be able to expedite housing schemes for the underprivileged. An SPV will be formed for the purpose which shall also bear the cost of rehabilitation of workers from the salt panes, a senior CMO officer has said. The state cabinet also decided to expedite SRA schemes for the slums at the Ramabai Ambedkar Nagar and Kamraj Nagar in the eastern suburbs.

The MMRDA has been entrusted with the project and was exempted today from paying the 25 percent of the land cost upfront in the beginning. Instead, they will now pay the cost after the completion of the project. The cabinet also appointed the JSW infrastructure as the developer for a multipurpose port at Murbe in Palghar district. The Rs 4,259 crore worth project is expected to be an all-weather port with facilities to handle captive cargo

and bulk-dry cargo and also generate 1,500 job opportunities. The JWS infrastructure has been entrusted with all the technical studies, rehabilitation of fish workers, CWPRS and CMFRI studies.

### 33 – No of decisions taken by the cabinet

**The cabinet also decided to lease out 37 acres of land from Akurdi in western suburb of Malad to the Sports Authority of India for building National Centre of Excellence and 90-hectare land at Khidkali area of Thane city to the Institute of technology (ICT) for quality enhancement for the institute. The cabinet also decided to set up a state water resources information centre to be able to plan water resources in a better manner.**

Among other decisions aimed at the forthcoming assembly elections, the state cabinet also brought in a new scheme aimed at strengthening the Gausshalas across the state and decided to grant Rs 50 in grant against each of the cows at Gausshalas.

The state cabinet also resolved to grant the status of "Rashtramata-Gaomata" to

and cows. Among other decisions the cabinet also decided to hike the remuneration of Gram Rojgar sevaks to Rs 8000 and give Rs 2000 as performance linked pay. The cabinet also cleared two irrigation schemes in Jalgaon and Latur district and allotted 10 hectare of land to the BAPS Swaminarayan trust in Dhule district for social development of the communities.

The cabinet also did away with the eligibility criteria of Rs 1.5 lakh of income for the agriculture self-reliance scheme; decided to set up Sant Narhari Maharaj Economic Development Corporation for the Sonar community under OBC department; form a new research institute named VANARTI for OBCs on the lines of BARTI that would work primarily for the Gor Banjara community and nomadic tribes; provide financial assistance to the Ahilyadevi Holkar textile mill at Jamkhed; increase stipend for the Home Guards; take over the medical college and the hospital at Nashik; set up a committee for recruitment of teaching staff at the private granted Ayurvedic and Unani medical colleges in the state and set up a financial development corporation for the Arya Vaishya community in the state.

There were many more smaller decisions regarding several pending projects and waving off taxes etc.



**The state cabinet decided to speed up the underground road from Orange Gate to Marine Drive and granted the permission for secondary loan assistance to the MMRDA. The project costs Rs 9,158 crore and Rs 1,354 crore has been granted as the secondary loan assistance towards the state government taxes of Rs 614.44 crore, central government taxes of Rs 307.22 crore and Rs 433 crore towards land acquisition.**

**The cabinet also cleared the revised plan of the 29 km long Thane-Borivali twin tunnel underground road that has a total of 20 stations on surface and two underground stations.**

**In another major step, the cabinet cleared the 11.85 km long Thane-Borivali twin tunnel underground road which is expected to cost Rs 18,800.40 crore for each of the tunnels. MMRDA has been entrusted with construction of this project.**

**The Cabinet also increased the limit of gratuity paid to retiring employees to Rs 20 lakh from current 14 lakh**

## Houses for project-hit people on salt pan land

**Maharashtra cabinet on Monday approved the utilisation of 255 acres of salt pan land in Mumbai to develop houses for slum rehabilitation project-hit people, assigning the implementation responsibility to Adani group's Dharavi Slum Redevelopment Project. The state government had written to the Centre to transfer the salt pan land in Mumbai on lease. The salt pan land utilisation decision also covers the beneficiaries of affordable housing and similar schemes. The Adani group-controlled Dharavi Redevelopment Project will be responsible for implementing this decision**

(to develop houses for slum rehabilitation project-affected people), the government stated after Chief Minister Eknath Shinde chaired the cabinet meeting. The 255.9 acres of salt pan land to be acquired include 120.5 acres in mauje Kanjur, 76.9 acres in Kanjur and Bhandup and 58.5 acres in mauje Mulund. According to the government, the additional chief secretary of the state housing department is designated to sign an agreement with the Union government for the land lease transfer. The cost of rehabilitating people living on salt pan land will be borne by a special

purpose vehicle (SPV). In this regard, the Dharavi Redevelopment Project should immediately complete a slum survey and determine the number of eligible and ineligible slum-holders, it was decided. Accordingly, the amount of land required is also to be determined. Care should be taken to ensure that no financial liability is incurred on the state government under the credit link subsidy. The responsibility of this liability will remain with the special purpose vehicle. This policy will not apply to any other project. Earlier this month, the Centre approved the transfer of 255.9 acres of salt pan land in Mumbai to the Dharavi

Redevelopment Project Pvt Ltd (DRPPL), a joint venture between Adani Realty Group and the Maharashtra government, for building rental housing for slum dwellers. The Cabinet also approved a state ports development department's proposal to appoint JSW Infrastructure as the developer for the Murbe multipurpose port, with an estimated cost of Rs 4,259 crore, in neighbouring Palghar district for which a detailed project report (DPR) will be prepared. The port is expected to become an all-weather operational facility, focusing on handling bulk dry cargo and captive cargo.

## Attempt to Prevent Deposition Before Wakf JPC

# Complaint filed against two MPs

By Correspondent

**Mumbai:** A complaint has been filed against two Members of Parliament and a staff of the Haj Committee in Mumbai for attempts to prevent a young man from depositing before the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on WAQF amendment bill.

According to an FIR lodged at the Airport Police Station in Mumbai, one Irfan Ali Pirjade (42) was pushed away by an unidentified staff upon alleged instructions of AIMIM MP Asaduddin Owisi and TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee.

Irfan, who is secretary of Gulshan foundation, an NGO engaged in social, educational and economic upliftment and skill development activities among the Muslim community had gone to the Imperial Hall of the Taj Santa Cruz hotel at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) on Thursday (September 26) to participate in the hear-



ing before the JPC on WAQF amendment bill. When he was called in to deposit before the committee, he expressed his opinion in favour of the bill.

Upon hearing that Owisi and Banerjee waved hands as if to instruct someone to shoo Irfan away from the place and an unidentified staff tried to push him away from the place. This led to commotion amidst which Irfan heard voice of Owisi saying, "Kafirun ko help karta hain... dekh lenge" (He is helping non-believers. We should look at him.)

According to the FIR, the unidentified person tried to hit out at Irfan and threatened him. However, later, he was given a chance to deposit by the chairperson of the committee and his opinions were noted.

## Man jumps off Atal Setu

**Mumbai:** A man allegedly jumped off the trans-harbour Atal Setu after parking his car on the bridge on Monday morning, police said.

The police launched a search and rescue operation for the man following the incident that occurred at Sewri around 10 am, an official said.

The man drove to the bridge in an SUV, parked it near a signboard and jumped into the sea, he said.

The vehicle is registered in the name of one Sushant Chakravarti, the official said.

A passerby alerted the authorities, and teams from the Sewri police and coastal police reached the site and initiated a search operation, he said, adding that officials are also attempting to trace the man's family members.

The 'Atal Bihari Vajpayee Sewri-Nhava Sheva Atal Setu', also known as the Mumbai Trans-Harbour Link (MTHL), that connects south Mumbai with the satellite city of Navi Mumbai, was inaugurated in January this year. The six-lane bridge is 21.8 km long with a 16.5 km sea-link.



Police personnel detain activists during a protest by members of Youth Congress against SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch, outside SEBI office in Mumbai on Monday.

Pic: PTI

## BEST bus gutted in Ghatkopar

**Mumbai:** A BEST bus on wet lease from a private operator was gutted in a fire in Ghatkopar in Mumbai on Monday, officials said.

The conductor of the bus suffered minor injuries to the hand while all the passengers were safe, Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport Undertaking public relations officer Sudas Samant said.

"The bus, which belongs to Dharavi depot, was plying on route 303 from Bandra station east to Mulund east. It caught fire at Gandhi Nagar junction at 1:30pm during a short trip to Ghatkopar. The fire took place when the passengers had alighted at the end of the trip and the bus was making a U-turn to depart for Bandra east," Samant said. "The driver noticed black smoke emanating from the engine and took the bus to the side of the road but by then the fire had spread. The conductor received minor burn wounds on the hand. By the time the fire brigade doused the blaze, the vehicle was gutted. The cause of the fire is not yet known."

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

**"Maharashtra is the land of saints and the brave. We have always embraced dharma, adhyatma and worked to connect humanity. Faith and Hindu unity is important. We will not leave Hindutva till our last breath."**

**Ekanth Shinde, Chief Minister**



## Kangana agrees to cuts suggested in 'Emergency'

**Mumbai:** The Central Board of Film Certification told the Bombay High Court on Monday that actor-producer Kangana Ranaut has agreed to the cuts suggested by the CBFC in her movie "Emergency".

A division bench of Justices BP Colabawalla and Firdosh Pooniwalla was hearing a petition filed by the film's co-producer Zee Entertainment Enterprises, seeking a direction to the CBFC to issue a certificate for the film, helmed by

Ranaut. The movie, which was initially slated for a September 6 release, has been embroiled in a battle with the censor board for non-issuance of certificate for its release. Ranaut, who has directed and co-produced the film besides playing the lead role of former prime minister late Indira Gandhi, had accused the CBFC of stalling certification to delay the release.

The biographical drama is caught up in controversy



after some Sikh organisations including the Shromani Akali Dal objected, accusing it of misrepresenting the community and getting historical facts

wrong. During the hearing on Monday, advocate Sharan Jagtiani, representing Zee Entertainment, told the high court that Ranaut has

informed them about the revised changes that they (CBFC) wanted to make.

The matter has been agreed and discussed between her (Kangana) and the CBFC, he said.

However, Zee Entertainment needs time to confirm about the cuts that are to be made, he added. Ranaut's Manikarnika Films is the co-producer of the movie. CBFC counsel Abhinav Chandrachud told the bench that the cuts would not touch even one minute and it won't affect

the movie's length. Most of the changes have been agreed upon by the Manikarnika Films, he added. The court adjourned the matter till October 3 and asked both the parties to seek proper instructions. Zee Entertainment in its plea claimed the CBFC had already made the certificate for the movie but was not issuing it. It had earlier alleged the certificate was being withheld due to political reasons and due to the upcoming elections in Haryana.

# Aim to create 4 lakh jobs in cruise sector: Sonowal

'Cruise Bharat Mission' aims to excel India's vision to become a global hub for cruise tourism



By Correspondent

**Mumbai:** The Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) Sarbananda Sonowal, launched the 'Cruise Bharat Mission' from the Mumbai port. Aimed at the boosting the tremendous potential of cruise tourism in the country, the programme by (MoPSW) aims to propel country's cruise tourism industry by doubling cruise passenger traffic within five years i.e. by 2029, said Sonowal. The Union Minister of State Shantanu Thakur also joined Sonowal at this occasion.

Sonowal launched the mission from onboard cruise ship 'Empress' here today. The initiative aims to excel India's vision to become a global hub for cruise tourism and promote the country as the leading global cruise destination.

The Cruise India Mission will be implemented in three phases, beginning from October 1, 2024 to March 31, 2029. The Phase One (01.10.2024 – 30.09.2025) will focus on conducting studies, master planning, and forming cruise alliances with neighbouring countries. It will also modernise existing cruise ter-

minals, marinas, and destinations to enhance the potential of cruise circuits.

The Phase 2 (01.10.2025 – 31.03.2027) will concentrate on developing new cruise terminals, marinas, and destinations to activate high-potential cruise locations and circuits.

Phase 3 (01.04.2027 – 31.03.2029) will focus on integrating all cruise circuits across the Indian Subcontinent, marking the maturity of the cruise ecosystem while continuing the development of cruise terminals, marinas, and destinations.

Key performance targets

**Cruise circuits to be designed to celebrate and promote globally India's cultural, historical and natural heritage**

**Mission to be implemented in three phases and cover three key segments – Ocean, Harbour cruise, River and, Island cruise**

**Cruise Bharat Mission will also result in over 1.5 million river cruise passengers over more than 5,000 kms of operational waterways in India**

across the phases include increasing sea cruise passengers from 0.5 million in Phase 1 to 1 million by Phase 3, with corresponding increases in sea cruise calls from 125 to 500. River cruise passengers will grow from 0.5 million in Phase 1 to 1.5 million by Phase 3. The number of international cruise terminals will expand from 2 in Phase 1 to 10 by Phase 3, while river cruise terminals will increase from 50 to 100. Similarly, marinas will grow from 1 to 5, and employment generated will rise from 0.1 million to 0.4 million by the final phase.

## China economy weakening

**Beijing:** China's economy weakened further in recent weeks, surveys released Monday showed, signalling the need for support as the government ratchets up stimulus.

The Caixin purchasing managers survey showed new manufacturing orders fell at the fastest pace in two years in September.

An official measure released by the National Bureau of Statistics showed a less drastic decline but it marked a fifth straight month of contraction. The purchasing managers index was at 49.8 in September, up from a six month low of 49.1 in August. The index is on a scale where figures above 50 indicate expansion.

The survey showed that factory output rose while new orders fell.

Chinese stock markets surged Monday, reflecting enthusiasm over a barrage of policy measures announced last week, including lower interest rates and smaller down payment requirements for mortgages and a cut in required bank reserves.

The main index smaller market in Shenzhen soared 8.2 per cent while the Shanghai Composite index jumped 5.7 per cent.

"The stimulus package announced last week should help shore activity over the coming months," Gabriel Ng of Capital Economics said in a report. But he noted that imbalances between excess supply of many products versus weak demand persist. And trade measures against China, such as higher tariffs on electric vehicles and other goods, also will weigh on the economy.

-AP

## INVESTMENT MATTERS

### Why is buying high P/E ratio stocks a risky strategy?



By Mangesh Kulkarni

The Indian stock markets have generated significant wealth for investors over the past 3-4 years. The Nifty50 index has seen a return of 48.5 per cent over this period. Similarly, the Nifty smallcap 100 and Nifty midcap 150 indices have shown impressive returns of 76.6 per cent and 96.8 per cent respectively during the same timeframe. However, some well-known stocks have underperformed the index. The primary reason for this underperformance is often attributed to their high valuation.

To begin with, let's look at the Price to Earnings (P/E) ratio, which is a key valuation metric. This ra-

tio provides insight into how much investors are paying for each dollar of a company's earnings, with higher ratios indicating a more expensive stock. Generally, stocks with a P/E ratio below 15 are considered value stocks, those between 15 and 25 are seen as fairly valued, and those above 25 are deemed expensive. Now, let's examine the stocks in the Nifty 500 index that have significantly fallen short of the index's performance over the last three years.

Out of around 500 stocks in Nifty500 index, about 25 have either seen no return or have returned very little. Prominent examples include Bata, Asian Paints, Metropolis, Star Health, Mphasis, SBI Cards, and

Jubilant Foodworks, all of which had a P/E ratio above 25 in September 2021. This data suggests that investing in high P/E stocks can be a risky move, as these stocks often lag behind the overall market.

While the P/E ratio shouldn't be the sole consideration for investment, it's undeniably a crucial one. Investors should also look at other financial ratios such as Return on Equity (ROE), Return on Capital Employed (RoCE), and Debt to Equity (D/E) ratio in conjunction with the P/E ratio. Stocks that show consistent profit growth, a healthy ROE, low debt, and a reasonable P/E ratio are more likely to generate above-average returns in the stock market.

Stock	3 years return	P/E ratio (Sept 2021)
Asian Paints	0%	94.8
Metropoli	-19.3%	64.1
Mphasis	-4.4%	48.8
SBI Cards	-22.9%	106.2
Jubilant Foodworks	-15.4%	143.7

Source - Screener

## ICAI sets up group on stress management

**New Delhi,** Chartered accountants' apex body ICAI on Monday announced the setting up of a dedicated group to suggest more stress management measures and will also introduce a counselling help desk against the backdrop of the death of a chartered accountant due to alleged work pressure.

The institute will also develop peer support networks where members can share experiences, seek advice, and collaborate to address challenges related to stress management.

Chartered accountant Anna Sebastian Perayil recently died allegedly due to extreme work pressure. She worked with S R Batliboi, a member firm of EY Global. The dedicated group will work on introducing measures to improve work-life balance and for managing stress within the profession, ICAI said in a release.

Also, a special counselling help desk will be introduced within ICAI's national call centre (9997599975) that will be dedicated to assisting members with stress management and work-life balance concerns.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) has more than 4 lakh members and over 8 lakh

students. Among other measures, ICAI in collaboration with health institutions, will introduce stress management programmes. In addition, it will work with industry partners to promote flexible work models.

ICAI President Ranjeet Kumar Agarwal said the institute strongly urges organisations to implement balanced work policies that promote employee health and reduce stress.

"The increasing demands placed on professionals across industries have raised widespread concerns regarding the detrimental effects of high pressure environments on personal health and professional efficiency," the release said.

According to the institute, it has proactively implemented various measures to support the well-being of its members and students, including health and wellness programmes, and webinars on stress management.

The institute already has a grievance redressal cell to address concerns from members, students, and employees, with efforts underway to enhance the system for more structured and empathetic resolutions, the release said. -PTI



Artisans give finishing touches to idols of Goddess Durga and Lord Hanuman at a workshop ahead of Navratri and Dussehra festivals in Amritsar on Monday.

PICTURE: PTI

## Audit report due date extended by week

The income tax department has extended the date for filing audit report for 2023-24 by 7 days till October 7.

In a circular, the I-T department said considering the difficulties faced by

taxpayers in electronic filing of various audit reports under the Income Tax Act, the deadline is being extended from September 30 to October 7.

Moore Singhi Executive Director Rajat Mohan said

technological issues in electronic filing of tax audit reports have pushed the government to extend timelines by 7 more days.

"Load of filings is quite high on the portal in the last few days, throwing

the entire ecosystem in a frenzy. Government should either upgrade the system to handle such rush or stagger the timelines for tax filings," Mohan said.

-PTI

## 'Right to disconnect': Most employees face contact after work hours

**Mumbai:** Even as 79 per cent of the employers support the "right to disconnect" policy, 88 per cent employees say they face contact after work hours, a survey report said.

According to global job site Indeed, over 79 per cent of respondents including employers opined that implementing the "right to disconnect" policy at work would be a positive step forward.

As India's workforce grapples with an "always on" culture, discussions around this policy are be-

coming increasingly important to address rising stress levels and employee burnout, it added.

However, 88 per cent of the employees said they are regularly contacted by their employers outside of work hours, with 85 per cent reporting that such communications continue even during sick leave or public holidays.

A majority of the employees (79 per cent) feel that not responding to work-related communication after hours may lead to repercussions such as



missed promotions, damaged professional reputation, or project setbacks, said the report, which is based on a survey among over 1,000 employees and employers across sectors in the country.

According to the report, baby boomers (people

born between 1946 and 1964) value constant availability, while Gen Z (born between late 1990s and early 2000s) prioritises work-life balance and mental health.

At the same time, employers worry about productivity but are open to

extra compensation for out-of-hours accessibility, it said.

Among boomers, 88 per cent are more likely to feel valued when contacted outside of work hours. In contrast, over 50 per cent of Gen Z respondents share this view, the report said.

"Personal boundaries are now essential, today's workforce seeks balance, and organisations that provide this will gain strong loyalty and productivity. There's a need to foster a culture where employees feel safe and val-

ued," Indeed India Talent Strategy Advisor Rohan Sylvester said.

The survey further reveals that 81 per cent of employers are concerned about losing top talent if they fail to respect work-life boundaries.

Over 81 per cent of employers expressed willingness to offer extra compensation for employees who remain accessible after hours, underlining their readiness to acknowledge the value of employees' time, the report added.

-PTI

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

"For every USD 100 worth of Indian goods exported to the US, only 12 per cent entered under the GSP program. Select products from leather, footwear, auto components, and chemicals sectors benefitted, but even in these cases, the advantages were minor."

Ajay Srivastava, Founder, GTRI



# Currency notes with Anupam Kher picture used to con billion trader



**Ahmedabad:** In a plot twist that could be the envy of even Bollywood, a billion trader was duped of 2.1 kgs of gold after unidentified con men handed over counterfeit currency featuring the face of noted actor Anupam Kher.

The transaction at the end left a local billion trader, Mehul Thakkar, high and dry and duped of 2.1 kgs of gold.

Thakkar filed a complaint with the Navrangpura police station, detailing how he was tricked into accepting 26 bundles of counterfeit Rs 500 notes.

The fake currency, which hilariously bore the misspelled label "Resole Bank of India," was presented to his staff in exchange for 2.1 kgs of gold on September 24.

The saga began when Thakkar, a gold dealer with a penchant for shiny

things, received a call from Prashant Patel, the manager of a jewellery shop whom the billion trader knew.

Patel was eager to buy 2.1 kgs of gold, and after some haggling, they settled on a price of Rs 1.60 crore. Little did Thakkar know, he was about to become the star of a real-life comedy.

On September 24, Thakkar instructed his staff to meet Patel at an 'angadia pedhi' (Hawala) office – a traditional money-moving service.

When they arrived, they were greeted not by the glamorous world of gold trade but by three "gentlemen" who handed over bundles of what they claimed were Rs 500 notes.

The unsuspecting staff was told to count the "money" using a machine provided by the trio.

Two of them then went

out with the gold biscuits on the pretext of fetching the remaining Rs 30 lakh from a neighbouring office, while a third one stayed on.

When the staff sent by Thakkar noticed the currency notes were fake after taking them out from plastic wrap for counting, they questioned the third person, who told them he was there just to deliver the counting machine for 'angadia pedhi', the complainant told the police.

It also later came to light that the angadia office was opened by the accused persons two days before the incident, as per the complaint.

An FIR has since been filed against the two unidentified suspects, and police have launched an investigation to track down the culprits behind this unusual con.

-PTI

## CBI arrests 26 cybercriminals in multi-state crackdown

**New Delhi:** In a multi-state crackdown on organised cybercrime, the CBI has arrested 26 alleged cybercriminals involved in fraudulent activities targeting people globally, officials said on Monday.

The action under operation Chakra-III started with raids at 32 different places across Pune, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Visakhapatnam late night last Thursday. The central agency has seized Rs 58.45 lakh cash, locker keys and three luxury vehicles, they said.

Four call centres – V.C. Inconformities Pvt. Ltd at Regent Plaza, Pune; V.C. Infrometrix Pvt. Ltd, Murli Nagar, Visakhapatnam; Viajex Solutions, Hyderabad; and Atriya Global Services Pvt. Ltd, Visakhapatnam – were among the places raided by the agency. The CBI intercepted 170 people engaged in live online criminal activities across the four call centers, the officials said.

"The cybercriminals targeted in this operation were involved in a range of illicit activities, including impersonating... tech support services and ap-



### Vardhman Group chairman duped of Rs 7 cr

**Ludhiana:** An inter-state gang of cyber fraudsters duped Padma Bhushan S P Oswal, Chairman and Managing Director of the renowned Vardhman Group of Rs 7 crore by posing as CBI officers, police said on Monday. The gang executed an elaborate plan including fake Supreme Court hearings, fake arrest warrants and digital arrests. The scam began with a phone when the accused told Oswal that he had been implicated in a criminal case, police said. The accused, posing as a CBI officer, told Oswal that they had seized a parcel bound for Malaysia with 58 fake passports, 16 debit cards, and other suspicious materials which was allegedly linked to Oswal's Aadhar Card, making him a prime suspect in the case, police said. Knowing that Oswal was a well-known industrialist, the gang capitalized on the potential embarrassment that he could face if the case went public. To establish credibility, the accused arranged a video call with Oswal, presenting himself in an office environment that featured a large CBI logo in the background. They also forged Supreme Court arrest warrant and sent it to Oswal on WhatsApp.

proaching victims, especially in the USA in the guise that the victim's systems have been hacked," a CBI spokesperson said in a statement.

He said the victims

The scammers told the victims that they were under the scanner of investigation agencies of their respective countries, he added.

"In some instances, the cybercriminals intimidated the victims into transferring funds to them through international gift cards or crypto currency. Extensive wrongful losses were incurred by the victims targeted by this criminal network."

So far, the CBI has arrested 10 cybercriminals from Pune, five from Hyderabad and 11 from Visakhapatnam. Further investigation and questioning into the role of other workers at these illegal call centers is ongoing, it said.

"These operations have resulted seizure of critical digital evidence and incriminating material. 951 items have been seized including electronic devices, mobile phones, laptops, financial information, communication records and incriminating material used by this cyber crime network for criminal activity and to defraud victims."

-PTI

## SC delays arrest of Siddique in rape case

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Monday granted interim protection from arrest to Malayalam film actor Siddique in a rape case.

A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Satish Chandra Sharma issued notice to the Kerala government and the victim in the case during the hearing of a plea by Siddique challenging a Kerala High Court order which denied him anticipatory bail.

At the outset, the top court asked advocate Vrinda Grover, appearing for the victim, about the reason for the delay in registering the complaint against the actor.

The lawyer told the bench that the Justice Hema Committee report, which exposed the shocking harassment and sexual exploitation faced by women in the Malayalam film industry, has to be understood in the larger context.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Siddique, submitted that a complaint was lodged in 2024 after a lapse of eight years.

On September 24, the high court had rejected the anticipatory bail plea of Siddique in the rape case, saying that in view of the seriousness of the accusations he was facing, his custodial interrogation was inevitable for proper investigation of the crime. Siddique has claimed in his plea that the complainant female actor had subjected him to a "prolonged campaign of harassment."

-PTI

## Air Chief Marshal Singh takes charge

**New Delhi:** Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh, an accomplished fighter pilot with more than 5,000 hours of flying experience, on Monday assumed charge as new chief of the Indian Air Force, succeeding incumbent Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari.

Air Chief Marshal Singh was serving as Vice Chief of the Air Force in his previous assignment.

Air Chief Marshal Chaudhari retired from service after helming the force for three years.

Born on October 27, 1964, Air Chief Marshal Singh was commissioned into the fighter pilot stream of the Indian Air Force in December 1984.

In his long and distinguished service spanning nearly 40 years, he has served in a variety of command, staff, instructional and foreign appointments.

An alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Defence Services Staff College and National Defence College, the air officer is a qualified flying instructor and an experimental test pilot with more than 5,000 hours of flying experience on a variety of fixed and

rotary wing aircraft.

Air Chief Marshal Singh has commanded an operational fighter squadron and a frontline air base.

As a test pilot, he led the MiG-29 upgrade project management team at Moscow.

He was also the project director (flight test) at National Flight Test Centre and was tasked with flight testing of the Light Combat Aircraft, Tejas.

Air Chief Marshal Singh has taken charge of the IAF amid concerns over delays in supply of LCA Tejas-Mark 1A variant to the force by state-run aerospace giant Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL).

The officer has held important staff appointments of Air Defence Commander at South Western Air Command and Senior Air Staff Officer at Eastern Air Command. Prior to assuming the charge of Vice Chief of the Air Staff in February last year, he was the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Central Air Command. The Air Chief Marshal is a recipient of the Param Vishisht Seva Medal and Ati Vishisht Seva Medal.

-PTI



Tram lovers perform a song as part of a campaign to save tram services in the city, at Esplanade tram depot in Kolkata on Sunday. Pic: PTI

## 5-yr-old girl tells mother about 'bad touch'; school watchman's son held

**Ratlam:** Police have detained a teenage boy for allegedly sexually assaulting a five-year-old girl on the premises of a school in Madhya Pradesh's Ratlam city, an official said.

The incident came to light after the girl told her mother about "bad touch" by the boy, the official said on Sunday.

The accused is the son of a watchman at the private school, where the victim is a UKG (upper kindergarten) student.

The incident allegedly occurred in the watchman's room on the third floor of the school building

and was reported by the girl to her mother on the night of September 27, Additional Superintendent of Police Rakesh Khakha said.

The school has CCTV cameras covering only the ground floor and not the upper floors, the official said.

"The accused is a student of class 10 with another branch of the same school. An investigation was conducted after the girl's mother lodged a complaint that her daughter was sexually assaulted in the school where she is a UKG student. The accused

boy has been taken into custody," he said.

The boy has been booked under sections 65-ii (Whoever commits rape on a woman under twenty years of age) and 75 (physical contact and advances involving unwelcome and explicit sexual overtures) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, the police said. Madhya Pradesh Congress chief Jitu Patwari expressed anguish and accused the BJP government of failing to protect daughters.

-PTI

## YouTuber arrested for defaming V.K.Singh

**Ghaziabad:** The owner of a YouTube-based news portal has been arrested here for allegedly putting out defamatory content against former Army chief and former Union minister V K Singh, police said on Monday.

The arrest was made by the officials of Kavinagar police station following the registration of a complaint made by Singh, the former Ghaziabad Lok Sabha MP, on Sunday evening, a sen-

ior officer said.

Those booked in the case are the news portal's editor-in-chief Ran Singh and a city-based iron trader, Anand Prakash, who allegedly made the false claim about Singh, the officer said.

The YouTube channel allegedly posted unverified claims, saying that Singh failed to pay rent for his residence during his occupancy. In his complaint, Singh described the post as

"baseless" and lacking factual evidence.

He asserted, "The post has tarnished my image both nationally and internationally, as well as in Uttar Pradesh and in the society as a whole. This act cannot be overlooked or excused; it has hurt my sentiments. Even the apex court and the high court did not pass any orders, so how can a businessman issue such false statements on social media?"

## Pakistani arrested for staying illegally

**Bengaluru:** A Pakistani national was arrested along with his wife and two others who were allegedly living illegally with fake identities for the past six years, police said on Monday.

According to a preliminary inquiry, his wife is from Bangladesh and they were earlier in Dhaka, where they got married.

## SP leader booked for abducting woman

**Ballia (UP):** A Samajwadi Party (SP) leader and another person have been booked for allegedly abducting a 22-year-old woman in eastern Uttar Pradesh's Ballia district, police said on Monday.


According to the FIR, the woman visited the house of the SP leader, Shambhu Nath Yadav, on September 25 and has been

missing since then. The incident took place in the Ubhav police station area.

Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Mohammad Faheem Qureshi said the woman's father lodged the complaint against Shambhu Nath Yadav, a former president of the district cooperative bank, and Pankaj Yadav alias Arpit.

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**

"They are working towards polarisation. They only know Vitamin P for polarisation. They believe in two Vitamin-Ps - P for polarisation and P for power."



Jairam Ramesh, Leader, Congress

## The common man's Dasara with no govt funding

**Mangaluru (Karnataka):** Although Mysuru's Dasara grabs all the attention in Karnataka, the coastal city of Mangaluru has its own version of Dasara festivities, thanks to the Kudroli Gokarnanatha temple. The temple takes the lead in organising the Dasara procession, the installation of Navadurga idols, and giving the required colour and gaiety to the festivities.

According to the organisers, it is estimated that this year, the Mangaluru Dasara will see more than five lakh

people during the procession, and 12 lakh people are expected to visit the temple during the Navratri festivities, equivalent to the crowds drawn by the Mysore Dasara.

However, the Mangaluru Dasara does not have government or royal patronage like its famous cousin in Mysuru, said temple officials.

The entire expenses of Dasara are borne by the devotees and philanthropists of Mangaluru, said Rajya Sabha member B Ja-



nardhana Poojary, who was instrumental in the temple's growth.

Speaking to the PTI, while overseeing the preparations for the Dasara fes-

celebrations are for 13 days (this time 14 days due to Ekadashi)."

According to Poojary, Gokarnanatha temple came about because Sahukar Koragappa, a Billava community leader, took it upon himself to have a temple for their community as they were denied the right of entry to temples by upper caste Hindus. So, in 1912, he brought the 19th-century philosopher and social reformer Narayana Guru from Kerala to Mangaluru to consecrate the Shiva

Lingam, which he brought from Kerala along with him. The Kshetra was named 'Gokarnanatha' by Narayana Guru, said Poojary.

Through these humble beginnings, the Gokarnanatha Temple has now become a world centre for Billavas and a strong Shiva temple not just in Dakshina Kannada but in entire South India, he said. The Kshetra started the tradition of consecrating the Navadurgas for the Dasara festival in the year 1991.

By Gaurav Saini

**New Delhi:** Thousands of tribals residing in the core zones of India's tiger reserves have launched protests against the government's directive to accelerate their relocation

from these areas. The tribal communities, asserting their rights under the Forest Rights Act, are now planning to gather in Delhi to demand "justice" for their livelihoods and traditions that are closely linked to the

# Tribals in tiger reserves protest against relocation

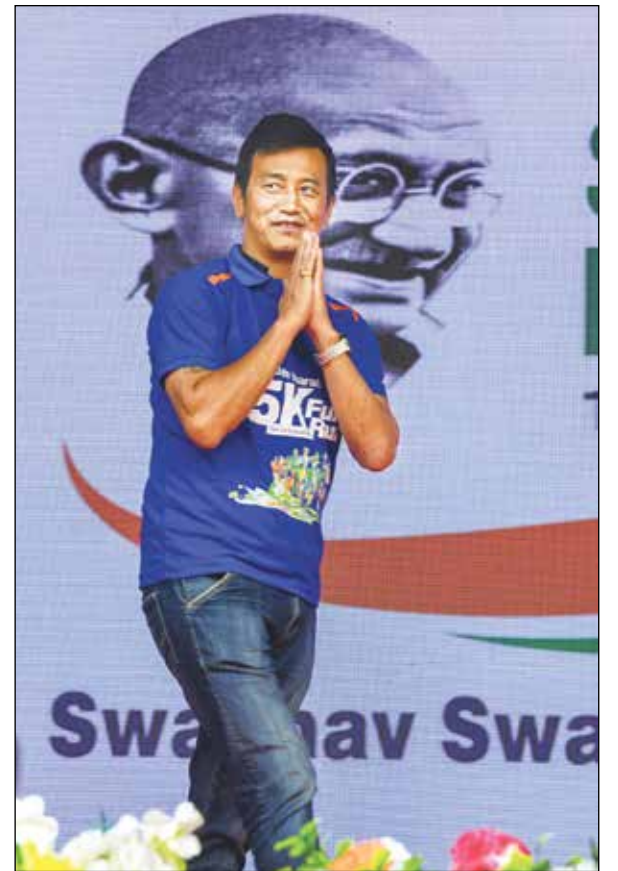


forests. The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) issued an order on June 19, directing forest officials to expedite the rehabilitation of 64,801 families from 591 villages located within the core areas of 54 tiger reserves. "The progress of village relocation is very slow and it poses grave concern in light of tiger conservation. It will be highly appreciated if the issue of village relocation may be taken up on a priority basis and timeline may be framed for smooth relocation of the villages from the core/critical tiger habitat areas," the NTCA letter read. NTCA Member Secretary Gobindsagar Bhard-

waj told PTI that the directions were issued in accordance with the law. "The letter is part of a routine exercise, and the relocation of villages from tiger reserves is entirely voluntary. There is no confusion. It appears that some people have misinterpreted the letter," he said. A tiger reserve consists of two zones -- the core (critical tiger habitat) and the buffer (peripheral area). According to the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, core areas must remain "inviolate for the purpose of tiger conservation". The buffer areas, in contrast, permit sustainable human activities alongside wild-

life conservation. Tribal and indigenous communities residing in the core areas say they have lived in harmony with nature and forests for generations and their livelihoods, culture, and traditions are deeply connected to the forest ecosystem. Under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, these communities are granted individual and community rights to access, manage and use forest resources, as well as live in these forests. However, they argue that the "contentious" and "delayed" implementation of FRA has left them vulnerable to forced eviction. Over the last two weeks, protests have erupted in several tiger reserves, in-

cluding Rajaji (Uttarakhand), Nagarhole (Karnataka), Udanti-Sitanadi (Chhattisgarh), Achanakmar (Chhattisgarh), and Kaziranga (Assam), against the NTCA's relocation directive. Community leaders plan a rally in Delhi in October-November, calling for the swift implementation of the FRA and the revocation of the NTCA order. Seemanchal, a resident of Lormi village in the core area of Achanakmar Tiger Reserve (ATR) in Chhattisgarh, said around 3,000 people from five Baiga community villages could be affected by the NTCA's order.



Former footballer Bhaichung Bhutia during the inauguration of '5K Fun Run' organised as a part of the 'Swachhata Hi Seva 2024' campaign at Tezpur in Sonitpur district, Assam on Monday.

Pic: PTI

# Climate change hit over 50 pc cotton farmers in Maharashtra, Gujarat

**New Delhi:** Over 50 per cent of the cotton farmers surveyed in Gujarat and Maharashtra have suffered either "major or complete" crop loss due to floods and droughts in the past five years, according to a new report. The survey, conducted by a UK-based think tank International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and the All-India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI), revealed that about two-thirds of the 360 farmers surveyed were experiencing longer dry spells, higher average temperatures and more days of

extreme heat. The survey, conducted in September 2023, involved cotton farmers equally split between Surendranagar district in Gujarat and Sambhaji Nagar district in Maharashtra. Most farmers were landowners, with the majority of landholdings smaller than 10 acres. India is the largest producer of cotton globally. In 2023, it produced around 5.84 million metric tonnes -- almost a quarter of the world's cotton -- across 13 million hectares, engaging nearly six million farmers. However, climate

change, specifically more frequent periods of extreme heat, poses a significant threat to the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, especially women, who depend on this crop and is a critical risk to the global textile supply chain. Research shows that the western and central zones of India are more vulnerable to drought-like conditions, while the northern and northeastern zones are more susceptible to extreme flood events. Smallholder cotton farmers are particularly vulnerable in this ongoing climate crisis, putting millions of liveli-



hoods at stake. Laura Kelly, director of IIED's Shaping Sustainable Markets team, said, "Climate change is turning into a nightmare for farmers

everywhere, and India's cotton growers are no exception. "There are some government programmes and insurance schemes to help

them, but our research shows they are not well known and may not provide comprehensive support in any case. While farmers are already doing what they can to protect their livelihoods, the government and investors also need to pitch in." The IIED director said big fashion chains need to recognise they have a role to play in helping their suppliers deal with climate shocks. Supporting the families producing a key commodity for their industry is not only a moral imperative but also a smart commer-

cial choice. The survey found that farmers are combating the climate threat by diversifying and rotating their crops or taking loans to invest in resources like irrigation to mitigate future problems. Dipping into savings is another common coping strategy, but not all respondents have this option available. Others reported that in response to climate shocks, they have been forced to sell land or livestock, while a small number have avoided using healthcare or even cut back on the amount of food they consume.

About two-thirds of respondents said they had crop insurance (81 per cent in Maharashtra and 42 per cent in Gujarat), one-third had life insurance, 36 per cent had health insurance and only 8 per cent had livestock insurance. Much of the farmers' access to insurance comes through government schemes. However, uptake was found to be very uneven. One-third of the people surveyed said they had no access to any such government programmes, which may be due in part to a lack of awareness.

-PTI



A submerged area after a rise in the level of Vishwamitri river inundated low-lying areas following heavy rainfall in Vadodra on Monday.

Pic: PTI

## Oil pollution in North Sea underestimated

**London:** Growing up in Aberdeen, Scotland, the shadow of the Piper Alpha disaster loomed large over our community. The tragic explosion of the oil rig platform in 1988 claimed the lives of 167 people. Back then, I was blissfully unaware of the ecological ramifications of that disaster. But the spill of 670 tonnes of oil wreaked havoc on marine life and had a lasting impact on the marine environment that I love to explore. In recent decades, there has been a gradual decline in the number of oil spills and the volume of oil discharged from tankers, rigs, wells and offshore platforms. While incidents continue to occur globally -- often in less scrutinised regions than the North Sea UK has not experienced another disaster of Piper Alpha's magnitude since.

# Biden to visit Helene-impacted areas

**Washington:** President Joe Biden says he will visit Hurricane Helene-impacted areas this week as long as it does not disrupt rescue and recovery operations. Biden was briefed again on Sunday evening about the impact of the devastating storm on an enormous swath of the Southeast. In a brief exchange with reporters, he described the impact of the storm as "stunning" and said that the administration is giving states "everything we have" to help with their response to the storm. Biden planned to speak about the administration's response efforts in remarks from the White House on Monday.

The White House also said Vice President Kamala Harris will visit the storm-ravaged areas "as soon as it is possible without disrupting emergency response operations." At a Las Vegas rally Sunday night, Harris spoke about the impact of Helene, saying, "I know everyone here sends their thoughts and prayer for the folks who have been so devastated by that hurricane." She added: "We will stand with these communities for as long as it takes and make sure they are able to rebuild." Harris was spending Sunday night in Las Vegas and had planned campaign stops in the city on Monday. But her office announced that she'd instead head back to Washington

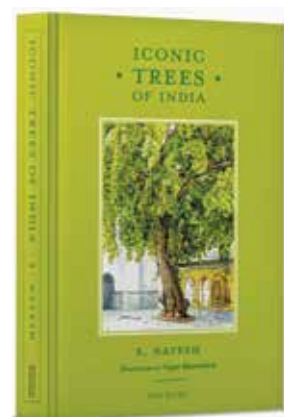
earlier than expected and will attend a briefing on the damage caused by Helene at the headquarters of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. A North Carolina County that includes the mountain city of Asheville reported earlier Sunday that 30 people were killed due to the storm, pushing the overall death toll to at least 91 people across several states. Biden on Sunday evening made calls to several state and local government officials in areas impacted by the hurricane, including Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp; North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper; Valdosta, Georgia Mayor Scott Matheson; and Taylor County, Florida Emergency Management Director John Louk.

# Professor compiles 75 'iconic trees' from across India

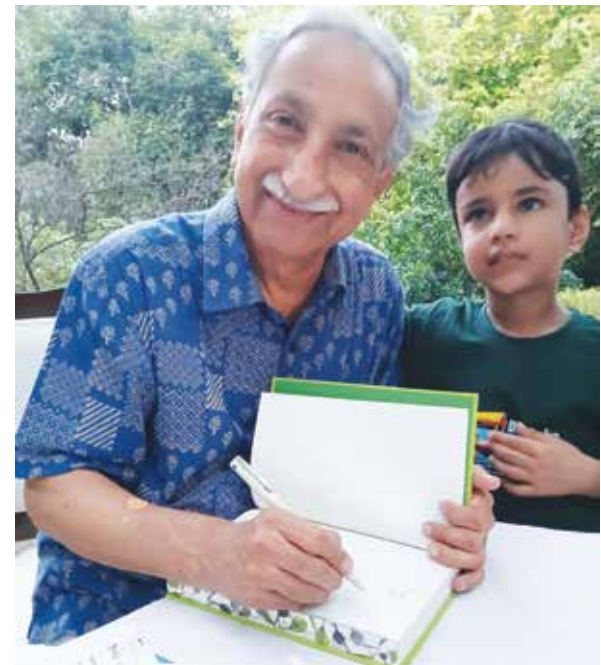
**New Delhi:** At a time when trees are almost always the first casualty of any developmental projects, a retired botanist has sought to draw attention to 75 'iconic trees' from across India. Documenting these iconic trees over a decade has been a labour of love for S Natesh, who taught botany at the Delhi University for close to a decade and then had a long career at the department of biotechnology, government of India. The "Iconic Trees of India" documents 75 natural wonders -- old and ancient 75 trees of 47 species -- from 23 states and union territories with beautiful supporting illustrations by Sagar Bhowmick. In the book, released by

Roli Books earlier this month, Natesh celebrates the joys of locating "some well-known, lesser-known, and unknown iconic trees of our country and trace their links to science, people, culture, and history". For instance, on the eve of the Namak Satyagraha, when Mahatma Gandhi picked up a fistful of salt at Dandi to defy the oppressive British Salt Act, he delivered a powerful message sitting under a banyan tree. Now, history remembers Gandhi and his salt march but few know of the 'Gandhi Vad' -- the Gujarati name given to the historic banyan tree. "The historians never write about trees and botanists never write history. So, I decided to combine it," Natesh told PTI. Although he taught the subject, worked as a scient-

ist, and was always fascinated by plants, it was the small stint at the National Institute of Immunology, which has a beautiful green campus, that made him sit up and take notice of the varied iconic trees in India. Natesh then travelled to scores of places and ensured a good mix of associations for religious, historical, quirky, and some downright majestic reasons. The listing starts with 'India's oldest and the largest' 650-year-old Chinar tree inside a mosque at Chattergam village in Badgam district; and the giant Sequoia tree, which though not native to South Asia is found at an altitude of 2,560 metres inside the farm at Yarikha village of the Jammu-headquartered Indian Institute of Integra-



tive Medicine (IIIM). Natesh describes Sequia as "the loneliest tree of India". Then there are some with religious antiquity such as the old sacred Mulberry tree of Joshimath, one of the institutions established by Adi Shankaracharya, in Uttara-



rakhand. This tree, the author describes, has stood the test of time, even a land

subsidence incidence in 2023, "like the great sage's Advaita philosophy".

Another example is the four-century old 'Ber Baba Budha' on the parikrama path of the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Some trees are associated with historical persons, such as the majestic Chinar of Bijbehara in Anantnag district, which, the author says was planted by Mughal prince Dara Shikoh himself in 1636. "If you want a particular reference for a specific thing, then you need to refer to a wide variety of books, including puraanas," he said, citing the example of the Baobabs, known as kalpavriksha or parijaat tree at a lot of places. "For Parijat (the word baobab doesn't occur in the Puraanas), there are many stories in the Puraanas such as Bhagwat Puraan, Vishnu Puraan

and Padma Puraan," he explained. It also has several trees from northeast India, including 'The Sacred Fig Tree of the Nagas' at Makhel village in Manipur. Explaining why the book does not have any trees from states such as Arunachal Pradesh, where there still are patches of primary forest, or the central Indian forests from Chhattisgarh/Jharkhand/Odisha, the dandakaranya of the yore, Natesh rued how most of his travel plans were eventually nullified due to the Covid-19 induced lockdown. But Natesh has not just stopped at documenting the green beauties, and has even come up with recommendations for the government and the society at large.

-PTI

# Israeli airstrike hits central Beirut

**Jerusalem:** The first apparent Israeli airstrike on central Beirut in nearly a year of conflict levelled an apartment building early Monday. It came after Israel hit targets across Lebanon and killed dozens of people, as Hezbollah sustained heavy blows to its command structure, including the killing of its leader, Hassan Nasrallah.

The airstrike hit a multi-storey residential building, according to an Associated Press journalist at the scene. Videos showed ambulances and a crowd gathered near the building in a mainly Sunni district with a busy thoroughfare lined with shops.

The airstrike killed at least one person and wounded 16, an official with Lebanese Civil Defence said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to the media. He said the person killed was a member of the al-Jamaa al-Islamiya, or the Islamic Group, a Sunni political and militant group that is allied with Hezbollah.

A Palestinian leftist faction in Lebanon said three of its members were killed in the airstrike. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine said in a statement early Monday that its military and security commanders in Lebanon, and a third member were killed in the attack.

Neither militant group has played a significant



A photographer documents damage to a building that was hit by an Israeli airstrike in Beirut's southern suburb, Lebanon on Monday. Pic:AP/PTI

## Hezbollah's acting leader vows to fight on

**Hezbollah's acting leader vowed on Monday to continue battling Israel and said the militant group was prepared for a long fight even after much of its top command was wiped out, including its leader Hassan Nasrallah. Israeli strikes have killed Nasrallah and six of his top commanders and officials in the last 10 days, and have hit what the military says are thousands of militant targets across large parts of Lebanon. Over 1,000 people have been killed in Lebanon in the past two weeks, nearly a quarter of them women and children, according to the Health Ministry.**

role in the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Shiite militant group Hezbollah.

Also early Monday, another strike killed a commander with the militant group Hamas, which has a presence in Lebanon's Palestinian refugee camps. Hamas said Fatah Sharif

and his family were killed in an airstrike on the Al-Buss refugee camp in the southern port city of Tyre.

In the past week, Israel has frequently targeted Beirut's southern suburbs, where Hezbollah has a strong presence — including a major strike on Friday that killed Nasrallah

— but had not hit locations near the city centre.

Israeli officials had no immediate comment.

Earlier, Hezbollah confirmed that Nabil Kaouk, the deputy head of its Central Council, was killed Saturday, making him the seventh senior Hezbollah leader killed in Israeli



## Jaishankar to meet Blinken in US

By Lalit K Jha

**Washington:** External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will meet his US counterpart Antony Blinken on Tuesday, during which they are expected to discuss a wide range of bilateral and global issues, including the Ukraine war and the Middle East crisis.

Jaishankar, who arrived in the US capital on Sunday, will also meet other Cabinet-rank and senior Biden administration officials.

Apart from meeting US Secretary of State Blinken, the external affairs minister is also scheduled to interact with the think-tank community.

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace will host a conversation between Jaishankar and its president Mariano-Florentino (Tino) Cuellar on the future of US-India relations. The think-tank said India's strategic importance was rising both globally and in the making of US foreign policy, and cited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2023 State Visit and his recent bilateral meeting with President Joe Biden to showcase this relationship.

Biden hosted Modi at his Delaware residence for a bilateral meeting on September 21. They were later joined by leaders from Australia and Japan for the QUAD Leaders' Summit in Wilmington, Delaware.

The think-tank said amid fast-paced global developments, India's bilateral ties with the US had grown more extensive. -PTI

## Vietnamese fishing boat attacked in South China Sea



**Hanoi:** A Vietnamese fishing boat was attacked in the South China Sea near the Paracel Islands, claimed by both China and Vietnam, and 10 crew members were injured, Vietnamese state media said Monday.

The Vietnamese boat radioed Sunday to report the attack, saying three fishermen suffered broken limbs and seven others received other injuries, the Tien Phong newspaper quoted a local official at Binh Chau commune in Quang Ngai province as saying.

It was not clear what country's boat attacked the Vietnamese vessel, and commune officials told The Associated Press they had nothing to add to the newspaper report.

Vietnam's border guard is investigating the case but has not yet made any information available.

The Paracel Islands are about 400 kilometres off Vietnam's eastern coast and about the same distance southeast from the Chinese province of Hainan.

Both countries claim them, as does the self-governing island of Taiwan.

The newspaper report said the attack on the boat occurred in Vietnamese waters but did not specify exactly where it was.

China claims almost all of the strategically vital South China Sea as its own territory, which has caused disputes with the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.

Beijing has been increasingly assertive in pursuing its claims, which has brought China into direct confrontations with the Philippines and Vietnam. -AP

## Ex-PM Imran Khan booked in new cases

By Sajjad Hussain

**Islamabad:** Punjab police has registered three new cases against Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan following a protest by his party on his call at Rawalpindi's Liaquat Bagh area on Saturday.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder was booked on Sunday under the Anti-Terrorism Act along with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and party chairman Barrister Gohar Khan, The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

The complaints filed by the New Town and Civil Lines police stations of Rawalpindi also included charges of attempted murder, violations of Section 144 and other terrorism-related offences.

According to the charges, the 71-year-old leader incited his supporters to protest against national institutions while issuing directives from Adiala Jail where he has been incarcerated for more than a year. The Punjab government has also raised allega-

tions against Khan and his supporters, accusing them of criticising national institutions, engaging in vandalism, and inciting violence, including stone-pelting.

Khan's supporters on Saturday allegedly clashed with police during the protest. Hundreds of PTI supporters tried to reach the historic Liaquat Bagh park in the city for the protest called by Khan, but police erected barricades and blocked all major roads.

In videos shared by the PTI, protesters were seen attacking the police with stones and bricks and the law-enforcing personnel were seen retreating in haste while being chased by the protesters.

Earlier, Khan had given a call for "peaceful protest", ahead of which, the provincial government banned public gatherings and closed all major roads leading to the city. Following the clashes, the party called off the protest to avoid any losses. The General Headquarters of the army is located in Rawalpindi and the venue of the protest was hardly a few kilometers away from the GHQ. -PTI



Israeli soldiers work on tanks and armoured personnel carriers (APC) in northern Israel on Monday. Pic:AP/PTI

## 17 Indian fishermen arrested by Sri Lanka Navy

**Colombo:** The Sri Lankan Navy has arrested 17 Indian fishermen and seized their trawlers for allegedly poaching in its territorial waters, taking the number of Indian nationals apprehended this year by the island nation in such incidents to 413, an official statement said.

The fishermen were arrested, and their two trawlers were seized north of Mannar on Sunday, the Sri Lanka Navy said in a press release.

The navy conducted the "special operation" leading to the apprehension of the Indian fishermen, it said. The 17 apprehended fishermen were escorted to the Talaimannar Pier and will be handed over to the Mannar Fisheries Inspector for further action, it said.

The Sri Lankan Navy has "held 55 Indian fishing boats and 413 Indian fishermen in island waters thus far in 2024 and handed them over to authorities

for legal action."

The fishermen issue is a contentious one in the ties between India and Sri Lanka, with Lankan Navy personnel even firing at Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait and seizing their boats in several alleged incidents of illegally entering Sri Lankan territorial waters. The Palk Strait, a narrow strip of water separating Tamil Nadu from Sri Lanka, is a rich fishing ground for fishermen from both countries. -PTI

## Hindi's importance to grow, say business leaders

**Singapore:** The fusion of Hindi -- spoken by 57.2 crore people in India and another 50 crore globally -- with cutting-edge technology opens a realm of possibilities for businesses, allowing them to tap into vast, previously inaccessible markets, a top Singapore business leader has said.

Neil Parekh, chairman of the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said, "As we transcend the world of digitalisation, where boundaries

between cultures and markets are increasingly blurred, language has emerged as a crucial bridge connecting people, ideas and opportunities."

Speaking at the Global Hindi Excellence Summit - 2024, held over the weekend, he underscored the growing importance of Hindi for working in the fast-paced development of the Indian economy.

He called the summit a platform with immense significance in promoting the

richness of the language and culture on a global stage.

The theme for the summit -- "Hindi Excellence in this Era of Innovation" -- reflects how language and technology open various business opportunities in today's interconnected world, Parekh said.

"Hindi is not just a language for communication but also a bridge to a deeper cultural understanding. It allows us to tap into the Indian market, which offers

excellent potential for corporations and SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) looking to expand internationally," said investment-focused Parekh, also a nominated Member of Parliament in Singapore.

He highlighted that Hindi was the third most spoken language in the world, with more than 50 crore speakers globally. In India, more than 57.2 crore people only speak Hindi.

"The sheer scale of these

numbers highlights the importance of language as a tool for businesses to connect with the local communities in India and across the world through the diaspora," Parekh said.

Elaborating on advanced technologies, he noted that artificial intelligence (AI) had also become a powerful tool in bridging language barriers, leveraging advanced technologies such as natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning.

## Imran's bail plea rejected

**Islamabad:** A Pakistani court on Monday rejected the bail pleas of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi in the new Toshakhana case, where they face allegations of misusing power to acquire state gifts.

Special Judge Central Shahrukh Arjumand announced the verdict on the bail pleas filed by the couple during a hearing inside the Adiala jail.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

"We have received a number of complaints that Indian Sikhs visiting Pakistan for their holy places are exploited in terms of giving them way less (amount) than the current exchange rate."

Ramesh Singh Arora, Punjab's first Sikh Minister



**Washington:** Republicans are pointing to newly released immigration enforcement data to bolster their argument that the Biden administration is letting migrants who have committed serious crimes go free in the US.

But the numbers have been misconstrued without key context. Immigration and Customs Enforcement released data to Republican Rep. Tony Gonzales in response to a request he made for information about people under

ICE supervision either convicted of crimes or facing criminal charges. Gonzales' Texas district includes an 800-mile stretch bordering Mexico.

Gonzales posted the numbers online and they immediately became a flashpoint in the presidential campaign between former President Donald Trump, who has vowed to carry out mass deportations, and Vice President Kamala Harris. Immigration — and the Biden administration's record on



border security — has become a key issue in the election.

**What are the numbers?** As of July 21, ICE said

662,556 people under its supervision were either convicted of crimes or face criminal charges. Nearly 15,000 were in its custody, but the vast majority — 647,572 — were not.

Included in the figures of people not detained by ICE were people found guilty of very serious crimes: 13,099 for homicide, 15,811 for sexual assault, 13,423 for weapons offenses and 2,663 for stolen vehicles. The single biggest category was for

traffic-related offenses at 77,074, followed by assault at 62,231 and dangerous drugs at 56,533.

The Department of Homeland Security, which oversees ICE, later clarified that the numbers span decades and those not in its custody may be held by a state or local agency. For example, someone serving time in a state prison for murder could be counted as a criminal not in ICE's custody. They are not being held by federal immigration authorities but

they are detained — a distinction ICE didn't make in its report to Gonzales.

Millions of people are on ICE's "non-detained docket," or people under the agency's supervision who aren't in its custody.

Many are awaiting outcomes of their cases in immigration court, including some wearing monitoring devices. Others have been released after completing their prison sentences because their countries won't take them back.

EDITORIAL

## Dangerous Trend

In a troubling display of misplaced priorities, several political leaders and parties in poll-bound Jammu & Kashmir, including Mehbooba Mufti's Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the National Conference (NC), have recently shown 'solidarity' following the death of Hassan Nasrallah, the militant Hezbollah leader killed in an Israeli airstrike in Beirut. This episode raises a fundamental question: why do sections of India's political and intellectual elite, who proclaim allegiance to liberal values, often end up pandering to militant causes and championing individuals with a violent, anti-Indian agenda?

Nasrallah, a symbol of Middle Eastern extremism and global terrorism, was responsible for years of violence grounded in hate for Israel and the West. One would expect Indian politicians, especially those claiming to represent the aspirations of Jammu & Kashmir's beleaguered population, to maintain a prudent distance from such figures.

This is not an isolated instance. For years, prominent members of India's so-called 'liberal' intelligentsia have extended their support to individuals like Yasin Malik, a separatist leader with blood on his hands. Malik's long record of violence, including involvement in the killings of Indian Air Force personnel, did little to tarnish his image among certain political circles. Even as he was being tried for terrorism, sections of the media and academia feted him as a 'freedom fighter,' turning a blind eye to the victims of his crimes.

The double standard is stark when compared to democracies like Israel, where all major parties agree that terrorism is never justified regardless of fierce ideological divisions. This consensus has enabled Israel to decisively deal with its security challenges, even when doing so requires difficult decisions.

Political opportunism still plagues Jammu & Kashmir, where leaders often pander to populist sentiment instead of upholding peace and pluralism. The recent display of solidarity with Nasrallah exemplifies this duplicitous strategy—a cynical bid to appease hardline factions that sympathize with militancy.

It is not just the political class in Kashmir that is at fault. Intellectuals in metropolitan India, many of whom are quick to condemn military excesses or human rights violations by the state, are often conspicuously silent when it comes to acts of terror committed by separatists. They couch their arguments in the language of 'resistance' and 'liberation,' overlooking the fact that militant leaders like Yasin Malik or Burhan Wani seek not justice but the disintegration of India. India's leaders must take a page from Israel's playbook. Terrorism is not an issue that can be tackled with half-measures or soft rhetoric. It requires a resolute stance, not only from the state but also from society at large. Political parties that support or sympathize with terrorists, either overtly or through implicit endorsement, must be called out and held accountable.

TECH WORLD

# The Future Animation Creative Hub of the World



By Prateek Sethi

India, long celebrated for its rich cultural tapestry and ancient heritage, is now increasingly making waves in a less-discussed arena - animation. Once merely an outsourcing destination for global animation and VFX projects, the nation is now evolving into a vibrant creative powerhouse. India is transitioning from being a low-cost service provider for international studios to a burgeoning hub for high-quality original animated content. The rise of independent animators, a proliferation of domestic film festivals, and the increasing sophistication of home-grown studios are key to this transformation.

The Indian animation industry began to gain momentum in the 1990s, primarily as an outsourcing solution for Western studios. With globalization and the demand for cost-effective production, Hollywood giants such as Disney, DreamWorks, and Warner Bros. turned to Indian studios for their technical expertise in 2D and 3D animation, rotoscoping, and VFX, handling the labour-intensive aspects of production for

**The country's animation industry has dramatically transformed from a service provider for international studios to a creative powerhouse poised to become a global hub.**

both blockbusters and critically acclaimed works.

While outsourcing was crucial for growth and offered valuable experience to Indian animators, the industry was often viewed as a back-office operation focused on external client demands rather than original content. But today, increased access to affordable technology, enhanced skill sets, and burgeoning confidence among Indian animators are creating fertile ground for original animated narratives. Indian studios and independent creators are crafting stories reflecting the country's unique cultural narratives, moving beyond the outsourcing model to produce feature films, TV series, and short films with global appeal.

A new wave of small, agile, passionate independent studios is emerging in India, pushing creative boundaries and exploring themes that resonate with both domestic and international audiences, emphasizing a distinctly Indian perspective over catering solely to foreign clients.

Films such as 'Kandittund!' ('Seen it!') by Studio Eeksauros, 'Return of the Jungle' by Vaibhav Studios, independent YouTube series like 'Folktales of India' by Trip Creative, and fresh student films like 'Maatitel' by Govinda Sao are making waves globally. These successes illustrate that Indian studios are capable of developing high-quality, globally relevant content originating from India.

While India has long been a hub for animation outsourcing, it is also becoming a significant player in the VFX sector. Studios like Prime Focus, Red Chillies VFX, and Technicolor India have contributed to the visual effects of some of the biggest blockbusters in recent years with Indian VFX houses competing on par with the best worldwide.

Moreover, Indian films are increasingly becoming VFX-driven spectacles. The 'Baahubali' franchise set new benchmarks for VFX in Indian cinema, showcasing India's ability to rival Hollywood in scale and ambition.

A thrilling development in India's ani-



mation landscape is the rise of original animated films and series that explore contemporary themes and social issues, moving beyond traditional mythological narratives. While epics like the 'Ramayana' and 'Mahabharata' remain popular, animators are increasingly focusing on stories that reflect the diverse fabric of modern Indian society.

The democratization of the industry through digital platforms is empowering indie creators to reach viewers by bypassing traditional gatekeepers. The success of series like 'Lamput' marks just the beginning. Studios like Eeksauros and Vaibhav Studios are crafting emotionally resonant, visually stunning stories that appeal to both domestic and international audiences.

The sector is strengthened by a growing number of festivals and showcases for animated content, such as Anifest, AGIFest, Animela, Chiuff, and Chittrakatha, which provide platforms for independent filmmakers. Additionally, the Animators Guild of India plays a vital role in supporting emerging animators and fostering knowledge-sharing.

Indian animation is gaining recognition at international film festivals, with projects like 'Bombay Rose' and 'Tumbbad' winning accolades at prestigious events such as Venice and Toronto.

Acknowledging the potential of the animation and VFX industries, the Indian government, along with states like Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Telangana, is implementing policies and financial incentives to support the AVGC sectors.

Projections suggest a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 29% for the AVGC sector, fuelled by rising demand for original content and technological advancements.

Additionally, educational institutions across India are increasingly offering specialized courses in animation, VFX, and game design. Prominent institutions such as the National Institute of Design (NID), IIT - IDC, MITID, Whistling Woods, and Chitkara Design University are producing highly skilled graduates equipped to contribute to the industry. These programs are arming the next generation of Indian animators with the tools and knowledge necessary to compete globally.

Despite promising developments, India's animation industry faces obstacles in inconsistent funding, limited distribution channels for indie films, and high production costs, hindering smaller studios. However, a growing ecosystem of festivals and funding opportunities is gradually addressing these issues. As the industry matures, these hurdles are likely to be overcome, enabling India to realize its potential as a global animation hub.

As more Indian stories find their way into global consciousness, the industry will continue to grow, providing inspiration, entertainment, and innovation to audiences everywhere. The world is watching. India is ready to lead.

*(The writer is Founder and Creative Director at Trip Creative Services, a multi-award winning communication design house. Views personal.)*

GLOBAL WATCH

## Political Earthquake in Austria

Austria is witnessing a seismic shift in its political landscape, with the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) achieving a historic victory in the recent national elections. Capturing 28.8% of the vote, the FPÖ outpaced the ruling conservative People's Party (ÖVP), which garnered 26.3%. This marks the first time the FPÖ has emerged as the leading party in a national election, reflecting a broader trend of far-right ascendance across Europe, triggered by public discontent over migration, economic struggles, and the aftereffects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The FPÖ, led by the charismatic and controversial Herbert Kickl, campaigned on a platform that echoed populist movements elsewhere in Europe, tapping into concerns about migration, crime, and the perceived erosion of traditional Austrian values. Kickl's rhetoric, often inflammatory, has drawn sharp criticism from political rivals, but it resonates deeply with a portion of the electorate that feels alienated by the mainstream parties.

Austria's chancellor, Karl Nehammer of the centre-right Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), has struggled to contain the FPÖ's momentum, with his government appearing increasingly out of step with voter anxieties over migration and the cost of living.

As of now, other political parties have rebuffed attempts by Kickl to forge a coalition. The FPÖ, founded in the 1950s by former Nazi lawmakers,

**Austria's political landscape shifts dramatically as the far-right Freedom Party seizes a historic electoral victory.**



has faced resistance due to its Euro-sceptic and pro-Russia stance. Kickl's provocative declarations, including aspirations to become the 'Volkskanzler' - a term reminiscent of Adolf Hitler's self-styling in the 1930s, have alienated potential allies.

The FPÖ's rise is not merely a response to current economic challenges or cultural fears but has roots in a long and complex history of Austria's engagement with right-wing ideologies. Following World War II, the country grappled with the legacy of National Socialism and its aftermath, leading to a cautious approach to right-wing populism.

The Anschluss, or annexation, of Austria by Nazi Germany in 1938 left indelible scars, complicating the nation's relationship with far-right ideologies. For decades, mainstream parties in Austria maintained a broad consensus against extremist sentiments, until the FPÖ began to redefine the political discourse.

The far-right's revival in Austria began in the 1980s when the FPÖ, under Jörg Haider, transformed from a marginal party into a significant political player. Haider softened the party's image while promoting nationalist and anti-immigration rhetoric. His controversial admiration for aspects of the Nazi regime and calls for rolling back multiculturalism alarmed many but resonated with disillusioned voters seeking an alternative to the mainstream

political order.

Haider's success marked the beginning of the FPÖ's enduring presence in Austrian politics. By the early 2000s, the FPÖ had entered into a coalition government with the Austrian People's Party, drawing widespread condemnation from across Europe. The European Union imposed diplomatic sanctions on Austria, signalling the unease with which the far-right was viewed on the continent. However, the sanctions were short-lived, and the FPÖ's influence continued to grow, particularly as global financial crises and the refugee wave of 2015 intensified nationalist fervour.

The refugee crisis was a turning point for Austria, with an influx of migrants from conflict zones like Syria prompting the FPÖ to exploit fears of cultural erosion by positioning itself as the protector of Austrian identity. The party adopted populist nationalism, aligning itself with similar movements across Europe, such as Marine Le Pen's National Rally in France and Matteo Salvini's Lega in Italy.

Under Kickl, the FPÖ has further energized its base and despite criticism, many Austrians view the FPÖ as a symbol of stability amid uncertainty as evidenced by the election results as the country grapples with challenges like an aging population, economic stagnation, and global migration pressures.

STATES WATCH

## The Unravelling of CPI(M)'s Secular Shield

In a political upheaval that is roiling Kerala's Left establishment, allegations of collusion between the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) have emerged, potentially undermining the ruling party's long-standing image as a bulwark against Hindu majoritarianism. The controversy centres on Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) M.R. Ajith Kumar, who stands accused of covertly engaging with RSS leaders, including a controversial meeting with RSS General Secretary Datatreya Hosabale last year in May. This episode not only challenges the CPI(M)'s narrative of secularism but also raises unsettling questions about the integrity of Kerala's governance in the wake of the BJP's electoral advances.

The implications of these accusations, coming soon after a lurid scandal that has shaken the Malayalam film industry, highlight Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's waning grip on the Left Democratic Front government. In the wake of the recent Lok Sabha elections, where the BJP secured its first parliamentary seat and increased its vote share to 19.21%, the CPI(M), once the dominant force in Kerala, faces a critical juncture. Reports from the party's Central Committee reveal a troubling erosion of its traditional base,

**Allegations of collusion between the CPI(M) and RSS threaten to unravel decades of Left dominance, challenging Chief Minister Vijayan's grip on power and the party's foundational ideals.**



especially in constituencies where the BJP has solidified its presence, raising questions about the CPI(M)'s ability to counter the 'Hindutva politics' it has long opposed.

To aggravate matters, CM Vijayan is increasingly proving to be an authoritarian figure, with questions being raised about the 'cult of personality' built round him.

It was P.V. Anvar, an independent legislator and former CPI(M) member, who threw open a Pandora's Box by alleging that Ajith Kumar had connections with the RSS that compromised his role as a law enforcement officer.

Anvar's claims, which include accusations of corruption and misconduct, have put the CPI(M) in a defensive position, particularly as the party grapples with the ramifications of losing public trust and its once-steadfast vote bank. As allegations of a political quid pro quo swirl, suggesting that the police have facilitated the BJP's rise at the expense of the CPI(M), the ruling party is forced to contend with dissent not just from the opposition but from

within its own ranks.

The CPI's national leadership has now intensified its scrutiny of the CPI(M) in light of these allegations. General Secretary D. Raja has called for a thorough investigation into the reported meetings between Ajith Kumar and RSS officials, questioning the legitimacy of such interactions without the Chief Minister's prior knowledge or approval.

The disruption of the Thrissur Pooram festival, which allegedly stoked Hindu resentment and aided BJP candidate Suresh Gopi's electoral success, underscores these allegations. Congress leader V.D. Satheesan has claimed that such meetings and police actions compromised the event's integrity and weakened the

CPI(M)'s position in the constituency. He further alleges that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) quietly dropped anti-money laundering investigations against CPI(M) leaders, including those linked to the Karuvannur cooperative bank scam, as part of a political quid pro quo. Satheesan also contends that Chief Minister Vijayan dispatched Ajith Kumar as a covert 'political envoy' for secret talks with the RSS, leading to the CPI(M)'s withdrawal of support for the LDF candidate in favour of Gopi.

The CPI(M) must not only defend its credibility but also reassess its political strategies in a changing landscape where the BJP's influence is on the rise. If the CPI(M) cannot adequately address these allegations and restore its standing, it risks being consigned, to paraphrase Russian Bolshevik Leon Trotsky, "into the dustbin of history!"

**Kerala**





**KALEIDOSCOPE**

1. Devotees take part in a Navaratri festival procession started from Padmanabhapuram Palace to Thiruvananthapuram on Monday.
2. Artists perform Kathak dance at the music-dance festival under the joint aegis of Language and Culture Department, Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh Sangeet Natak Academy.
3. A community puja pandal, inspired by the works of late film director Tapan Sinha, being prepared as a tribute to Sinha ahead of his birth centenary for the upcoming Durga Puja festival in Kolkata on Saturday.
4. Foreign devotees perform 'pind daan' rituals during the Pitru Paksha, at Devghat in Gaya district of Bihar.
5. Leaf artist Subham Saha shows his creation on a leaf, called colocasia esculenta locally known as 'Kochu Pata', ahead of Durga Puja festival in Agartala.



All Pictures PTI, AP

**READERS' VOICE**

# Not a Colonel but the Commander in Chief!!!



By Krishna Hegde

Everyone knows him as a batter par elegance and an icon of the game. Born in Mumbai and bred on its cricketing maidans Dilip Balwant Vengsarkar has the 'Khadoos' attitude of a Mumbai cricketer so much so that he is often considered to be aloof and reserved but with friends close to him he is the life of any party. He is the stuff which legends are made of...not only on the field but also off the field. We all know of his exceptional batting prowess over the years for his club Dadar Union, Mumbai, West Zone and for India and not for any small reason does he hold the title 'Lord of the Lords' with 3 back-to-back centuries and narrowly missing the 4th one. He has close to 7000 runs in Test cricket and top-notch centuries all across the globe and against all teams. He is one of the rare Indian cricketers who has played much over 100 Test matches. He still holds the record of being the No.1 batsman in the world as per

the world rankings for the longest period which he held for 21 months from 1986-88. Indian cricket owes a lot to this former Captain of India and Chairman of the Selection committee. Post retirement Dilip Vengsarkar could have done what most of his contemporaries have done. He could have sat in an air-conditioned television studio, done commentary and advertisements and made lots of money. He is one of the very few cricketers who has given back to the game and that too in many forms. His contribution as a cricketer, an India captain, as Chairman of selectors, an administrator, a talent spotter, a columnist is immense and he has taken upon himself to spot, groom and train the young and mentor talent at not one, two but four of his Dilip Vengsarkar Cricket Academy's. His products latest products include Yashasvi Jaiswal and Ruturaj Gaikwad and as a Chairman of Selectors he did Indian Cricket the greatest service when he backed and played two youngsters who went on to become India's legends and best cricketers across all formats Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Virat Kohli!!! The list is endless... In his four academy's, two in Mumbai, one in Pimpri-Chinchwad and the newest one at Panvel, Dilip (Sir) as he is known to the youngsters ensures that his trainees and players get the best of equipment,

pitches and facilities. Every July he even travels to England with his Academy's team to give upcoming trainees the exposure and experience of foreign conditions, pitches, players and culture. A devoted son and a family man, he is married to Manali Vengsarkar who is herself a successful jewellery designer, a spiritual guide, a counsellor and mentor to those who seek her help from all over the world. They have a son Nakul who is a leading Architect and Interior Designer and daughter Pallavi. They are well settled with their respective spouses. His grandson, Nirvaan of course is the apple of his eye!!! Dilip Vengsarkar is avid traveler across the globe, he is a cricketing brain and most of his predictions about a player or the game come out to be true due to his vast experience. Born in Hindu Colony in Dadar he holds high traditional values. Not many know that he is also an excellent singer and hums his favourite Mehdi Hasan songs only when he is with the closest of his friends. He always stays away from social media and media glare though is contribution to Indian cricket is huge. Unlike others he shuns publicity and continues with his good work towards the game and society. As a columnist also he is precise, blunt and does not mince words. He gives justice to a neglected player and backs the player to the hilt. His views carry weight and more often than not the neglected player gets his due. He always speaks for the upliftment of cricket and other sports. Amongst Indian crickets most popular names he was given offers to contest Lok Sabha elections on more than one occasion from different Party's but had politely declined. However, he did try his hand at the Mumbai Cricket Associations elections and was elected as the Vice President of MCA for a long period.

Though he prefers to stay far away from politics, he was also elected to the apex committee of the BCCI with a thumping majority by voters all across India, where he voices players concerns, speaks about improvement in the game, fights for the rights of ex cricketers and their families. His concern for the game and its players is extremely genuine and he voices the same at all levels and forums makes him sound anti-establishment but Dilip Vengsarkar is not the one to be bothered. Standing tall he doesn't duck but faces every attack bravely just as he did in his heyday days on the cricketing field making him one of India's finest batsmen ever to play the game. He has good sense of humour and it is always a pleasure to be in his company. He has good taste is elegant and is a connoisseur of the finest single malts!!! A hard-core Maharashtrian he loves his fish and his mutton and an evening with friends. He is a goldsmith in Indian Cricket, he knows how to spot diamonds on the field, not surprising because of his experience of 55 years and as mentioned has given back to the game tirelessly as a cricketer, administrator, talent spotter and as a mentor to so many greats. With more than a thousand trophies and awards he was also conferred the Padma Shree and is also the recipient of the Arjuna award instituted by the Government of India. However, legions of his fans across the globe truly feel that he has not got his due for all his work and lesser mortals have been honoured more... The government should definitely consider honouring this Indian legend, World Cup winner with a Padma Bhushan!!! For Indian cricket and its lovers across the globe he is a man worth his weight in Gold... 24 Karat Gold!!!

(The writer is a spokesperson for Shiv Sena. Views personal.)



Pallavi, Dilip, Manali and Nakul

**YOUTH VOICE**

# The Missing Youth in Politics



By Kuldeep Ambekar

In the run-up to Maharashtra's elections, political parties are keen to highlight the role of young people. Yet behind the slogans and speeches, a crucial question remains: Where are the youth? Despite all the talk, it is still mostly the sons and daughters of established political families who rise through the ranks. Meanwhile, ordinary young people are often relegated to organizing protests, attending rallies, and manning campaign events. When it comes time to distribute tickets or positions of power, they are left out, and their frustration grows. This is not a new phenomenon, but today's youth are more aware of their marginalization than ever before. Maharashtra's education system, particularly at the higher levels, remains deeply unequal. While opportunities have expanded in recent years, access to quality education is still out of reach for many young people in rural areas and among economically disadvantaged groups. Young political leaders rarely prioritize these educational concerns, and the parties they represent often sidestep them altogether. Programs to improve education, like skill development initiatives and reforms to the curriculum, are bogged down by bureaucracy. Scholarships for students in private and deemed universities have been cut, yet there is little outcry from the youth leadership. This lack of attention to educational challenges is not just a failure of politicians but reflects the inability of youth to organize and apply political pressure. There is no doubt that youth participation in Maharashtra's political arena has increased. But opportunities within the system still favour those from well-connected families. Social media has made it easier for youth from less privileged backgrounds to make their voices

heard, but even for them, sustaining a political career is challenging. Money, social connections, and influence remain the currency of political power. Young people who lead protests or hunger strikes may spend years fighting for a cause, but without financial or social backing, many cannot maintain their momentum. Frustration sets in early, and promising political careers often fizzle out. The system favours endurance, but endurance alone doesn't pay the bills or win elections. For young women, the path to political power is even steeper. Though opportunities have increased in recent years, women are often sidelined in the decision-making process. Traditional notions of family honour and responsibility still weigh heavily on parents who may hesitate to support their daughters' political ambitions. This is particularly true for women from marginalized groups such as Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC), who face additional cultural and structural barriers. Youth leadership from Dalit, tribal, and OBC communities is growing through grassroots activism, driven by ideology rather than ambition. However, few make the leap from activism to political office, and even fewer secure lasting roles in mainstream politics, leaving their influence largely on the margins. Those who do rise from humble beginnings face tremendous challenges. Political careers, especially at the local and rural levels, remain heavily influenced by wealth and social standing. While some Dalit and OBC leaders have been able to break through, most continue to struggle against a system that rewards connections over competence. The next generation of political leaders in Maharashtra has already begun to emerge, but their path to power is fraught with obstacles. Whether they will succeed in reshaping the political system—or be sidelined like so many before them—remains to be seen. For now, the youth in Maharashtra are still on the outside looking in, waiting for their moment to lead.

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

# VIRAT COMPLETES 27,000 international runs, FOURTH in list



**Kanpur:** Indian batting superstar Virat Kohli on Monday became only the fourth player in history to complete 27,000 runs in international cricket across formats, a feat that he achieved on the fourth day of the ongoing second Test against Bangladesh here.

Kohli made a brisk 47 off 35 balls with four fours and a six as he helped India push on further in an aggressive mode to make up for the lost time in the Test due to incessant rains.

He is only the second Indian cricketer to have breached the 27,000-run mark and stands fourth in the list for most international runs across formats, which is headed by the legendary Sachin Tendulkar with 34,357 runs.

## Jaiswal, Rahul make blistering fifties

Forceful fifties by Yashasvi Jaiswal and KL Rahul helped India declare their first innings at 285 for nine on the fourth day of the second Test against Bangladesh here on Monday. India now lead by 52 runs. Earlier, Bangladesh were bundled out for 233 in their first innings. Jaiswal (72 off 52 balls) and Rahul (68 off 43 balls) powered India's innings with belligerent knocks. Virat Kohli made a fluent 47 off 35 balls.

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## 2nd Test; India vs Bangladesh, Day 4

### India 1st Innings:

Yashasvi Jaiswal	b Hasan Mahmud 72
Rohit Sharma	b Mehidy Hasan 23
Shubman Gill	c Hasan Mahmud b Shakib Al Hasan 39
Rishabh Pant	c Hasan Mahmud b Shakib Al Hasan 9
Virat Kohli	b Shakib Al Hasan 47
KL Rahul st Litton Das	b Mehidy Hasan 68
Ravindra Jadeja	c Najmul Hossain Shanto b Mehidy Hasan 8
Ravichandran Ashwin	b Shakib Al Hasan 1
Akash Deep	c Khaled Ahmed b Mehidy Hasan 12
Jasprit Bumrah	not out 1

**Extras:** (B-3 NB-2) 5

**Total:** (For 9 wickets in 34.4 overs) 285 decl

**Fall of wickets:** 1/55 2/127 3/141 4/159 5/246 6/269 7/272 8/284 9/285

**Bowling:** Hasan Mahmud 6-0-66-1, Khaled Ahmed 4-0-43-0, Mehidy Hasan Miraz 6.4-0-41-4, Taijul Islam 7-0-54-0, Shakib Al Hasan 11-0-78-4.

## India record fastest team hundred

Indian batters went on a rampage to better their own record of fastest team hundred in men's Test cricket while resetting the record of quickest fifty on the fourth day of the rain-affected second match against Bangladesh here.

Yashasvi Jaiswal hammered 10 fours and a six to make the fourth fastest fifty for any Indian batter after Rohit Sharma's early fireworks (23 off 11 balls, 3x6s, 1x4s), as the 50-run mark was breached in a mere three overs at the Green Park on Monday.

India thus broke England's record of scoring the fastest team fifty in 4.2 overs which they had registered against the West Indies at Trent Bridge in July this year.

While Jaiswal continued with his aggressive approach, No 3 Shubman Gill also joined in to punish the Bangladesh bowlers as India crossed the triple-figure mark in 11.overs, improving their own record.

India had recorded the fastest century for any team in terms of overs faced when they went past the 100-run mark against the West Indies at Port of Spain in 2023.

Indian batters went all guns blazing in reply to Bangladesh's 233 all out in the first innings. Only 35 overs' play was possible on the first three days of this final match due to persistent rains and ground conditions.

world. Congratulations @imVkohli, the journey continues to inspire millions!"

In his 24-year-old career for India, Tendulkar scored 15,921 runs in 200

Tests, which is the most for any batter. In 463 ODIs, the Little Master made 18,426 runs while he scored 10 in the only T20I that he ever played.

-PTI

## Railways trump IOC to defend Hockey title

**Chennai:** Defending champion Indian Railways – RSPB trounced Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) 5-3 in the final to emerge as the 95th All-India MCC-Murugappa Gold Cup Hockey Tournament champion here on Sunday.

RSPB presented an aggressive side of itself, with Gursahibjit Singh scoring early in the seventh minute thanks to a well-executed penalty corner.

Meanwhile, Simranjot Singh doubled the lead two minutes later with a masterful finish in open play, as RSPB was in firm control of the fixture.

Yuvraj Walmiki then consolidated RSPB's advantage with twin goals in the 18th and 58th minute, while Mukul Sharma added the fifth in the 35th minute.

IOC's fightback arrived in the 23rd minute.

## Injured Samit may miss games against Australia

**Chennai:** Injured Samit Dravid is likely to miss India Under-19 side's two four-day matches against Australia, which is starting here from Monday.

Samit is currently at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) recuperating from a knee injury that forced him to sit out of the three-match youth one-dayers against the Aussies recently.

He was expected to make his India U-19 debut at Puducherry but did not feature in any of the three matches. India had won the series 3-0.

"As of now he's at the NCA, recovering from his knee injury. So, I don't know yet. It looks unlikely," head coach Hrishikesh Kanitkar was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

In fact, for Samit, son of former India captain and head coach Rahul Dravid, this is the last chance to



represent India at the U19 level.

He is set to turn 19 on October 11 this year, which will also make him ineligible for playing for India in the ICC 2026 Under-19 World Cup.

"His MRI scan was done during the one-day matches. We thought of giving him a go at the four-day

the second spot and Australia's Ricky Ponting at the third, with 27,483 runs.

## Usha slams EC members

**New Delhi:** Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President PT Usha on Monday said it is "deeply concerning" that the Executive Committee members failed to honour Olympic medallists and accused the Finance Committee of blocking funds intended to support Indian athletes' preparation for the Paris Games.

India secured six medals, including two historic bronze by young shooter Manu Bhaker, but Usha said the "EC does not want to celebrate their success" and it makes her "very sad."

"These athletes have made the nation proud, and it is the responsibility of the IOA to celebrate their achievements with the respect they deserve. It is deeply concerning that, even after returning home in mid-August, the EC has failed to discuss or take any steps towards organizing a formal felicitation ceremony."



Indian men's hockey team captain Harmanpreet Singh during the Army Sports Conclave 2024 in New Delhi

## Laxman hopeful of future players

By G Unnikrishnan

**Bengaluru:** VVS Laxman admitted that he took over as the chief of BCCI Centre of Excellence with trepidation, but now he is a contented person after setting in place a robust bench strength that will allow India to dominate

world cricket for the next 10 years, if not more.

Laxman took over as the head of the erstwhile National Cricket Academy (NCA) in 2021 from his onetime teammate Rahul Dravid, and built on the excellent platform that was already laid out.

"I can say with a lot of confidence, barring a couple of skillsets, I think, for the next 10 years, we've got a lot of players who will make our country proud. I'm not only talking about men's, but also women's as well. We're blessed to have that kind of talent."

## Jidnyasa, Arpita record victories

By Correspondent

**Mumbai:** Jidnyasa Chaudhari and Arpita Ardey, both from Pune District, recorded hard-fought victories in women's singles first round matches of the Yonex Sunrise Shri Nandu Natekar Memorial Maharashtra State Senior Inter District (Team) and State Badminton Championship 2024, conducted under the auspices of Maharashtra Badminton Association (MBA) and Badminton Association for Mumbai Upanagar (BAMU) and played at the Goregaon Sports Club on Monday.

Displaying tremendous fighting qualities Chaud-

hari after losing the first game bounced back to win the next two to overcome Samprati Pathra (Raigad) 18-21, 21-9 and 21-10 to advance to the second round.

Ardey also produced a solid fighting performance to overcome Shruti Shankargouda (Sangli) 21-17, 16-21 and 21-16 in another first round encounter.

Greater Mumbai's Naishaa Bhatoye enjoyed smooth sailing as he easily defeated Manasvi Vaidya (Thane) in straight games winning at 21-5 and 21-9.

**Results - Women's singles (round-1):** Vedika Kulkarni bt Kyra Barua 21-

12, 21-13; Mrunmayee Deshpande bt Pranali Wadar 21-12, 21-10; Shreya Bhosale bt Purva Bagkar 21-7, 21-12; Sanika Patankar bt Rishika Goyal 21-13, 21-6; Asmita Shedge bt Netra Jhalani 21-14, 21-14; Nishika Gokhe bt Anushka Bhise 21-10, 21-14; Gargee Degvekar bt Shraddha Hakke 21-14, 21-15; Aarti Chougale bt Apurva Ghadge 21-16, 21-14; Sanskruti Satarakar bt Ishita Korgaonkar 21-9, 21-13; Aarya Korgaonkar bt Riya Vinherkar 21-16, 21-12; Ananya Durugkar bt Divyansha Wahal 21-5, 21-18; Shivani Herlekar bt Shruti Phanse 21-6, 22-20; Nehal Gosavi bt Deepti Pillay 21-13, 21-9.

## Govt will decide on travel to Pak: BCCI

**Kanpur:** Reiterating a long-held position, BCCI Vice President Rajeev Shukla on Monday said a decision on whether the national cricket team will travel to Pakistan for next year's ICC Champions Trophy will depend on government approval.

Pakistan are scheduled to host the prestigious ODI tournament from February 19 to March 9.

"No decision has been taken (yet). But our policy is that for international tours, we always seek the permission of the government. It's up to the government to decide whether our team should go to any country or our team should not go to any country," Shukla said.

## Reliance honours Olympians

By Correspondent

**Mumbai:** The Reliance Foundation honoured Indian athletes, who excelled in the Olympics and Paralympics games recently held at Paris.

The Nita Ambani-led organization hosted United in Triumph – an evening celebrating equality and excellence through the unifying power of sport – on September 29 at Antilia, where athletes across disciplines were felicitated for their hard work, passion and the profound impact they've had in bringing India to the global forefront of sports.

The athletes, who were honoured, include Olympic and Paralympic medalists such as Neeraj Chopra, Manu Bhaker, and Murlikant Petkar, India's first-ever Paralympic gold me-



Nita Ambani, founder and chairperson of Reliance Foundation, felicitates Manu Bhaker.

The event was graced by other notable athletes, including Preethi Pal, Mona Agarwal, Simran Sharma, Deepthi Jeevanji and Olympians like Sarabjot Singh, Swapnil Kusale, and Aman Sehrawat. The Indian men's hockey team was represented by captain Harmanpreet Singh and PR Sreejesh, both members of the medal-winning squad in Paris. Olym-

pic medalist Lovlina Borgohain and Dhinidhi Desinghu, the youngest member of India's contingent at just 14 years of age, were also in attendance.

The ceremony was also attended by Indian sporting legends like Deepa Malik, Sania Mirza, Karnam Malleswari and Pulela Gopichand who have inspired countless younger athletes with their achievements and excellence.

Speaking at the event, Nita Ambani said, "This is truly historic. For the first time, there are over 140 Olympic and Paralympic athletes who have come together on the same platform." She also spoke about the 'transformational power of sport' and hailed the contribution of India's female athletes to the country's Olympic successes.