THE PERFECT VOICE



Will soon take a decision on future action: **Bhujbal**



Gold jewellery consumption to grow ... pg 6



Mumbai's next wonder kid who took SMAT by storm

... pg 10



Visitors at three-day TechFest at IIT-Bombay in Mumbai on Tuesday.

Present glorious way of life to world: Bhagwat

Pune: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat on Tuesday said it is India's prime responsibility to present its glorious way of life to the world so that others can attain happiness and prosperity.

Speaking at the inauguration of the Moraya Gosavi Sanjivan Samadhi ceremony in the industrial belt of Pimpri Chinchwad near Pune city, he also emphasized that the essence of Indian ethos lies in ensuring the well-being of all.

"It is everyone's responsibility to maintain balance and patience to ensure the smooth functioning of the world order. In Indian culture, there has always been a tradition of returning to nature. In today's terms, this can be described as 'giving back'. The structure of our dharma is built on this principle of 'giving

Our ancestors recognised and practised it as nature itself works on this aspect," Bhagwat said.

He said our ancestors not

only understood the concept of balance in dharma but also led by example, demonstrating how to live peacefully while ensuring harmony and progress for

"This dharma ensures the well-being and progress of all, which is why India must survive, grow and lead the way. It is India's prime responsibility to show to the world its glorious way of life so that others can follow and attain happiness and prosperity,"

RSS keen on keeping Amit Shah in the cold

THE MAHAYUTI 2.0 CABINET CEMENTS MODI'S DOMINANCE AND THE RSS'S IDEOLOGICAL OVERSIGHT IN MAHARASHTRA

By Kiran D. Tare

Mumbai: The absence of ministers aligned with Home Minister Amit Shah in the new Mahayuti cabinet led by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has raised evebrows, triggering speculations that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) may have moved to curtail Shah's influence in the state.

Maharashtra expanded its cabinet on Sunday, swearing in 33 cabinet ministers and six ministers of state at Raj Bhavan in Nagpur. In keeping with the performance and contribution of each of the three Mahayuti parties in the coalition's stunning electoral success in the Assembly polls, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) secured the lion's share with 16 cabinet berths, followed by nine for Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena and eight for the Ajit Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party

The reshuffle introduced a youthful tilt, with 18 new faces joining the council

while as many as 13 former ministers were dropped during the cabinet expansion that took place in Nagpur.

Notably absent from the new cabinet are individuals known to be close to Shah, a political tactician often credited with the BJP's meteoric rise over the past decade. As per sources who spoke to The Perfect Voice, the absence of veteran BJP leader from Chandrapur Sudhir Mungantiwar, considered to be a confidante of Shah in Maharashtra, underscored this pattern.

Over the past year, tensions between Shah and the RSS have bubbled to the surface. Dattatreya Hosabale, the Sarkaryavah (of the General Secretary) of the RSS, reportedly confronted Shah over the induction of senior Congress leader and former Maharashtra CM Ashok Chavan into the BJP.

An apparently curt retort issued by Shah to Hosbale -"Politics is not your business. Let us do politics in our own way" - did little to endear him to the Sangh.

Relations further soured when, following a public



statement by BJP President J.P. Nadda that appeared critical of the RSS, Shah sought to meet RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat to clarify the party's position. As per sources, Shah's overtures were reportedly rebuffed as Bhagwat reportedly refused to meet the Home Minister. signalling a rare public rebuke to the powerful BJP satrap from the Sangh leadership.

"Amitbhai had gone to meet Mohanji at the Sangh's Jhandewalan's office in Delhi. Mohanji was present

there but he outrightly refused to meet Amitbhai." said a source.

Mungantiwar's exclusion is the latest consequences of this falling-out. Earlier, the ouster of C.T. Ravi as BJP general secretary was also seen as a stern message to

The biggest confirmation of Shah's diminishing influence came when his bete noire Devendra Fadnavis was chosen for the coveted post of Maharashtra Chief Minister. By promoting Fadnavis – a leader with whom Shah has clashed in the past - the RSS and PM Modi are reportedly sending a message about where ultimate

authority lies. The RSS, for its part, has little tolerance for figures who appear to put personal ambition above the organization's broader ideological goals. Shah's brusque style and political pragmatism, while effective in winning some elections, have also queered the pitch in some states where friction between the top BJP brass and the local leadership has for the party. This has drawn criticism from Sangh stalwarts who prefer a more consultative approach.

Modi and Shah have long been seen as the twin architects of the BJP's dominance. Though their partnership is often described as seamless, divergences in strategy and priorities occasionally surface. Shah is known for his hard-nosed approach and backroom deals - the BJP's principal trouble-shooter.

The RSS's priorities often differ from those of Shah, whose realpolitik sometimes clashes with the Sangh's ideological purism. By sidelining Shah's allies in Maharashtra, the RSS is likely signalling its preference for a less transactional and more ideologically aligned leadership in the

Furthermore, with Nadda's term as party president nearing its end, speculation is rife that the next president will be someone at odds with Shah. This is likely to curtail Shah's influence over state BJP

Netanyahu tours buffer zone inside Syria

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu entered Syrian territory on Tuesday during a security tour of the buffer zone seized by Israel in the past few days since the fall of Bashar Assad.

It was apparently the first time a sitting Israeli leader entered Syrian territory.

Earlier in the day, Israel launched overnight attacks on Syrian air defence systems and ammunition depots. The action was a part of the country's aim to threaten country's military capability after the ousting of President Bashar al-Assad.

Isreal wanted to destroy all the arms, ammunition, and equipments that could fall into hands of terrorists or rebels who have taken over in Syria and partially Israel has accomplished that goal. When US military had hastily left Afghanistan, in most unplanned and inhuman manner, only personnel were moved out. All the

Jerusalem: Israeli Prime ammunition, lethal weapons, guns and armored vehicles and tanks were left there, which easily fell into the hands of Taliban. This posed a serious security threat to India. Thereafter Kashmiri terrorists were spotted using such advanced weapons, obviously traded from Taliban of Afghanistan to kashmiri

In the similar way, a massive bulk of modern arms, ammunition, war planes, tanks, ships etc. supplied by Russia and Iran, were to be property of the Syrian rebel forces after ousted Syrian President Bashar-Al-Assad fled. This could have been a potential

danger to Isreal. Israel has been conducting airstrikes in Syria for several years, primarily targeting Iranian military positions and militias. In April 2023, Israel had launched three airstrikes in Syria's Homs Governorate, killing two Iranian military advisers and injuring five Syrian soldiers.



Uddhav meets Fadnavis, Speaker

Nagpur: Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray and his MLA son Aaditya Thackeray on Tuesday met with Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Assemblv speaker Rahul Narwekar on the premises of Vidhan Bhavan in Nagpur.

Aaditva later told reporters that he and his father extended good wishes to Fadnavis and Narwekar.

"We talked about taking a step towards showing political maturity and working together in the interest of the people of Maharashtra," the former minister said.

Aaditya said no discussion was held on the post of the leader of the opposition

in the assembly. Uddhav Thackeray was accompanied by Sena (UBT) legislators Anil Parab and Varun Sardesai during their meeting with Fadnavis in the latter's chamber.

The winter session of the state legislature is currently underway in Nagpur.

The 15th legislative assembly is without LoP since none of the three parties of Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi could win 10 per cent of seats in the November 20 polls.

The Shiv Sena (UBT) bagged 20 seats, the Congress 16 and the NCP (SP)

Uddhav Thackeray, who is a member of the state legislative council, arrived in Nagpur on Tuesday to attend the ongoing session.

Ties between Fadnavis and Thackeray strained after Shiv Sena (undivided) snapped its old association with BJP in November 2019 over the issue of sharing the chief minister's post and joined hands with the Congress and undivided NCP to form Maha Vikas

Aghadi. Uddhav had severely criticised Fadnavis and BJP leadership at election

ONOE bills in LS

translated into bad results

OPPOSITION CALLS THE MOVE UNCONSTITUTIONAL

New Delhi: Two bills that ished dream. lay down the mechanism to hold simultaneous elections in the country were introduced in Lok Sabha on Tuesday after a fiery debate, with the opposition terming the move "anticonstitutional" and Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal asserting that the legislation would not tamper with the powers enjoyed by states.

Amid uproar by the opposition, Home Minister Amit Shah told Lok Sabha that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said during a meeting of the Union Cabinet that the bill should be referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee for wider deliberations at every level.

The government is likely to move a resolution to refer the bill to the JPC on

Wednesday in Lok Sabha. The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha by Meghwal after a nearly 90-minute debate, followed by a division of votes -? the first step towards completion of BJP's long-cher-

As many as 269 members voted in favour of introduction of the bill and 198 against it. Opposition Congress,

DMK Trinamool Congress Samajwadi Party, NCP-SP, Shiv Sena-UBT, AIMIM among others objected to the introduction of the bill contending that it was an assault on the basic structure of the Constitution.

During the consultations held by former president Ram Nath Kovind-led high level committee on 'One Nation, One Elections', 32 political parties supported the measure and 15 parties opposed it.

YSRCP, which has four members in Lok Sabha, is the only non-NDA party to have declared support for the bill. BJD, another fence sitter, is yet to spell out its stand. BJD failed to open its account in Lok Sabha in elections this year, but has seven members in Rajya

Meghwal also introduced The Union Territories Amendment Bill, which seeks to align elections in

the Union territories of Puducherry, Delhi, and Jammu and Kashmir with the Lok Sabha polls.

He said the proposed bills did not attack the "basic structure doctrine of the Constitution, as claimed by the opposition". "Detailed discussions

can take place in the JPC. The report of the JPC will be approved by the Cabinet. Then again, there will be a discussion on this (bills) in the House," Shah said.

Meghwal said he would move a resolution referring the Bills to a joint committee of Parliament.

The government would require a two-thirds majority for the passage of the bill in both the Houses in separate votes -? numbers it does not enjoy in Parliament currently.

Congress member Manickam Tagore pointed out that the government did not have a two-thirds majority among the 461 members who took part in the voting on Tuesday. In Lok Sabha, 269 members voted in favour of the bill against the two-thirds-mark of 307.

New books for classes 9-12 by 2026: Pradhan



New Delhi: NCERT textbooks for some classes will cost less from next year, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan announced on Tuesday.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), which currently prints five crore textbooks a year, is working to augment capacity to 15 crore from next year, he said.

The minister also informed that the new textbooks, according to the updated curriculum for classes 9-12, would be available from the 2026-27 academic session.

"In the next academic year, NCERT will publish 15 crore quality and affordable books... Currently, it publishes nearly five crore textbooks. Earlier, there were concerns about demand and supply about the textbooks. However, that will be addressed now," Pradhan told reporters.

"Since the volume of printing of books is going to be high, the prices of textbooks for some classes will be reduced. However, the price will not be increased for any class to ensure there is no financial burden on parents," he added.

The minister informed that the process of updating textbooks, according to the new National Curriculum Framework (NCF), was underway.

"The process is on and textbooks for classes 9-12 will be ready by the 2026-27 academic session," he said.

"New textbooks have been made available for seven out of 15 grades, with textbooks coming out for four more grades in the next academic year. Textbooks for arts, physical education, and wellbeing (classes 3-8) and vocational education (classes 6-8) are being developed. Textbooks are being prepared in all scheduled Indian languages and made accessible via online platforms," the minister said.

Pradhan informed that the number of schools affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) had more than doubled, rising from 14,974 in 2014 to 30,415 in

"Admissions, transfers and CBSE affiliation processes are now fully online. Kendriya Vidyalyas, Navodaya Vidyalayas and the CBSE are operating on 100 per cent e-office platforms.

Schools offering vocational courses have risen from 960 in 2014 to 29,342 in 2024. Student enrolment in skill education has surged from 58,720 in 2014 to over 30.8 lakh in 2024," he

Detailed report: Page 5

NTA will be restructured in 2025

The NTA will not conduct any recruitment exams from 2025, instead focusing only on higher education entrance tests, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan announced on Tuesday. The agency will be restructured next year and new posts are being created, he added. The move is part of examination reforms based on the recommendations of a high-level panel set up earlier this year following alleged leaks in the National Eligibilitycum-Entrance Test (NEET) medical entrance exam and a series of cancellations of others due to suspected leaks and other glitches. The education ministry is also in conversation with the health ministry on conducting NEET in the traditional pen-and-paper mode or switch to a Computer Based Test (CBT). "The National Testing Agency (NTA) will be limited to conducting only entrance exams for higher education and not conduct any recruitment exams from next year," Pradhan told reporters. He clarified that the Common University Entrance Test - Undergraduate (CUET-UG) would continue to be held once a year.

Will soon take a decision on future action: Bhujbal

THE NCP VETERAN FIRES 'TOY' BARB AT NCP LEADERSHIP

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Senior NCP leader Chhagan Bhujbal on Tuesday launched a veiled attack on party president Ajit Pawar over his exclusion from the new council of ministers, claiming Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis was in favour of his induction in the cabinet.

He said Ajit Pawar, the NCP president, makes decisions for the party like Fadnavis for the BJP and Eknath Shinde for the Shiv Sena.

Amid speculation over his "Jahan nahi chaina, wahan nahi rehna" remark a day before, Bhujbal said he would speak on Wednesday after discussing with NCP workers and people from the Yeola constituency

The prominent OBC leader said he wasn't disappointed about not being made a minister but felt humiliated by his treatment.

Bhujbal claimed that he was asked to contest Lok Sabha elections in May but his name was never finalised. Weeks after winning assembly elections from Yeola seat, Bhujbal said he was recently offered a Rajya Sabha seat.

"I accepted the suggestion to contest Lok Sabha elections from Nashik. When I wanted to be in the Rajya Sabha earlier this year, I was asked to fight the assembly elections. I was offered a Rajya Sabha seat eight days ago which I

"They didn't listen to me then, now they are giving it (Rajya Sabha seat). Am I a toy in your hands? he

Do you think whenever you tell me I will stand up, whenever you tell me I will sit down and contest the elections? What will the people in my constituency feel if I resign? he questioned.

"I have confirmed that Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis insisted on Protest outside Ajit Pawar's house

Supporters of Chhagan Bhujbal in Pune staged protests on Tuesday over his exclusion from the Maharashtra cabinet alleging insult to

An agitation was also held outside the bungalow of Deputy CM and NCP chief Ajit Pawar in Baramati.

Former ministers Bhujbal and Dilip Walse Patil of the NCP and Sudhir Mungantiwar and Vijaykumar Gavit of the BJP were among the prominent leaders who didn't make it to the state cabinet expanded on Sunday. "Despite being the senior-most leader in NCP, Bhujbal was denied a cabinet berth which is an insult to the OBC community. If you had decided to allot cabinet posts to the senior leaders, then why did the same parameter not apply to Bhujbal?" asked one of the protesters who participated in a demonstration outside the district collectorate in Pune. NCP workers wore black clothes and slammed Ajit Pawar. A protester demanded Ajit Pawar make an announcement assigning the deputy chief minister's post to Bhujbal after 2.5 years.

my inclusion in the state cabinet. The chief of each party in the Mahayuti alliance decides for his partv. Fadnavis for BJP, Eknath Shinde for Shiv Sena, and Ajit Pawar for NCP," he said.

While speaking to reporters, Bhujbal said, "Ajit Pawar and Praful Patel had said that they will discuss with me about giving me a ministerial berth. But they did not sit down for a discussion. No one from Aiit Pawar or Praful Patel's office called me. I am not a toy in their hands. If I resign, what

constituency think if I decide to consider their offer to go to Rajya Targeting Ajit

will the people of my

Pawar and Praful Patel, Bhujbal further said, "Chhagan Bhujbal is not that kind of a person

told to sit down will sit down and if told to stand up, will stand up. I will discuss with all the workers in the

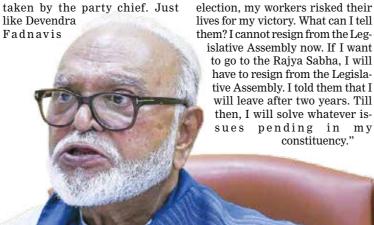
state and think about the next step.

In a democracy, everyone has the

right to express his or her views. I

am trying to find out who rejected

me for the ministerial post". "The decision for every party is taken by the party chief. Just



takes the decision for the BJP, Eknath Shinde takes the decision for the Shiv Sena. Similarly, Ajit Pawar takes the decision for our group," he added further.

"Chief Minister Fadnavis had insisted that I should be in the Cabinet. I have confirmed this myself. I did not declare my name in the Lok Sabha. The Rajya Sabha seat came up. I said 'let me go', but I was not given a ticket. Party legislator Makrand Patil's brother Nitin Patil was given a nomination. I have been here for 40 years. At that time, the party told me that I was needed in the state and asked me to contest the Assembly election. I fought and won," Bhujbal pointed out.

"Now the party has offered me a Rajya Sabha seat saying that as Makrand Patil has been inducted into the Cabinet his brother Nitin Patil will be asked to resign from the Rajya Sabha. I have rejected the party's offer as it would be a betrayal of the electorate from the Yeola constituency who overwhelmingly voted for him. I have contested the election, my workers risked their lives for my victory. What can I tell them? I cannot resign from the Leg-

to go to the Rajya Sabha, I will have to resign from the Legislative Assembly. I told them that I will leave after two years. Till then, I will solve whatever issues pending in my constituency.'



Opposition leaders stage a protest demanding swift action in the custodial death of Somnath Surevanshi in Parbhani during the Winter session of Maharashtra Assembly outside Vidhan Bhavan in Nagpur on Tuesday. Pic:PTI

Oppo protest against sarpanch's murder

Nagpur: Leaders of the opposition parties staged a demonstration at the Vidhan Bhavan here on the second day of the Winter Session on Tuesday to protest the murder of a sarpanch in Maharashtra's Beed and demanded the arrest of the accused involved in the crime

Legislators from the opposition Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi allies protested on the steps of the Vidhan Bhavan and raised slogans against the government.

Leader of Opposition in the legislative council Ambadas Danve, Congress's Nana Patole, Nitin Raut, Bhai Jagtap, Vikas Thakre,

and Shiv Sena (UBT) leaders Bhaskar Jadhav, Sachin Ahir, NCP (SP) Jitendra Awhad and other legislators took part in the protest.

Last week, Massajog vil-

lage sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh was abducted from his car near a toll plaza, and his body was later found in the Daithana area of Kej tehsil, following which three persons were arrested. The CID is investigating the murder.

Talking to reporters, Danve alleged that people from the ruling party were involved in the death of the sarpanch in Beed.

He claimed that the Ma-

hayuti government had not taken any action in both the Beed murder and the death of a 35-year-old man arrested in connection with the violence triggered by the vandalism of a replica of the Constitution in Parbhani last week.

The post-mortem report in Parbhani case suggested that the man died due to assault, the Shiv Sena (UBT) leader said, alleging that the collector and superintendent of police of Parbhani are responsible for the incident.

Danve said the Opposition raised these issues in the House on Monday and will do so today.



Assembly at Vidhan Bhavan in Nagpur on Tuesday.

Ministers Shambhuraj Desai and Sanjay Rathod during the Winter session of

Efforts to pacify upset leaders: Samant

and minister Uday Samant on Tuesday said efforts are underway to placate party leaders who are upset over their exclusion from the state cabinet

Samant said, "We work as a family under Eknath Shinde. There could be unhappiness if someone does not get a place in the cabinet. It is the responsibility of those who have become ministers to address the unhappiness. We are working on it extensively (to address

Be it Shiv Sena leaders

Nagpur: Shiv Sena leader Tanaji Sawant or Vijay Shivtare, Deputy Chief Minister Shinde will pacify them, Samant said about some party leaders being upset over their exclusion from the state cabinet.

> "If we don't do good work in two or three months. Shinde, who made us minister, will take back our ministerial berth." he said.

> Samant said it was not possible to accommodate everyone, as the Shiv Sena has only 12 positions in the state cabinet.

> He said portfolios are expected to be allocated soon.

Earlier, Shiv Sena leader Shivtare had expressed disappointment at being ignored in the first cabinet expansion of the Fadnavisled government.

A miffed Shivtare said he wouldn't take up a ministerial post even if offered after two and half years.

Another cabinet aspirant, Shiv Sena' MLA from Bhandara, Narendra Bhondekar, quit all party posts - deputy leader and coordinator for eastern Vidarbha - after being overlooked for ministerial position.

Shinde set to be council Chairperson Nagpur: Maharashtra leg-

islative council chairperson will be elected on Thursday, deputy chairperson Neelam Gorhe said.

Gorhe made this announcement in the legislative council on Tuesday the second day of the ongoing winter session of the state legislature.

The council chairperson's post has been lying vacant since July 7, 2022, after Ramraje Naik-Nimbalkar's term ended

Among 78 members in the upper house of the state legislature, the BJP has 19 members, Congress 7, Shiv Sena (UBT) 7. Shiy Sena 6. NCP (SP) and NCP 5 each, and Independent 3.

Governor C P Radhakrishnan, acting on the recommendation of the state cabinet, in October approved the names of seven MLCs out of the 12 vacant

BJP MLC Ram Shinde is set to become the Chairperson. He hails from Ahilyanagar. He was elected as MLA in 2014 and defeated in 2019 by Rohit Pawar, He was later made MLC. He contested from Karjat Jamkhed this time against Rohit Pawar and lost.

Permission given for Tipu procession in Pune Mumbai: Police on Tues- ana Abul Kalam Azad and day informed the Bombay also the Constitution Day.

High Court that they have granted permission for a procession planned on December 24 in Pune to celebrate 18th century Mysore ruler Tipu Sultan's birth

anniversary. A division bench of Justices Revati Mohite Dere and Prithviraj Chavan, which was informed about the permission granted by the Pune rural police, noted a person has the right to take out a procession, but he has to abide by conditions and restrictions imposed as per law.

The HC observed it was the police's job to ensure no untoward incident happens during an event and suggested them not to cite law and order issue every time.

The bench was hearing a petition filed by Faiyaz Shaikh, the Pune unit president of the All India Mailis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM), seeking a direction to the police to grant permission to hold a rally to commemorate the birth anniversaries of Tipu Sultan, freedom fighter Maul-

The procession to mark all three occasions has been planned for December 24. As per the plea, the Pune

rural police had refused to give nod for the rally and asked the petitioner to celebrate the occasions at his private place and not in public arena. The police had apprehended such rallies may cause law and order problems.

The bench had last week directed the police to consider the plea seeking permission for the event.

On Tuesday, the bench was informed that the police have granted permission for the procession to be held on a designated route.

The petitioner, however, said the police were yet to issue a no objection certificate (NOC) for putting up banners and arches for the event.

Public Prosecutor Hiten Venegaonkar maintained there was some restlessness about the proposed procession and hence permission has been granted for holding it on a particu-



lar route, but now the petitioner wants to put up banners and arches all over the

The bench directed the police to take a decision within 24 hours on the application seeking to put up banners and arches related to the event.

'What is mandated in law for any such procession needs to be followed. Same will apply here too. Why should an exception made in this case?" the bench asked.

"No one can stop you (petitioner) from holding the rally/procession. (On put-

ting up) Banners and arches, let the police decide," it emphasised. The court noted law and

order was the domain of the police and it was not going to interfere in that.

"You (petitioner) have the right to take out a procession -- that is OK, but if the police feel there will be a law and order situation then we are not going to interfere. We are not aware of the ground reality. Police knows it better. We cannot pass a blanket order," the HC observed

At the same time, the bench advised the police to now stop using the law-andorder reason in each and every case.

"It is the police's job to ensure no untoward incident happens. It is time to change this attitude of law and order now. Law and order is the police's domain. Don't tell us every time law and order," the court said.

The bench took note of the permission granted for the procession and disposed of the petition.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"I have expressed my willingness to step down. The party high command will decide on the same. I don't want to comment on whether I would like to continue."



Nana Patole, President, State Congress

SIT promised on Darekar's allegation

Nagpur: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLC Pravin Darekar on Tuesday alleged in the Maharashtra council that a conspiracy was hatched to frame Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and then-minister Eknath Shinde in a false case during the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government.

At the time, BJP MLA Fadnavis was Leader of Opposition in the assembly, while Shinde was a member of the Uddhav Thackeray cabinet holding the urban development ministry. After the collapse of the MVA government, Shinde took over as CM in June 2022 with Fadnavis as his

deputy. Darekar made the allegation while speaking on a point of infor-

mation in the upper house of the legislature, which is having its winter session in Nagpur, and demanded a probe by a special investigation team (SIT) into the alleged conspiracy.

Cabinet minister Shambhuraj Desai, speaking on behalf of the Mahavuti government, said the issue raised by Darekar was serious and told the house an SIT headed by a senior IPS officer will be formed to probe the matter.

Darekar said audio clips purportedly linked to the conspiracy were played on TV channels on Monday. The ruling party MLC claimed he was in possession of a pen drive containing an audio clip of purported conversation between former Maharashtra director general of police Sanjay Pandey and then-ACP Laxmikant Patil.

Darekar claimed that in the audio clip, Pandey is purportedly heard asking Patil, then posted in adjoining Thane city, to register a case and arrest Fadnavis and Shinde, now a deputy CM in the Mahayuti government.

Desai said it was important to find out who was behind the alleged conspiracy and misuse of power at that time, referring to the MVA government's tenure (November 2019 to June 2022). The BJP legislator also demanded immediate suspension of Patil. Cabinet minister Desai said he will speak about the matter with

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to bring to the knowledge of general Public at large on behalf of my client MR. LOKESH MADHUSUDAN SETH of the flat No. C/104,1st floor, Chandresh Jyoti, CHS. Ltd., Achole, Nallasopara, (E), Tal. Vasai Dist. Palghar, bearing S.N.190. Hissa No. 17/1,17/2 & S.N. 184,Hissa No.5,6,819 Achole, Nallasopara (E),Tal.Vasai, Dist. Palghar Bering Document No. P4536/1989at Vasai-1,dated 24.09.1989 purchased by MRS. PRABHAVATI DATTATRKYA BHANSALI.

MRS. PRABHAVATI DATTATRKYA BHANSALI has expired dated

22.09.2003 at Greater Mumbai, leaving beffind his three adult Sons 1.
MR. LOKESH MADHUSUDAN SETH,2. MR. CHIRAG MADHUSUDAN
SETH & 3. MR.SACHIN MADHUSUDAN SETH as his only legal heir to

the said flat.

In the Judicial First Class Magistrate at Vasai Lok-Adalat the matter has been compounded and disposed of as per terms settled in compromise. And The Court order that the owner of flat MRS. PRABHAVATI DATTATRKYA BHANSALI expired her Grand Son MR. LOKESH MADHUSUDAN SETH sale the flat No. C/104,1ST floor, Chandresh Jyot, CHS.Ltd., Achole, Nallasopara, (E), Tal. Vasai, Dist. Palghar and pay Rs.6,00,000/. (Rupees Six Lakh only) other Grandson MR. Sandeep Shyam Bhanushali and same time the flat no. 571/35, situated at Kurla known as Topiwala Lane release by MR. LOKESH MADHUSUDAN SETH and his brothers to MR. Sandeep Shyam Bhanushali without fail. If any person baying any objection or claim in respect of the above said. If any person having any objection or claim in respect of the above said lost agreement by way of sale, exchange, charge gift, possession, lease mortgage, lien or otherwise howsoever, they/she/he is request to inform me and undersigned his claim with proper evidence within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice at shop No.11, Guru- Govind Singh Nagar, CHS. Ltd., Lodha Marg, Achole, Nallasopara (E), Tal. Vasai Dist. Palghar.

NEEL RATAN RAI Advocat

'Simultaneous polls a bid to divert attention'

Nagpur: Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Tuesday claimed the Centre's move to introduce a bill on simultaneous polls in the Lok Sabha was an attempt to divert attention from issues plaguing the country.

Addressing reporters in Maharashtra's Nagpur city, Thackeray demanded a transparent election process before implementation of the 'One Nation One Election' proposal.

Even the election commissioners should be elected through polls, the former state chief minister said but did not elaborate on how to go about it.

Thackeray also said that the Devendra Fadnavis-led Maharashtra government should give Rs 2,100 per month to women under the Ladki Bahin scheme, as promised before the state assembly polls held last month.

Currently, women are provided Rs 1,500 per month under the scheme, which is believed to have played a key role in the BJP-Shiv Sena-NCP Mahayuti coalition's victory in the November 20 state assembly polls.

The winter session of the state legislature is currently underway in Nagpur.

On Tuesday, Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal moved in the Lok Sabha two bills which lay down the mechanism to hold simultaneous polls in the country, with the opposition dubbing the draft laws as an attack on the basic



"The One Nation One Election (proposal) is an attempt to divert attention from issues plaguing the country," Thackeray said.

The Sena (UBT) leader also slammed the Centre over shifting of the iconic painting depicting signing of documents after Pakistan army's surrender in 1971 war from the Army chief's annexe in South Block to the Manekshaw Centre in New Delhi.

The former state chief minister asked why was the painting shifted as it was a symbol of bravery of Indian soldiers.

Thackeray also took a dig at the government over disappointment expressed by some Mahayuti leaders over their exclusion from the state cabinet, following the ministry expansion on Sunday.

"The unhappiness of those who did not get ministerial berth reverberates more than the happiness of those who became ministers," Thackeray claimed.

On senior NCP leader Chhagan Bhujbal not being included in the state cabinet, Thackeray said he felt sad about it because many like him had switched sides to be part of the

Notably, Bhujbal supported the NCP faction led by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar after he joined hands with the ruling BJP-Shiv Sena coalition in July

Thackeray said the chief minister introduces his council of ministers to the House

But this will be, for the first time, that the CM has to introduce as his ministers those against whom there were allegations of corruption and raids by central agencies, he quipped.

Thackeray also targeted the Mahayuti government for not allocating portfolios despite the cabinet expansion.

He dubbed the Fadnavisled dispensation as the EVM "every vote for machine" government, referring to the opposition charges of irregularities in the Election Voting Machines.

Thackeray further said the governor's address, to the joint session of the state legislature last week, had a passing reference on environment protection.

The then Fadnavis government from 2014-19 did not care for the environment while building the Aarey Metro car shed project. Similarly, 1,400 trees will have to be felled for Dongri car shed project, the Shiv Sena (UBT) leader said. There was no mention of security of women in the governor's address, Thackeray added.

HC asks govt to follow advisory

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court has asked the Maharashtra government to ensure the effective implementation of a 2010 advisory concerning the treatment of terminally ill prisoners which recommends medical bail or house arrest for inmates suffering from such

A division bench of Justices Revati Mohite Dere and Prithviraj Chavan on Monday said they visited the Yerwada central prison in Pune on Sunday and met with prisoners, particularly women inmates, and inspected the condition there.

The bench referred to an advisory issued by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs in August 2010 on the policy for the treatment of terminally ill prisoners/ inmates

As per the advisory, any prisoner who is identified as suffering from any terminal illness shall be either granted bail on medical grounds, parole, furlough, or placed in house arrest or the custody of family members.

The advisory also says that in such cases, special medical care could be given to such persons in the prison itself. The court directed the

Maharashtra government

to file a detailed affidavit

on the issue and the implementation of the advisory. The HC was hearing a petition filed by one Arun Bhelke, who along with his wife Kanchan Nanaware was an undertrial and lodged in the Yerwada jail after being arrested in 2014

under provisions of the

stringent Unlawful Activi-

ties Prevention Act

(UAPA).



Students participate in "PATRA UTSAV 2024", Mumbai Letter Fest 2024, hand written letter organised by Indian Postal department at GPO on Tuesday. Pic: Bhushan Koyande

BADLAPUR SEXUAL ASSAULT CASE

Police officer suspended: SIT

Mumbai: The Badlapur sexual assault case investigation is over and a senior police officer has been suspended for dereliction of duty, the Maharashtra government told the Bombay High Court on Tuesday.

Two charge sheets have been filed against the slain accused in the case and trustees of the school, the HC was told.

Two police constables were given a strict warning for not taking the case seriously.

Public Prosecutor Hiten Venegaonkar, appearing for the Special Investigation Team (SIT) which investigated the case, told a division bench of Justices Revati Mohite Dere and Prithviraj Chavan that the probe was complete and the SIT disbanded.

Two girls, aged four and five, were allegedly sexually assaulted in the toilet of their school in Badlapur in Thane district by an attendant in August, leading to a huge outrage and staging of protests.

The arrested accused was killed in an alleged retaliatory firing by police when he was being shifted in a police vehicle in September.

A departmental inquiry was initiated against Badlpur police station officials for delay in registering an FIR and investigation.

"A lady officer, who was the senior police inspector of Badlpur police station, has been suspended after the departmental inquiry. Her two-year increment has also been stopped," Venegaonkar told the

He added that two charge

sheets have been filed

against the slain accused

and the trustees of the school. "The probe in the case is

over and the SIT is disbanded," Venegaonkar said. The HC had taken suo

motu (on its own) cognisance and ordered the formation of a committee of experts to examine the safety of children in schools and other educational institutions.

Venegaonkar told the bench on Tuesday that the committee would submit its report in January 2025.

The court posted the matter for further hearing on December 19 on the issue of granting police protection to the parents of the slain accused who had apprehended an attack by certain persons

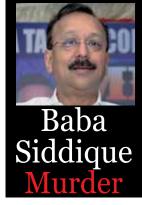
Venegaonkar told the court that the parents had declined police protection but expressed apprehension about targeting their

"A police constable has been deployed outside their house," he said. Advocate Amit Katarna-

ware, appearing for the parents of the slain accused, however, said they didn't decline police protection.

The bench said the parents should appear before it on Thursday.

Five accused in custody till Friday



Mumbai: A special court in Mumbai on Tuesday remanded five accused arrested in NCP leader Baba Siddique's murder case to police custody till December 20 after investigators said they need to interrogate them about an absconding accused and the weapons used in the crime.

These five accused are Pravin Lonkar, brother of absconding accused Shubman Lonkar, Bhagwat Singh, Akshdeep Singh, Salman Vohra and Sumit Wagh. All of them were in jail under judicial custody when police sought their remand

Police sought custody of Prayin Lonkar from the court hearing cases under the Maharashtra Control

of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA), saying they need to interrogate him on the whereabouts of his absconding brother. The other accused need

to be questioned about source and supply of weapons and financial angle linked to the October 12 murder in Mumbai, they told the court. Defence lawyer Sid-

dharth Agarwal submitted that there was no new ground for seeking custody of his clients

Agarwal also filed a pursis (a document submitted in court) for Lonkar, saying he was not willing to give a confessional statement under the MCOCA. It may be noted that con-

under the stringent antiorganised crime law are admissible as evidence in a The court, after hearing

fessions made to the police

both sides, remanded the five accused to police custody till December 20.

The five accused, along with 21 others arrested in the case, have been charged under the stringent provisions of MCOCA.

The Mumbai crime branch has until now arrested 26 accused.



Three Day Tech Fest Festival started at IIT Powai on Tuesday. Pic: Bhushan Koyande

Six held, minor detained for robbery

Thane: Six persons were arrested, and a minor was detained for allegedly robbing a 45-year-old woman of foreign currency and Rs 1 lakh cash in Maharashtra's Thane district, police said on Tuesday.

Officials of the Thane crime branch's anti-extortion cell arrested the accused on Saturday in connection with the crime that occurred on December 5,

> an official said. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Amarsingh Jadhav said the victim was travelling to the airport in a cab when the accused wavlaid the vehicle on the Mumbai-Nashik Highway, posing as police

and customs officials.

He said the accused allegedly forcibly opened the door of the cab, pulled out two bags containing 50,000 Saudi Riyals (Rs 11.29 lakh) and Rs 1 lakh cash and fled the scene.

The police registered a case under sections 310(2) (dacoity), 309(6) (robbery) and other relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita, Arms Act and Bombay Police Act.

Based on technical and intelligence inputs, the police zeroed in on the accused, including a woman and a minor, and managed to recover the entire stolen amount, the official

Five-yearold boy kidnapped

Thane: A five-year-old boy was kidnapped by unidentified persons from near his house in Thane district, police said on Tuesday.

As per the complaint lodged by the father, unidentified persons kidnapped the boy from near his house in Bhiwandi town around 5 pm on Monday, an official said.

The family members carried out a frantic search for the child and later approached the police. A case under section 137(2) (kidnapping) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita has been registered, and a probe is underway, the official said.

Mumbai: A court here has officer.

Human trafficking

case: Officer bailed

granted bail to Indian Navy officer Braham Sharma, arrested for alleged involvement in trafficking people to South Korea on forged documents, noting that he has been under detention since June 2024 and the trial is vet to commence. Police had claimed that

Lieutenant Commander Sharma was the mastermind of a gang that allegedly sent 8 to 10 people to the East Asian country using bogus papers and charged Rs 10 lakh per case. Sharma's bail was al-

lowed by additional sessions judge V M Pathade on December 13. A detailed order was available on Tuesday.

Sharma, in his bail application, had claimed he was innocent and was falsely implicated in the crime.

The accused stated that he was not a beneficiary of the crime money.

The investigation culminated in filing a chargesheet and hence his further detention is unwarranted, Sharma's plea said and pointed out that a co-accused granted bail.

The prosecution opposed the bail contending that Sharma played a major role in committing the crime, unbecoming of a Naval Police have alleged that

Sharma's associate and coaccused Vipin Dagar, also a Navy officer, was found in possession of 14 Indian passports in the name of different persons, a stamp machine (purchased from Vishakhapatnam to make fake stamps), 108 rubber stamps of distinct establishments, and a rubber sheet used for creating forged and fabricated documents to be used as genuine for obtaining passport/

Sharma had collected such documents through another co-accused and sent them to Dagar.

He used to receive money in bank accounts operated by his mother and grandmother, the police said.

The prosecution argued that sufficient material was collected by the investigating agency, disclosing Sharma's active participation in the entire activities leading to the commission of the offences. The court stated that the charge sheet in the case was filed by police.

Sharma has been under detention since June 29, 2024. and the other co-accused persons were granted bail, the court stated.

conductor found drunk

Bus driver,

Mumbai: The driver and conductor of a bus ferrying 50 children for a school trip were found under the influence of alcohol in the western suburbs here on Tuesday, police said.

The traffic police were conducting a surprise check in Andheri in the morning and intercepted a bus heading to Gorai for a trip with students and teachers of a Saki Nakabased school, an official said. Traffic personnel noticed that the bus was being driven dangerously, and on questioning the driver, they found that both he and the conductor were drunk, he said.

Security guard drowns in water tank

Thane: A 54-year-old security guard accidentally fell into the water tank and drowned at a housing society in Thane district, police said on Tuesday.

The incident occurred in a housing society in Badlapur town late on Monday night, an official said.

Venkat Saheb Rao, a security guard at the building, accidentally fell into the water tank when he went to turn off a light around 11.15 pm.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Even if Bhujbal throws tantrums, it has to be seen how much of his mental and physical strength is left. They will cry and



if one or two MLAs go sulking."

Sanjay Raut, MP, Shiv Sena (UBT)

Mumbai: India cannot stay

out of global technological race and should build capabilities that will keep it at the top while remaining vigilant against its misuse, said Jeet Adani, Director, Adani Airport Holdings

Speaking at IIT Bombay's Techfest 2024, Adani, the 27-year old younger son of infrastructure magnate Gautam Adani, said the future of technology is both scary and exciting.

"But be it scary or exciting, we cannot afford to ignore technology or even go slow in our use of technology -- either as a nation or as its citizens. India cannot stay out of this global race,' he said.

"Our generation needs to build capabilities to lead India into this new technological era if we want to stay at the top of our game and realise our dream of Viksit Bharat -- to become a USD 26-trillion economy by 2047." he said.

While technology has helped mankind progress, it is also being applied to wrong causes -- fake news, fake photos, fake videos,



fake money, online scams, spoofing, phishing, and cyber-crimes.

'As the scope and power of technology grows, we must be careful not to let the harmful use of technology overshadow the beneficial use of technology," he Technology is only as

good as the benefit it provides. "As we stand on the

brink of a new AI-empowered world, we must all ask ourselves how to ensure that the vast potential of technology is harnessed for good. There is no limit to where technology can go or lead us, but it is our generation's responsibility to guide its journey," he said.

Even as he hailed Google's new quantum computing chip, Willow, as a revolutionary breakthrough with immense potential for positive impact in areas like drug discovery, renewable energy and climate change, he cautioned that such power also comes with

"What you do with that kind of power is a choice -whether to solve the world's problems or create new ones.'

responsibility

Urging students to anchor their technological pursuits to societal goals, he called on the next generation to drive progress responsibly, ensuring that technology uplifts humanity and fosters inclusivity. India, he noted, has al-

ready embraced technology with purpose through initiatives like UPI and Digital India, which have made financial and digital services accessible to millions.

India's 180 billion cashless transactions a year is, he pointed out, a far bigger number than every advanced economy, whether it is the US or the UK or Singapore or any of the developed countries in Europe.

EU investigates TikTok over Romanian presidential election

London: European Union regulators said Tuesday they're investigating whether TikTok breached the bloc's digital rulebook by failing to deal with risks to Romania's presidential election, which has been thrown into turmoil over allegations of electoral violations and Russian meddling.

The European Commission is escalating its scrutiny of the popular videosharing platform after Romania's top court cancelled results of the first round of voting that resulted in an unknown far-right candidate becoming the front-runner.

The court made its unprecedented decision after authorities in the European Union and NATO member country declassified documents alleging Moscow organised a sprawling social media campaign to promote a long shot candidate, Calin Georgescu.

"Following serious indications that foreign actors interfered in the Romanian presidential elections by using TikTok, we are now thoroughly investigating whether TikTok has violated the Digital Services Act by failing to tackle such risks," European Commission president Ursula on der Leyen said in a press release. "It should be crystal clear that in the EU, all online platforms, including TikTok, must be held accountable.'

The European Commission is the 27-nation EU's executive arm and enforces the bloc's Digital Services Act, a sweeping set of regulations intended to clean up social media platforms and protect users from risks such as election-related misinformation. It ordered TikTok earlier this month to retain all information related to the election.

In the preliminary round of voting on November 24 Georgescu was an outsider among the 13 candidates but ended up topping the polls. He was due to face a pro-EU reformist rival in a runoff before the court cancelled the results

The declassified files alleged that there was an "aggressive promotion campaign" to boost Georgescu's popularity, including payments worth a total of USD 381,000 to TikTok influencers to promote him on the platform.

TikTok said it has "protected the integrity" of its platform over 150 elections around the world and is continuing to address these "industry-wide challenges."

"TikTok has provided the European Commission with extensive information regarding these efforts, and we have transparently and publicly detailed our robust actions," it said in a statement

The commission said its investigation will focus on TikTok's content recommendation systems, especially on risks related to "coordinated inauthentic manipulation or automated exploitation." It's also looking at TikTok's policies on political advertisements and "paid-for political

TikTok said it doesn't accept paid political ads and "proactively" removes content for violating policies on misinformation.

The investigation could result in TikTok making changes to fix any problems, or in fines worth up to 6 per cent of the company's total global revenue. -AP



Artists perform during a victory parade for World Chess Champion Gukesh in Chennai on Tuesday.

ASI gets time to conduct Masjid survey

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court has granted more time to the Archaeological Survey of India to conduct an inspection of the Jama Masjid in the national capital and file a report.

A bench comprising Justices Prathiba M Singh and Amit Sharma, while dealing with the PILs to declare the mosque a "protected monument", asked the ASI for the report at least a week before the next hearing on January 29, 2025.

"Let the survey/inspection as directed in the order dated October 23, 2024 be carried out and a report be filed at least one week before the next date of hearing with advance copies to all parties appearing in the matter," ordered the bench on December 11.

On October 23, the court asked the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) along with the representatives of the Waqf board to conduct the inspection of the Jama Masjid and its vicinity.

It also sought a sketch along with a table outlining the purpose for which the Jama Masjid premises were being used.

On December 11, however, senior advocate Anil Soni, appearing for the ASI, sought more time to complete the exercise. While granting further time, the bench permitted one counsel on behalf of the petitioner to accompany the team during the inspection.

The PILs filed by Suhail Ahmed Khan and Ajay Gautam in 2014 raised questions over the Jama Masjid not coming under the purview of the ASI.

They objected to the use of the "Shahi Imam" title by Jama Masjid's Imam, Maulana Syed Ahmed Bukhari, and the appointment of his son as the naib (deputy) Imam.

In 2015, the ASI informed the court that former prime minister Manmohan Singh had assured the Shahi Imam that Jama Masjid would not be declared a protected monument.

In its latest affidavit, the ASI said declaring the historic Jama Masiid a "protected monument" would have a "substantial impact" and no steps had been taken in this regard so far.

It said once a structure was declared a protected monument, certain regulations and prohibitions in the area around it would come into force. Jama Masjid is currently under the protection and guardianship of Delhi Waqf Board.

Facebook owner fined with 251 mn euros for 2018 data breach

European Union privacy watchdogs hit Facebook owner Meta with fines totalling 251 million euros on Monday after an investigation into a 2018 data breach on the social media platform that exposed millions of accounts. Ireland's Data Protection Commission issued the penalties after wrapping up its inquiry into the breach, when hackers gained access to user accounts by exploiting bugs in the platform's code that allowed them to steal digital keys, known as "access tokens." Under the 27-nation EU's strict privacy regime, the Irish watchdog is Meta's lead privacy regulator because the company's regional headquarters are based in Dublin.

The watchdog issued reprimands and "administrative penalties" worth 251 million euros (USD 264 million) after it found multiple infringements of the rules, known as the General Data Protection Regulation.

The company said it would appeal the decision.

"This decision relates to an incident from 2018. We took immediate action to fix the problem as soon as it was identified," Meta said in a statement. The company said it "proactively informed people impacted" as well as the Irish watchdog. When it first disclosed the problem,

Facebook said 50 million user accounts were affected. But the actual number was around 29 million, including 3 million in Europe, the Irish watchdog said Tuesday.

The company has said that after discovering the bug, it alerted the FBI and regulators in the US and Europe. The hack involved three distinct bugs in Facebook's "View As" feature, which let people see how their profiles appear to others. The attackers used the vulnerability to steal access tokens from the accounts of people whose profiles came up in searches using the "View As" feature. The attack then moved from one user's Facebook friend to another. Possession of those tokens would allow attackers to

control those accounts.

Court defers order for survey of mosque

Jaunpur (UP): A Jaunpur court has postponed the date of passing order for the survey of Atala Masjid here till March 2, 2025 in view of the Supreme Court's instructions to all courts to refrain from passing orders in cases related to religious places under the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991. In a similar matter, a court in Budaun on Tuesday said it will decide on December 24 whether a hearing will be held in the Jama Masjid Shamsi versus Neelkanth temple case. The dispute started in 2022 when Mukesh Patel, the then convener of Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha, claimed

that the Neelkanth Mahadev temple

existed at the Jama Masjid Shamsi mosque site and sought permission to worship there.

In the Atala Masjid case, the suit was filed by the Swaraj Vahini Association (SVA) president Santosh Kumar Mishra. It sought the "disputed" property be declared 'Atala Devi Mandir' and followers of the Sanatan religion be allowed the right of worship at the site. The court of Civil Judge Junior Division Sudha Sharma on Monday postponed the date of passing the order for the

survey of Atala Masjid till March 2, District

Government Advocate Satish Chandra

No bail to IPS officer's husband

Mumbai: A special court him with the crime, the here has denied bail to Purushottam Chavan, husband of an IPS officer, in an alleged Rs 263 crore Income Tax refund fraud case, saying there is prima facie evidence to show his involvement in "layering proceeds of the crime".

Chavan was arrested in May this year and is currently in judicial custody.

Special judge, A C Daga, hearing cases pertaining to the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) denied the bail on Monday.

Chavan, in connivance with co-accused in the case, laundered money to the tune of Rs 11 crore in India and abroad, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has alleged in its supplementary chargesheet.

Chavan's bail plea claimed that his arrest was "suspicious and he has not

committed any offence". In the plea, he said that his name is not in the original FIR or the initial chargesheet.

The evidence against him is circumstantial and is based on the statement of the co-accused, he said, adding that no reasonable ground is made out to link plea said.

Trial has not yet commenced and prolonged pretrial detention is violative of the right given under the Constitution of India, he said.

its order, noted that there is nothing on record to show that "there is delay in trial on the part of the complainant".

the accused will be decided today (Monday), then natucharge," the court said.

not be said that Article 21 of the Constitution of India for speedy trial is violated and there is prolonged incarceration," it observed.

ening disease.

However the court in

"The bail application of

rally the matter will proceed for framing of "At this juncture, it can-

The court noted that

"there is prima facie evidence on record showing involvement of the accused in layering proceeds of the crime and has received proceeds of the crime from coaccused". On the medical condition cited by the accused, the court said there is nothing on record which show that the accused is suffering from life-threat-



Smriti Mandhana plays a shot during the second T20 cricket match between India and West Indies at D Y Patil Sports Stadium in Navi Mumbai on Tuesday.

WI beat India by nine wickets

Navi Mumbai: West Indies beat India by nine wickets in the second women's T20 International to level the three-match series 1-1 here on Tuesday.

Captain Hayley Matthews led from the front with 85 not out off 47 balls as the West Indies chased down the target of 160 with 26 balls to spare.

Mathews' opening partner Qiana Joseph chipped in 38 with while one-down Shemaine Campbelle made 29 not out as the visitors reached 160 for 1 in 15.4 Saima Thakor took the

lone West Indies wicket. Earlier, invited to bat India posted 159 for 9 in their allotted 20 overs with opening batter and stand-in captain Smriti Mandhana top-scoring with a 41-ball 62. Richa Ghosh made 32 off 17 balls.

For West Indies, captain Matthews (2/36), Afy Fletcher (2/28), Deandra Dottin (2/14) and Chinelle Henry (2/37) took two wickets apiece.

Regular captain Harmanpreet Kaur was rested as she had sustained a niggle while batting in the first match which India had won by 49 runs on Sunday. Raghvi Bist made her India debut, coming in place of Kaur.

Brief Scores:

India: 159 for 9 in 20 overs (Smriti Mandhana 62. Richa Ghosh 32: Hayley Matthews 2/36, Afy Fletcher 2/28, Deandra Dottin 2/14, Chinelle Henry 2/37).

West Indies: 160 for 1 in 15.4 overs (Hayley Matthews 85 not out; Salima Thakor 1/28)

Shah slams Congress

New Delhi: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday attacked the Congress for bringing various amendments to the Constitution, saying the opposition party considered it as the "private fiefdom" of one family and amended it to remain in power.

Replying to a discussion on the "Glorious Journey of 75 Years of the Constitution of India", Shah also accused the Congress of being antireservation and said it never worked for the benefit of the backward classes.

The minister also chided the Congress for "finding faults" in EVMs.

At the outset, he noted that the Constitution strengthened the roots of democracy and the transfer of power happens without shedding even a drop of blood. Shah listed many amendments made to the Constitution by the Congress, claiming the party

did so for its own benefit. Even before the first elections in the country, Jawaharlal Nehru effected the first Constitutional amendment to curtail the freedom of expression, he claimed.

"The Congress considered the Constitution as 'private fiefdom' of one family and deceived Parliament."

Tethered drones at Maha Kumbh

Pandey said.

Mahakumbh Nagar (UP): Tethered drones have been deployed in the Maha Kumbh area to provide comprehensive aerial surveillance ahead of next year's event, officials said on Tuesday.

The high-tech device capable of capturing highresolution images, videos, and sensor data leaves no corner of Mahakumbh Nagar unmonitored, they said. Held every 12 years, the

Maha Kumbh is scheduled to take place in Prayagraj from January 13 to February 26.

The state-of-the-art system is a major step towards safeguarding the devotees, officials said, adding that Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Rajesh Dwivedi has appointed an expert team to oversee its operation.

Calling it a unique and advanced security tool, Dwivedi highlighted its ability to switch to alert mode within seconds.

"The tethered drone's secure data transmission ensures that it captures every detail, big or small, from above, making it a cornerstone of the hi-tech security measures in place," the officer said, adding that it will act as an "third eye" of the police.

Positioned strategically, the drones are monitoring the Sangam bank, crowded ghats, temples, and other significant locations. They can instantly alert officers about any developments, Dwivedi said.

Deployed at a fixed height using ropes attached to large balloons, these drones have been installed on the high towers across Mahakumbh Nagar.

Their elevated position allows them to provide continuous monitoring of the entire Mela area without the need for frequent adjustments. Dwivedi said.

With their high-resolution cameras, these drones transmit real-time footage to the control room, enabling the identification of the overcrowded areas and immediate deployment of police personnel.

They are also instrumental in detecting any suspicious activities from a considerable distance. making them a vital part of the hi-tech security measures put in place for the Maha Kumbh.

-PTI

NDA, Congress wrangle on Sengol's significance

New Delhi: Sengol, a symbol of transfer of power from the British that has been installed in Parliament, was at the centre of a BJP-Congress verbal duel in Rajya Sabha on Tuesday as the Congress claimed that an untrue story was told about its significance and the government countered it.

The opposition parties, mainly Congress members, objected to the mention of Sengol by Union Minister Bhupender Yadav during a discussion on the "Glorious Journey of 75 Years of The

Constitution of India" in the Upper House.

Yadav said that when the Sengol was given during the transfer of power at the time of independence, it

was treated as a "walking

stick" of Nehru instead of symbol of justice. Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, however, objected to the remarks, saying that it was not given to anyone. Yadav then said that the Congress member has not spoken on where the Sengol

was kept for the past 75 Rajiv Shukla, who was presiding the House, allowed Ramesh to speak.

Ramesh said that the ruling party has spread a story about the Sengol and "this is not history'

"It was not handed over formally to someone. Some people came and gave Sengol in a celebration and they have created a history out of it," he said. Making an intervention,

Leader of the House JP Nadda said that Lord Mountbatten had asked Nehru about the process or ritual or tradition of handing over power in India when the country was getting independence. But Nehru stated that he was not aware of any such tradition or ritual.

Nadda mentioned that C Rajagopalachari informed about the tradition of transfer of power through Sengol as was prevalent in the Chola dynasty.

The BJP MP also said that the same Chola dynasty members had attended the ceremony of the installation of the Sengol in Parliament.

Nadda said the Sengol was brought from Madras by air and handed over through a ritual, probably on August 14, 1947, to Nehru at his residence. He said that the Sengol was sent to Anand Bhawan and thereafter kept in a museum where it was written that it was Nehru's walking stick.

The remark led to an uproar as the opposition MPs contested it. Shukla, who was in the Chair, asked Nadda if he would "authenticate" this, to which the BJP leader replied in the affirmative.

In his speech, Yadav took a jibe at the Congress leaders, saying some people "do not respect the Constitution, they roam around keeping (a copy of) the Constitution in their pocket".

The BJP never opposed issues connected with the progress of the country, he said. The Congress, on the other hand, opposed GST and the new Parliament, he said, adding the BJP works on the principle of "nation first". "The founder of this party (erstwhile Bharatiya Jana Sangh), Syama Prasad Mookerjee, sacrificed his life for Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Under pressure from Muslim clergies, you brought an amendment in Parliament. The SC always said triple talaq should go, you did not have courage, you were doing appeasement politics."



J.P. Nadda, President, BJP

DIGI-EXAM system, policy to allot centres, transition to CBT

system to check impersonation, multi-stage and multisession testing, test centre allocation policy, setting up secured test centres in each district and mobile testing centres in rural and remote areas are among the recommendations made by the Centre's high-level panel on exam reforms.

The report by the sevenmember panel headed by former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chief R Radhakrishnan was made public on Tuesday.

The panel noted that there was a strong case for transition from pen-andpaper based tests to Computer Based Test (CBT) as the preferred methodology while the challenges in reaching out to underserved areas could be network, test infrastructure and competent human resources.

The panel recommended the introduction of a DIGI-EXAM system on the lines of DIGI-YATRA to ensure that only the candidate writing the exam joined the intended programme.

"Essentially, multi-stage authentication of the candidate's identity is envisaged which makes use of Aadhar and biometrics and AI-based data analytics," it

The panel noted that the National Testing Agency (NTA) outstretched itself to accommodate diverse requests from many test indenting agencies for handling end-to-end operations of tests.



ly when registered partici-

pants exceed say, two lakh.

The parameters and meth-

odology of normalisation

process that is integral to

multi-session testing

should be well defined, es-

tablished, documented and

communicated transpar-

ently for each test," accord-

NEET-UG (National Eligi-

bility cum Entrance Test-

Undergraduate) could be a

viable possibility that

needs to be followed up. An

acceptable framework with

thresholds and test objec-

tives of scoring and rank-

ing at each stage, and num-

ber of attempts may be

NTA could target develop-

ing at least 1,000 secure

standard testing centres in

a phased manner in reputa-

This process may require

"The committee envi-

a "war-footing" approach, it

sions a testing centre allo-

cation policy to ensure that

ideally the candidates

should get a choice of test-

ing centre in their district

of residence," it said

government

ble

noted.

institutions.

It recommended that the

evolved," the panel said.

"Multi-stage testing for

ing to the report.

Representation Picture

"The NTA should primarily conduct entrance examinations. Enhancing its scope for other examinations may be considered after the capacity of the NTA is augmented," the panel said in its report.

Suggesting restructuring of the NTA, the committee recommended 10 specific verticals, headed at the director level. The verticals will be related to technology, products and operations, test security and surveillance

"The NTA needs to be manned with internal domain-specific human resources and a leadership team with domain expertise, proven experience and skill sets who should take charge of the testing process in the future," it said.

The committee also noted that the NTA should have an "empowered and accountable" governing body with three designated sub-committees to oversee test audit, ethics and transparency; nomination and staff conditions; and stakeholder relationships.

"Multi-session testing, spread over typically a few days to a couple of weeks could be adopted, especial-

Trusted question bank secured and trusted testing platform that facilitates secure storage of question paper, setting up one secure Standard Testing Centre (STC) in each district and Mobile Testing Centres (MTCs) to facilitate aspirational districts from rural, remote and inaccessible areas are among the recommendations made in the report.

"Typically, a large bus with seating capacity of 40-50 persons could accommodate 30 test takers and multiples of it could be deployed as necessary. MTCs should be equipped with secure servers that are connected to the command centre," it

Laying down a roadmap for testing centres, the panel suggested that it was possible to integrate such testing centres from Kendriya Vidyalyas, Navodaya Vidyalayas, reputable universities and institutes to establish a nationwide network of about 400-500 testing centres within a time frame of a year or so, which would provide about 2-2.5 lakh testing capacity for conducting CBT in one session

nationwide. The panel has also made some long-term recommendations, including harmonisation and unification of tests for undergraduate (UG) admissions, migration to Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT), transition to online mode for exam and coping with Information Security Advancements, among others.



Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma attends the celebrations of 117th National Day of Bhutan in Thimphu, Bhutan.

Indians died in Georgia are from Punjab

Amritsar: Congress MP Gurjeet Singh Aujla on Tuesday urged the Punjab government to take steps to bring back the bodies of Punjabis who were among 11 Indians who died in a restaurant in Georgia.

Eleven Indian nationals were found dead at a restaurant in Georgia's mountain resort of Gudauri, the Indian mission had said on Monday.

Georgia's Ministry of Internal Affairs had said the initial inspection found no signs of injury or violence. All victims died from carbon monoxide poisoning, local media reported, citing police.

The Indian mission in Tbilisi had said it was saddened to learn of the unfortunate passing of 11 Indian nationals in Gaudauri and extended its deepest condo-**-PTI** : lences to their families.

ED raids against Pakistaniowned betting portal the agency, is a "betting"

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate Tuesday said it has conducted fresh searches against the operatives of a betting website, owned by some Pakistani nationals, that also was involved in "illegal" broadcast of Men's T20 Cricket World Cup matches.

The searches were undertaken by the federal agency between December 10-12 in Delhi, Mumbai and Pune in the case against the portal, 'Maginwin'.

The ED's case, filed under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), is based on an FIR registered by the cyber crime unit of the Ahmedabad Police in Gujarat.

Bank deposits worth Rs 30 lakh were frozen during the raids apart from seizure of "incriminating" documents, the ED said in a statement.

Magicwin, according to

consider the mandatory re-

quirement of both the Acts

and granted bail to the re-

spondents in a very casual

and cursory manner, with-

out assigning any cogent

reasons, though they were

prima facie involved in a

very serious offence, noted

the bench's order on Decem-

bail orders were in "utter

disregard" of the mandatory

provisions of Code of Crimi-

nal Procedure and the

Scheduled Castes and

Scheduled Tribes (Preven-

tion of Atrocities) Act while

setting them aside.

The apex court held the

website "guised" as a gaming portal which is "actually owned" by Pakistani nationals. The operations of this website are mostly handled by Indian nationals working or settled in Dubai, it said.

"The betting games being shown on the website are originally played in the Philippines and other countries which allow betting activities," it said.

However, as per the investigation, the same is "re-telecast" on Magicwin's website by copying the APIs (application programming interface) of the original games.

The agency said betting activities llike deposits, placing of betting and withdrawal are "controlled" by the "owners" of Magicwin.

The ED claimed its probe found that that the money, deposited in the bank accounts by the players/betters, was "diverted" through layers of "shell and mule" bank accounts and further the profit part of the owners were invested in crypto assets, withdrawn in cash or sent to Dubai through Hawala channels.

The winning amounts of the players/betters were transferred to their bank accounts through merchant accounts of various shell companies maintained with payment gateways. These amounts were also transferred to the player's bank account though domestic money transfer (DMT), it said.

A "launch party" for the portal. where several "Btown celebrities" attended and endorsed Magicwin, is also under the scanner of the agency.

These celebrities also did video and photo-shoots for Magicwin.

Delhi-NCR schools

hold hybrid classes

Children help police nab convict who jumped furlough



New Delhi: A breakthrough provided by two children led to the arrest of a murder convict who had been evading the police since being released on furlough in the Narela area of Outer North Delhi, an official said on Tuesday.

The convict was apprehended on Monday after the children, both related to him, cooperated with the police to track him down.

According to the police, Sanjay had been sentenced to life imprisonment in a 2010 murder case.

He was out on furlough and was due to surrender on June 18, 2024, the police said, adding that he had requested the Supreme Court for interim relief, which was granted by the apex

However, Sanjay evaded the police even after the interim relief period "On December 2, the Su-

preme Court of India passed an order directing the Delhi Police to immediately arrest Sanjay and take all necessary steps in accordance with the law,' Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer North) Nidhin Valsan said.

The court also directed the police to file a compliance affidavit by January 2, 2025, he added.

Police said that despite extensive searches, they struggled to track Sanjay and their efforts to seek cooperation from his surety provider proved futile as he refused to assist.

"Our teams later reached out to the children of the surety provider -- a nineyear-boy and a 10-year-old girl, appealing for their help. Initially reluctant, the children were explained the seriousness of the matter and the police emphasised that their uncle was absconding in connection with a heinous crime," the DSP said.

"Through careful communication and repeated efforts, the police gained the trust of the children. In a crucial breakthrough, the children provided a phone number linked to Sanjay," said the DCP.

The police used technical surveillance to track Sanjay's location following which he was apprehended, he said.

lahabad High Court order granting bail to two persons, accused of kidnapping and gangraping a 14 year-old minor, and expressed displeasure for not making the survivor a party during the bail

plea hearing.

New Delhi: The Supreme

Court has set aside the Al-

A bench comprising Justices Bela M Trivedi and Satish Chandra Sharma asked the accused - Khargesh alias Golu and Karan - to surrender before the trial court on or before December 30. The bench in the process

allowed the survivor's plea, filed through advocate Pra-

Bail in gangrape case canceled nav Sachdeva, seeking cancellation of the bail granted by the Allahabad High

Taking a strong exception

President Droupadi Murmu with a recipient during the first convocation of

AIIMS Mangalagiri in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday.

Court.

to the fact that neither the accused nor the public prosecutor nor the Allahabad HC informed the minor survivor about the bail hearing, the bench said, "In the instant case, there is gross violation of the said statutory provisions contained in Section 439(1A) of CrPC and Section 15A(3) of the SC/ST Act, at the instance of the respondents."

The high court in the impugned order also did not

schools on Tuesday switched to the hybrid mode of conducting classes following the re-imposition of anti-pollution measures under the Stage 4 of the Graded Response

New Delhi: Delhi-NCR

Action Plan (GRAP). According to the revised GRAP schedule, classes for students in grades VI-IX and XI in Delhi, Gurugram, Faridabad, Ghaziabad and Gautam Buddh Nagar must operate in hybrid mode (physical and online) under Stage 4. However students of class X and XII have to attend

school in-person Pritika Gupta, principal of the Sovereign School in Rohini said, "We are conducting online classes for students up to Class 5, while classes from Class 6 onwards will be held offline.'

"As exams are approaching, students up to Class 5 will take their exams online, whereas those in higher classes will take them offline," Gupta added.

Chairperson of the Gitarattan School in Rohini, RN Jindal said, "Today, all classes are being conducted offline. However, we are planing to shift classes up to Class 5 to online mode, while classes from Class 6 onwards will remain

With exams approaching, many schools were conducting offline classes for children in junior and senior school.

Sudha Acharya, principal of ITL School in Dwarka, said, "All classes in our school will be conducted offline as exams and preboards for Classes 10 and 12 are approaching.'

She said, "Many parents have requested us to hold all classes offline as students are lacking behind in various activities due to online classes, so we will proceed accordingly."

The air quality in the national capital was in the 'severe' category on Tuesday morning with an AQI

The Stage 4 restrictions were imposed shortly after the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) implemented measures under Stage 3 earlier in the day when Delhi's AQI breached the 350 threshold.

Previously, all schools in Delhi had shifted to hybrid mode on November 25, before resuming in-person classes on December 5.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The reason that fixed terms ended in 1969 is because of the fact that we have in our country a parliamentary system... different

Houses, different majorities, different coalitions, may rise and fall at different times."

Shashi Tharoor, MP, Congress

Winter management plan to shield animals from pollution New Delhi: From water

sprinkling to control dust, to replacing firewood with stubble padding and using eco-friendly vehicles, Delhi Zoo authorities have implemented a range of measures as part of their winter management plan to protect the animals from pollution and cold weather.

The zoo officials have outlined proactive steps to mitigate both the direct and indirect effects of pollution on the premises as air quality in the national capital continues to deteriorate in the third week of December, officials said.

While the zoo's location in a relatively lower-lying area offers some natural protection, efforts to safeguard animals remain a top priority, an official told PTI.

"Pollution levels here are relatively lower due to the zoo's geography, but we are still taking various steps to protect the animals," he

To address local sources of pollution, the zoo has minimised the use of diesel vehicles, switching to ecofriendly alternatives

"We have already re-



duced the number of highpolluting vehicles in the zoo and replaced them with cleaner, mini diesel-free op-

tions," the official said. Regular water sprinkling is also being carried out, particularly near the ring

to pollutants from outside. the official added, noting that fogger machines are being used to spray water and further suppress dust and airborne pollutants. Highlighting long-term

road and other areas prone

measures, the official added that extensive tree plantations within the zoo premises are helping maintain a clean and green environment. These green initiatives, combined with other steps, contribute to better air quality within the

premises Dust control has been integrated into the zoo's daily cleaning routine. "Before sweeping roads or animal enclosures, water sprinkling is done to prevent dust from rising. Zookeepers have been instructed to avoid unnecessary activities that could contribute to pollution," the official said.

The air quality in the national capital was in the 'severe' category on Tuesday morning, with an AQI of 427, while the minimum temperature was 5.9 degrees Celsius, two notches below normal.

-PTI

Gold jewellery consumption to grow

Mumbai: The domestic gold jewellery consumption in value terms is expected to continue its growth momentum in the current financial year and is likely to witness an onyear rise of 14-18 per cent, a report said on Tuesday.

Rating agency Icra in a report said in FY25, gold jewellery consumption growth is pegged at 14-18 per cent in value terms, led by favourable realisations.

In 2023-24, gold jewellery consumption growth had witnessed a growth of 18 per cent in 2023-24, primarily driven by realisations even as volume growth was subdued.

According to the report, while gold prices were volatile, improving consumer sentiments and festive-led demand aided consumption growth in the recent months.

Moreover, a sharp 900 bps cut in import duty in the Union Budget in July 2024, and consequent correction in gold prices for a brief period led to some pre-buying of jewellery as well as bars and coins during the second quarter of FY25, which is generally a seasonally weak quarter, it

This, coupled with higher number of auspicious and wedding days, and favourable monsoons aiding better rural output, is likely to help jewellery demand growth in H2 FY25, it added

'The organised market is projected to record a healthy YoY expansion of 18-20 per cent in FY25. Planned store additions with focus on tier II and III



cities, rising gold prices, shift in preferences towards branded jewellery and some likely pre-buying in the fourth quarter of FY25 on account of higher number of auspicious days in the first quarter of FY26 shall drive

"The customs duty cut is also expected to disincentive unofficial imports, thus supporting the growth in organised trade," Icra Vice President and Sector Head - Corporate Ratings, Sujoy Saha

Revenue growth for organisedjewellery in FY24 had been supported by realisations with gold prices rising by 14 per cent YoY, the report said, adding that the same trend is expected to continue this fiscal as well.

So far in the current fiscal, the average gold price has risen by a sharp 25 per cent. There were occasional corrections in prices, once after the cut in customs duty in late July 2024 and then in November 2024, following the US elections and currency

The continuing uptick in the gold prices for the last seven quarters has been stimulated by the evolving global economic and geopolitical scenario, and rising investment demand for gold, it said.

On the supply side, organisedjewellers are expected to add 16-18 per cent to their existing retail network in FY25, said the

Most large jewellers are opting for the franchise model to expand into new markets given the twin benefits of low capital expenditure and knowledge of the local market with the franchisee-partner, it

The Indian economy

grew 6.7 per cent in the first

quarter and 5.4 per cent in

About inflation, Sithara-

man said it is better con-

trolled in the NDA regime,

whereas under the UPA, it

Retail inflation in April-

October 2024-25 stood at 4.8

per cent, the lowest since

the Covid pandemic, she

noted. Sitharaman said the

unemployment rate has

come down from 6 per cent

in 2017-18 to 3.2 per cent

touched double digits.

July-September period.

Icra estimates the in-

dustry operating margin in FY25 to contract by 50-70

bps from 7.2-7.4 per cent

levels of FY23 and FY24. Nevertheless, Icra expects the debt protection metrics of its sample set to remain comfortable, with interest cover projected to improve to 6.2-6.4 times in FY25 from 6 times in FY24. driven by a rise in operating profit at an absolute level and a proportionately lower rise in interest cost due to the adoption of a more capital-efficient franchise route for store

Most organised players have outlined expansion of their retail presence over the medium-term. while this is likely to translate into market share gains, the margin could moderate due to frontloaded expenses, added the

additions by the retailers.

Par Panel bats for legal guarantee of MSP

New Delhi: A parliamentary panel on Tuesday recommended the government implement a legally binding minimum support price for agricultural produce, arguing that such a measure could significantly reduce farmer suicides and provide financial stability.

The Standing Committee on Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Food Processing, headed by Congress MP Charanjit Singh Channi, submitted a comprehensive report to Parliament highlighting the potential benefits of a legally guaranteed MSP.

"The committee strongly recommends that the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare declare a roadmap for implementing MSP as a legal guarantee at the earliest," the report stated.

The government fixes MSP for 23 commodities based on the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices recommendations.

The panel argued that a legally binding MSP would not only safeguard farmers' livelihoods but also promote rural economic growth and enhance national food security.

Key recommendations include: implementing a robust MSP system to mitigate farmer suicides, providing compensation to farmers for managing crop residue, establishing a National Commission for Minimum Living Wages for Farm Labourers, introducing a debt waiver scheme for farmers and farm

The committee emphasized that assured income through MSP would encourage farmers to invest **-PTI** in agricultural practices.



An artisan works on a papier-mache item ahead of Christmas celebrations in

'Vivad Se Vishwas' covers all appeals pending as on July 22

New Delhi: The Income Tax Department has said that all appeals pending as on July 22, 2024, irrespective of whether they have been subsequently disposed of or withdrawn, will be eligible for the Vivad Se Vishwas Scheme, 2024.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has issued a fresh set of FAQs on the Vivad Se Vishwas Scheme, 2024, under which taxpayers willing to take advantage of the dispute resolution scheme are required to file a declaration by December 31.

Issuing the second set of FAQs for the VSV Scheme, the CBDT said it had received several queries regarding the scheme and this FAQ will help in creating "better awareness and understanding".

It has now been clarified that if a taxpayer was eligible to apply for direct tax VSV Scheme, 2024 as the appeal was pending as on July 22, 2024, but before the taxpayer could file a declaration under the DT (Direct Tax) VSV Scheme, 2024, the appeal has been disposed of. such cases would be considered as eligible for settlement under the scheme and the disputed tax will be calculated in the same manner as if the appeal is yet to be

It has also been clarified that to be eligible for payment of a lower rate of the disputed amount, what is important is the filing of the declaration on or before December 31, 2024, and not payment before that date.

disposed of.

The payment of the disputed amount is required to be made within 15 days of the date of receipt of certificate issued in Form No. 2 by

Another important clarification which was missing in the first set of FAQs and has been included now is related to the applicability of secondary adjustment under transfer pricing if the taxpayer avails DTVSV Scheme, 2024.

"It has been clarified that the secondary adjustment will be applicable in such cases unless the case pertains to Assessment Year 2016-17 or earlier years when the provisions of secondary adjustment were not in place," Garg said.

The scheme was announced in 2024-25 Budget on July 23, 2024, and notified on October 1.

-PTI



Hyderabad on Tuesday.

'Lower GDP growth a temporary blip

India continues to be the

fastest-growing major

economy in the world, Si-

The second quarter

growth is only a "tempo-

rary blip", and the econo-

my will see healthy growth

in the coming quarters, Si-

The finance minister

further said there is no

broad-based slowdown in

the manufacturing sector.

Half of the sectors within

the overall manufacturing

basket continue to remain

tharaman added

tharaman said.

Investments structured

Mumbai: About a fifth of all investments by AIFs has been structured to circumvent existing financial regulations like the ones on non-performing assets classification, Sebi's wholetime member Ananth Narayan G said on Tuesday.

In a consultation paper floated in January, Sebi had pegged the circumvention by the industry at Rs 30,000 crore. The year also saw the Reserve Bank acting strongly against banks' AIF investments by asking for higher provisioning on such bets because of such concerns.

Addressing an event on Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) organized by CII here, Narayan said the industry has been pressing for light-touch regulations, but made it clear that it is the structuring of the funds for circumventing existing laws which is a deterrent on the same.

"'...of the Rs 4.5 lakh crore of investments (by AIFs), around Rs 1 lakh crore...has been questionable in terms of the regulatory intent behind those investments," he said.

"More than 20 per cent of the drawdown is not a small number. And this is just what we've seen."

Scindia, Ramesh lock horns over linking satcom spectrum New Delhi: Union telecom

minister JyotiradityaScin-"A scam that not just led to dia and Congress leader Jairam Ramesh locked a colossal loss of Rs 1,76,645 horns over linking speccrore to the exchequer, but trum assignment process also gave governmentfor satellite companies approved in-principle by the NDA regime with 2G case during the UPA tenure.

Scindia said the country cannot forget the "2G scam"- a blot on history.

The current regime has decided to approve allocation of spectrum to satellite communication companies without auction through administrative process.

Telecom operators Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel, and Vodafone Idea have opposed administrative allocation of spectrum to satcom players where Elon Musk-led Starlink is also in the fray to launch services in India.

Scindia has said satellite spectrum cannot be auctioned due to technical and operational reasons.

The minister has on several occasions said even administrative allocation of spectrum to satcom players will be done at a price recommended by the TRAI. Scindia was responding corporate collaboration its worst name, a.k.a crony capitalism. The Modi government prioritises transparency and public interest -- mobile telephony spectrum is now auctioned." **Jyotiraditya Scindia**

to Ramesh's post on X that linked the process of inprinciple approval by the current government to that of administrative spectrum allocation process during the UPA regime.

Ramesh said the government has stated on record that "spectrum assigned administratively are also chargeable and hence contribute to revenue" a position contrary to what the Prime Minister has been loudly proclaiming for many years.

"Recall that the BJP reaped huge political dividends from the media frenzy generated by its proxies in the government over the

UPA's allocation of 2G spectrum by administrative processes rather than auctions. Fraudulent revenue loss projections and an overactive judiciary ended up doing huge damage to the investment environment in telecoms," he said.

Ramesh said at the end of an exhaustive trial, the CBI court acquitted all the accused, stating in strongest terms that the entire affair was built on "public perception created by rumour, gossip and speculation".

"This is the reality of the Modi government and its propaganda machine. Of its cronies, for its cronies, and The judgement

stated that there is no evidence on the record produced before the court indicating any criminality in the acts allegedly committed by the accused and that the government's chargesheet was based mainly on misreading, selective reading, non-reading and out of context reading of the official record."

Jairam Ramesh

by its cronies," Ramesh

said. Last week, Trinamool

Congress MP Jawahar Sircar had also linked the NDA satcom spectrum assignment process with that of the 2G case during the UPA regime.

Five firms seek to set up e-comm export hubs

New Delhi: As many as five more firms have submitted their applications to the government to set up e-commerce export hubs in the country and a decision on this is expected soon, a senior official said.

New Delhi: Finance Min-

ister Nirmala Sitharaman

on Tuesday said the lower-

than-expected GDP growth

of 5.4 per cent in the second

quarter was a "temporary

blip" and the economy will

see healthy growth in the

Replying to a debate in

the Lok Sabha on the first

batch of Supplementary

Demands for Grants, she

said India has seen "steady

and sustained" growth and

its GDP growth rate has

averaged 8.3 per cent in the

coming quarters.

last three years.

Logistics aggregator Shiprocket and air cargo handling company Cargo Service Centre (CSC) have already been selected by the government on a pilot basis to set up these hubs in the country.

"We have received five more applications, including from DHL and Lexship.

Out of the five, we have shortlisted three. We are going to decide on these applications soon," the official said.

Two of the hubs will come in and around Delhi airport and begin operations in February next

It will have facilities for expedited customs and security clearance in-house. Provision for quality and certifying agencies will also happen within the

It will also have an easy re-import policy, he added.



This policy will enable the return of e-commerce consignments and rejects without payment of import

The official said that

based on the feedback received from these firms on the running of these pilots, the government will come out with detailed guidelines to set up more such hubs across the country. These guidelines will require policy tweaks or regulatory tweaks in different departments.

The move assumes significance as India is looking at tapping into the growing export opportunities in this segment. Ecommerce exports have the potential to grow to over USD 100 billion by 2030 and then further to USD 200-250 billion in the coming years.

As per estimates, global e-commerce exports are expected to touch USD 2

trillion in 2030 from USD 800 billion now. India's exports through this medium are only about USD 5 billion compared to China's USD 250 billion annually.

China, which is a leader in e-commerce exports, is also a pioneer in export hubs for e-commerce. China's exports through this route are 6.4 per cent of its total merchandise exports

In the Foreign Trade Policy of 2023, the intent and roadmap for setting up e-commerce export hubs were outlined.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"We have to reduce the cost. And for that reason, my request to all of you is that how it is possible for us, to have Made in India machinery, which is our dream and which is the mission for all of us."



Nitin Gadkari,

Union Minister, Roadways

15-year-old girl fatally shoots teacher

Madison: A 15-year-old student opened fire inside a study hall at a small Christian school in Wisconsin, killing a teacher, teenager and prompting a swarm of police officers responding to a second grader's 911 call. The female student wounded six others in Monday's shooting at Abundant Life Christian School, including two students who were in critical condition, Madison Police Chief Shon Barnes said. A teacher and three students were taken to a hospital with less serious injuries, and two of them were later released.

"Every child, every person in that building is a victim and will be a victim forever. ... We need to figure out and try to piece together what exactly happened," Barnes said. Police said the shooter, identified as Natalie Rupnow, was found with a self-inflicted gunshot wound when officers arrived and died en route to a hospital. Barnes declined to offer additional details about the shooter, partly out of respect for the family. Abundant Life is a nondenominational Christian school — prekindergarten through high school — with approximately 420 students in

Madison, the state capital. Barbara Wiers, the school's director of elementary and school relations, said when they prac-



tice safety routines, leaders always announce that it's a drill. That didn't happen Monday, just a week before Christmas break. "When they heard, Lockdown, lockdown,' they knew it was real," she said. Wiers said the school does not have metal detectors but uses other security measures including cameras. A motive for the shooting was not immediately known, nor was it clear if the victims were targeted, Barnes said.

"I don't know why, and I feel like if we did know why, we could stop these things from happening," he told reporters.Barnes said police were talking with the shooter's father and other family members, who were cooperating, and searching the shooter's home. "He lost someone as well," Barnes said of the shooter's father, "And so we're not going to rush the information. We'll take our time and make sure we do our due diligence." The first 911 call to report an active shooter came in

responders who were in training just 3 miles (about 5 kilometers) away dashed to the school for an actual emergency, Barnes said. They arrived three minutes after the initial call.

Investigators believe the shooter used a 9mm pistol, a law enforcement official told The Associated Press. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to discuss the ongoing investigation. Police blocked off roads around the school, and federal agents were at the scene to assist local law enforcement. No shots were fired by police.

Children and families were reunited at a health clinic about a mile (1.6 kilometers) from the school. Parents pressed children against their chests while others squeezed hands and shoulders as they walked side by side. Abundant Life asked for prayers in a brief Facebook post. Wiers said they're still deciding whether they will resume

classes this week. Bethany Highman, the mother of a student, rushed to the school and learned over FaceTime that her daughter was OK. "As soon as it happened, your world stops for a minute. Nothing else matters,' Highman said. "There's nobody around you. You just bolt for the door and try to do everything you can as a parent to be with your kids." In a statement, President Joe Biden cited the tragedy in calling on Congress to pass universal background checks, a national red flag law and certain gun restrictions.

"We can never accept senseless violence that traumatizes children, their families, and tears entire communities apart," Biden said. He spoke with Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers and Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway and offered his support. Evers said it's "unthinkable" that a child or teacher would go to school and never return home. The school shooting was the latest among dozens across the US in recent years, including especially deadly ones in Newtown, Connecticut; Parkland, Florida; and Uvalde, Texas.

The shootings have set off fervent debates about gun control and frayed the nerves of parents whose children are growing up accustomed to doing active shooter drills in their classrooms. -AP



AKD visits Mahabodhi

Gava: Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake on Tuesday visited Bodh Gaya in Bihar's Gaya district and prayed at the Mahabodhi Temple, a UN-ESCO world heritage site.

After arriving at Gaya International Airport, Dissanayake went straight to the 1,500-year-old Mahabodhi Temple, one of the four holy sites related to the life of the Lord Buddha, and particularly to the attainment of Enlightenment.

The Sri Lankan president was received by Bihar ministers Prem Kumar and Santosh Kumar Suman and senior officials of the district administration at the

Dissanayake, accompanied by Gaya District Magistrate Thiyagarajan SM, Bodhgaya Temple Management Committee (BTMC) secretary MahashwetaMaharathi and others, offered prayers at the temple.

He also offered prayers and flowers under the sacred Bodhi Tree.

Pope reveals bombing plot during 2021 Iraq visit

Rome: Pope Francis turned 88 on Tuesday and marked the occasion with revelations that he almost didn't make it. According to excerpts of his upcoming autobiography, suicide bombers had planned to attack him during his 2021 visit to Iraq, but were killed before striking.

Italian daily Corriere della Sera on Tuesday ran excerpts of "Hope: The Autobiography," written with Italian author Carlo Musso, which is being released in more than 80 countries next month. The New York Times ran other excerpts Tuesday, Francis' 88th birthday.

In the Italian excerpts, Francis recalled his historic March 2021 trip to Iraq, the first ever by a pope. COVID-19 was still raging and security concerns were high, especially in Mosul. The devastated northern city had been the headquarters of Islamic State militants, whose horrific reign had largely emptied the region of its Chris-

According to the book, British intelligence informed Iraqi police as soon as Francis arrived in Baghdad that a woman wearing explosives was heading toward Mosul and was planning to blow herself up during the papal visit. "And that a truck was heading there fast with the same intention," Francis says in the book.

tian communities

The visit went ahead as planned, albeit under tight security, and became one of the most poignant of all of Francis' foreign trips: Standing in the wreckage of a Mosul church, Francis urged Iraq's Christians to forgive the injustices against them by Muslim

extremists and to rebuild. In the book, Francis said he later asked his Vatican security detail what became of the suicide

"The commander replied laconically They're no longer here," Francis writes. "Iraqi police had intercepted them and made them explode. This struck me as well: Even this is the poisonous fruit of war.'

The book, originally planned to be published after Francis' death, is coming out at the start of the Vatican's big Holy Year, which Francis will officially inaugurate on Christmas Eve.

According to Italian publisher Mondadori, "Hope" is the first autobiography ever published by a pope. Francis, however, has published other firstperson, memoir-style books or book-length interviews with biographers and journalists, including "Life: My Story Through History," published earlier this year.

NSA Ajit Doval in Beijing

shortly before 11 a.m. First



Beijing: National Security Advisor Ajit Doval arrived here on Tuesday to take part in the India-China Special Representatives' talks to be held on Wednesday aimed at restoring the bilateral ties stalled for over four years' due to the military standoff in eastern Ladakh

Doval will hold the 23rd round of the Special Representatives' (SR) talks with his Chinese counterpart and Foreign Minister Wang Yi and was expected to discuss a range of issues to rebuild the bilateral ties following the October 21 agreement of disengagement and patrolling in eastern Ladakh between the two countries.

Ahead of crucial talks, China said on Tuesday that it is ready to honour commitments based on the common understandings

reached between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping during their meeting at Kazan in Russia on the sidelines of the BRICS summit on October 24.

The External Affairs Ministry said on Monday said, "as agreed during the meeting of the two leaders in Kazan on October 23, the two SRs will discuss the management of peace and tranquility in the border areas and explore a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution to the boundary question".

After Modi-Xi meeting, which was their first after five years, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart met on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Brazil followed by a meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordina-

"China stands ready to work with India to deliver on important common reached between our two leaders. enhance mutual trust and mutual confidence through dialogue and communication. honour our commitments and promote our bilateral relations to go back to the sound and steady growth."

> Lin Jian, Chinese **Foreign Ministry** spokesman

tion on China-India Border Affairs (WMCC).

The military standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh began in May 2020 and followed by a deadly clash at the Galwan Valley in June that year resulted in a severe strain in ties between the t w o neighbours.



aftermath of Cyclone Chido.

Two cops killed in terror attack

Peshawar: Terrorists hurled grenades at a police check-post in Pakistan's restive northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Tuesday, killing at least two policemen and injuring three, police said.

The terror attack took place in the Chakesar area in the mountainous Shangla district. The terrorist threw the hand grenade and opened fire on the check-post before fleeing the scene, officials said.

Two policemen were killed and three others wounded in the terrorist grenade attack on the police check-post in Chakesar, police said.

The injured police officers were immediately transported to a hospital in Battagram, they added.

However, no one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. Terrorist attacks have

been rampant in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, targeting especially the law enforcement and security forces.

The third quarter (July-September) of 2024 saw a sharp increase in fatalities of terrorist violence and counter-terrorism campaigns, with a 90 per cent surge in violence, according to a report issued by

the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS)

A total of 722 people were killed, including civilians, security personnel, and outlaws, while 615 others were wounded in as many as 328 incidents recorded during the period under review.

Nearly 97 per cent of these fatalities occurred in Khyber and Balochistan marking the highest percentage in a decade, and over 92 per cent of these incidents of terror attacks and security forces' operations were recorded in the same provinces.

Russian general killed by bomb

general was killed Tuesday by a bomb hidden in a scooter outside his apart- Kirillov as a "war criminal ment building in Moscow, a and an entirely legitimate day after Ukraine's security agency levelled criminal charges against him.

A Ukrainian official said the country's security service carried out the attack. Lt. Gen. Igor Kirillov, the

chief of the military's nuclear, biological and chemical protection forces, was killed as he left for his Kirillov's assistant also

died in the bombing, which was triggered remotely, according to Russian news reports. Images from the scene showed shattered windows and scorched and blackened brickwork.

Kirillov was under sanctions from several countries, including the UK and Canada, for his actions in Moscow's war in Ukraine On Monday, Ukraine's Security Service, or SBU, opened a criminal investigation against him, accusing him of directing the use of banned chemical weapons.

An official with the SBU said the agency was behind the attack. The official, who spoke on condition of ano-

Moscow: A senior Russian nymity because they were not authorised to release the information, described target.

> The SBU has said it recorded more than 4,800 occasions when Russia used chemical weapons on the battlefield since its fullscale invasion in February 2022. In May, the US State Department said in a statement that it had recorded the use of chloropicrin, a poison gas first deployed in World War I, against Ukrainian troops.

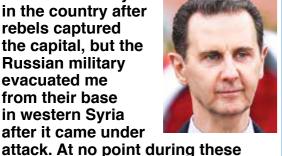
Russia has denied using any chemical weapons in Ukraine and, in turn, has accused Kyiv of using toxic agents in combat

Kirillov, who took his current job in 2017, was one of the most high-profile figures to level those accusations. He held numerous briefings to accuse the Ukrainian military of using toxic agents and planning to launch attacks with radioactive substances claims that Ukraine and its Western allies rejected as propaganda.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine, several prominent figures have been killed in targeted attacks.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"I wanted to stay in the country after rebels captured the capital, but the **Russian military** evacuated me from their base in western Syria after it came under



events did I consider stepping

down or seeking refuge.'

Bashar Assad, Ousted President, Syria

Ukraine looks for creative ways to raise money Kyiv:The concert took

-PTI

place in an old movie studio in Kyiv, the location kept secret until the final moment in case it was the target of a Russian attack.

More than 1,000 soldiers and young people gathered to listen to the artists who joined forces with a military brigade in an innovative effort to raise funds for Ukraine's embattled troops.

This was the first and only live performance of the charity album "Epoch," a collaboration between the 3rd Assault Brigade and eight Ukrainian bands.

The project's ambitious target is to raise 50 million hryvnias (about USD 1.2 million) to buy an M113 armoured personnel carrier to help get infantry to the front and evacuate the wounded for medical treatment. Since it launched on streaming platforms a month ago, the initiative has raised 9 million hryvnias (around USD 214,000).

Grassroots fundraising for Ukrainian fighters dates back to 2014, the year Russia first annexed the southern region of Crimea and Moscow-backed separatists



launched an uprising in eastern Ukraine. At that time, Ukraine's defence was made up of a regular army supported by volunteer battalions who weren't financially supported by Kyiv's government. Selffunding was critical.

Now, advertisements pasted along the sidewalk in Kyiv ask for donations to help fill financial gaps across the military. By scanning a QR code, people can help buy anything from

to armoured cars for soldiers defending the nearly 1,000-kilometre front line. But some charities are

body warmers and drones

seeing a decline in individual donations in part because of the economic situation in the country.

Oleksandr Borodyn, one of the project's organisers, says the idea for the collaboration came from the challenge of continuing to drum up funds to support troops as the war is on the cusp of marking a three-

year milestone. "To raise the same beginning of the war, you need much more effort. That's why we came up with the idea that a musician could donate his or her art, and that art would earn money for the army," said Borodyn, a press officer for the 3rd Assault Brigade. The initiative comes as

amount of money as at the

US President Joe Biden is rushing out billions of dollars more in military aid before Washington's support for Kyiv's defences is thrown into question when Donald Trump takes office next month.

EDITORIAL

Caste Tinderbox

he custodial death of Somnath Vyankat Suryawanshi, a 35-year-old law student and anti-caste activist, in Parbhani district jail serves as a grim reminder of the potential for violence and unrest in Maharashtra. Suryawanshi, who had been detained alongside over 50 Dalit Bahujan youths for their alleged involvement in a recent outbreak of violence, died just hours after being sent to judicial custody. The circumstances surrounding his death, particularly the fact that he had been granted bail but died in police custody nonetheless, have sent shockwaves through the state. His tragic demise follows an already tense episode in Parbhani earlier this week when the desecration of a replica of the Constitution triggered violence.

What makes this event even more concerning is that it takes place days before the upcoming celebrations of the historic 1818 battle of Bhima-Koregaon (in Pune district) – an incident viewed as a symbol of Dalit pride. The Parbhani case echoes the tensions of the Bhima-Koregaon riots that erupted in late December 2017 and January 2018 - a period marked by violent clashes and the deepening divide between communities.

At the time, too, Fadnavis was CM. The Bhima-Koregaon riots, which started as a skirmish between Dalit and Maratha groups, quickly escalated into a statewide crisis, exacerbating long-standing tensions between the communities and drawing in national attention. The rioting led to massive damage to property and a hardening of identities in the state, while the state's handling of the aftermath, including the alleged targeting of activists and intellectuals, raised uncomfortable questions about the state's response to caste-based unrest.

Now, as he returns to the helm, the lesson for the CM from Bhima-Koregaon is clear: the authorities must be proactive in managing the tensions that frequently flare up around caste-based violence and protests. It is crucial that Chief Minister Fadnavis, who has returned to power in Maharashtra, takes swift action to prevent a repeat of the events of Bhima-Koregaon and ensure that the Parbhani tragedy does not spiral into widespread statewide unrest and spillover to other districts.

Suryawanshi's death has already sparked protests and outrage, particularly from the Dalit community, who view his demise as another example of systemic police brutality. While the political situation in Maharashtra is far more fluid than in 2018, underlying fault lines remain. The Parbhani violence risks further inflaming tensions between Dalit and upper-caste communities, particularly as caste-based politics continues to shape the discourse in the state.

The Chief Minister must act decisively to ensure that neither the state's institutions nor political rabble-rousers aggravate the violence. This begins with a full, throrough and transparent inquiry into Suryawanshi's death.

A takeaway of Bhima-Koregaon is that violence can quickly spread if it is allowed to fester without intervention. A repeat of the 2018 riots must be avoided at all costs. Fadnavis must rise to the occasion, showing that Maharashtra is capable of managing its deep-seated social divisions without allowing them to boil over into violent confrontations.

NATIONALISM FIRST

The Unsung Hero of 1971: General Jacob and India's Martial Supremacy



Rajeev Puri

ecember 16, 1971, is a day that forever altered the course of South Asian history, marking the culmination of India's triumph in the 1971 India-Pakistani war and the creation of Bangladesh. On this day, India achieved a victory that restored its martial confidence on the world stage as a formidable military power. At the heart of this victory was a moment of unparalleled significance: the surrender of 93,000 Pakistani soldiers in Dhaka, immortalized by the iconic photograph of Pakistani General A.A.K. Niazi handing his pistol to Indian Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora.

While the spotlight has often shone on the charismatic leadership of Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw and the figure of General Aurora, one crucial individual remains largely overlooked — General J.F.R. Jacob. The role played by Jacob, a man whose actions were instrumental in

Gen. Jacob's unwavering resolve and strategic brilliance were the linchpin of India's historic victory in the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War, securing not just a military triumph but the birth of a nation.

turning a strategic stalemate into a resounding victory, deserves greater recognition. Without his decisive actions and iron resolve, the humiliating defeat of Pakistan may never have come to pass, and the war could have concluded in an UN-brokered ceasefire, allowing Pakistan to avoid the full consequences of its defeat.

The irony is palpable. Just six years earlier, in the 1965 war, India found itself at the gates of Lahore, poised for a historic victory, only to be halted by international intervention. Pakistan, with its propaganda machine in overdrive, proclaimed a victory despite the fact that Indian forces were on the cusp of success. The celebrations in Pakistan on September 6 as their 'Liberation Day' only serve to underscore the false narrative of triumph.

But December 16 was different. That day, the surrender at the Ramna Race Course in Dhaka confirmed India's unequivocal victory. In stark contrast to Pakistan's manufactured claims of victory, the image of Niazi's surrender to Aurora sent shockwaves through Pakistan, triggering riots as the population grappled with the reality of their humiliation. No amount of propaganda could rewrite the narrative captured in that photograph, which spoke volumes about India's martial prowess. Today, India stands proudly at number four on the Global Firepower Index, a testament to its formidable military capabilities, an ascent that owes much to the confidence instilled in the armed forces by leaders like General

In his memoirs, General Jacob recalls the dire situation in the Eastern Sector: with only 3,000 men 30 miles from Dhaka and Niazi commanding 26,400 inside, a UN-sponsored ceasefire threatened India's gains. At this crucial moment, Manekshaw called, directing Jacob to go to Dhaka and secure the surrender.

Jacob's resolve was unshaken, despite knowing that the glory of the surrender would likely go to his superior, General



Aurora. He was determined to see this victory through, not just for the military but for the country's pride and the international reputation of India. Jacob's professionalism and selflessness stand as a shining example of Indian military leadership. While Manekshaw could have easily taken the surrender himself, he chose to let General Aurora, as the commander of the Eastern Command, claim that honour. Jacob, though aware that history would remember someone else, played a pivotal role in laying the groundwork for the surrender.

Upon reaching Dhaka, Jacob was met with resistance. Niazi and his commanders were prepared for a ceasefire, not a surrender. Jacob, alone and surrounded by hostile officers, remained calm under pressure. He demanded that Niazi read and sign the Instrument of Surrender, giving him 30 minutes to decide. Jacob's words were blunt: if Niazi refused, he would have no choice but to hand over the Pakistani prisoners to the Mukti Bahini, a feared Bengali liberation force that had already reached Dhaka. Jacob knew that this was a gamble; despite his small force, he had to secure the surrender or risk losing everything.

Even after 30 minutes of tense silence, Jacob's confidence never wavered. He entered Niazi's office and, when he received no response to his request for a decision, he took the silence as an acceptance. His next move was decisive. "You will surrender in the open at the Ramna Race Course," he told Niazi, further demanding that the Pakistani troops provide a guard of honour.

The surrender, when it finally took place at 4:30 PM was more than just a military victory—it was a moment of national pride for India. As 500,000 Bengalis cheered the arrival of a new nation, the humiliation of Pakistan was complete. The events of that day marked not just a military triumph but the birth of Bangladesh and a reaffirmation of India's place as a rising power in the world.

General J.F.R. Jacob, though not widelv remembered in the same breath as Manekshaw or Aurora, was the key to this victory. His strategic foresight, unwavering confidence, and deft handling of the surrender secured a victory that has echoed through the annals of history. The events of that momentous day remind us that military triumphs are not just about the battlefield but about leadership, timing and the courage to seize the moment. Today, as we commemorate Vijay Divas, let us remember General Jacob, the unsung hero whose actions ensured that India's victory was not just military, but absolute.

> (The author is a political commentator and a global affairs observer. Views personal.)

The Arab Spring: Democracy's Dream and its Unfinished Business

THIRTEEN YEARS AFTER THE ARAB SPRING. THE PRICE OF FREEDOM ACROSS WEST ASIA AND THE ARAB WORLD HAS BEEN MORE CHAOS AND INSTABILITY



Ruddhi Phadke

ore than a decade since the seismic tremors of the Arab Spring first rippled across the Middle East and North Africa, the outcomes remain as diverse and complex as the region itself. From the chaotic stalemate of Syria to the fragile transformations of Morocco and the simmering discontent in Bahrain, these movements have etched a lasting imprint on the political, social, and economic fabric of their nations. Yet nowhere are the consequences more tragic and instructive than in Yemen, where optimism collapsed into war, and Syria, where a revolution turned into one of the world's most prolonged humanitarian disasters.

The Arab Spring, triggered by a young Tunisian fruit vendor's selfimmolation in December 2010, inspired millions across the Arab world to demand accountability, reform, and dignity from deeply entrenched regimes. What began as hopeful protests in squares from Sanaa to Manama quickly morphed into bloody crackdowns, civil wars, and even broader geopolitical proxy struggles. While Tunisia has emerged—albeit shakily—as a democratic success story, countries such as Yemen, Syria, and Libya remain case studies in how revolutions can collapse into dysfunction and despair.

Yemen was swept into the revolutionary fervour soon after the uprising in Syria gained momentum in early 2011. Protests against President Ali Abdullah Saleh's 30-year rule were marked, at first, by optimism. Demonstrators called for Saleh's resignation and demanded political and economic reforms. Saleh's decades-long grip on power had been characterized by patronage, corruption, and growing inequality, which catalysed the anger of Yemen's youth and civil society.

Initially, Saleh offered minor concessions, including promises that he would not transfer power to his son. Yet the violence escalated. Clashes between government loyalists and protesters turned deadly, forcing the international community—primarily the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)—to intervene. In late 2011, Saleh agreed to step down in exchange for immunity from prosecution, transferring power to his deputy, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, in 2012.

However, Yemen's fragile transition collapsed within two years. The Houthi rebels—an Iran-aligned Shia insurgent group—exploited the political vacuum and seized the capital, Sanaa, in 2014. What began as an internal conflict quickly turned into a devastating proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran, with devastating consequences for civilians. Over 377,000 deaths have been recorded, millions have been displaced, and Yemen now stands as one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

Efforts to broker peace, including UN-sponsored negotiations and ceasefires, have been repeatedly sabotaged by shifting alliances and entrenched distrust. While other countries that experienced Arab Spring uprisings have begun to rebuild, Yemen remains trapped in a cycle of violence and hymenitarian despair.

violence and humanitarian despair.

Bahrain's uprising, which began in February 2011, carried echoes of its neighbours' struggles but was uniquely shaped by the island nation's sectarian divide. The Shia majority, long marginalized by the ruling Sunni





elite, took to the streets to demand democratic reforms, an end to corruption, and greater representation. The protests, centered in Manama's Pearl Roundabout, were met with a heavy-handed police crackdown that killed demonstrators and injured hundreds.

The ruling Al Khalifa family's response illustrated a blend of coercion and superficial reform. King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa promised investigations into police violence and reforms to address grievances. Yet when these measures failed to appease the protesters, a more forceful intervention followed. In March 2011, Saudi Arabia, backed by a GCC military coalition, sent troops into Bahrain to

quash the uprising. A state of emergency was declared, and opposition groups were suppressed with sweeping military and judicial powers.

Today, Bahrain remains a cautionary tale of unresolved grievances. Although the state projects an image of calm, the underlying tensions persist. Protests continue sporadically, but they are quickly quelled through surveillance, arrests, and intimidation. Bahrain's small size and geopolitical alignment with Saudi Arabia ensure it remains a key player in the Gulf, yet the sectarian cleavages that drove the uprising remain unresolved.

In contrast to Yemen and Bahrain, Morocco managed to chart a more peaceful trajectory through the Arab Spring. Demonstrations began in Rabat and other major cities, as citizens demanded democratic reforms, an end to corruption, and greater social justice. However, King Mohammed VI, who enjoys significant legitimacy, responded with a series of measured reforms that defused much of the unrest.

In March 2011, the king promised constitutional reforms and established a commission to draft a new framework that would address some of the protesters' demands. By July, a new constitution was approved in a nationwide referendum, winning support from 98% of voters. The reforms curtailed some of the king's powers while enhancing the role of the elected parliament. Subsequent parliamentary elections saw the moderate Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD) emerge as the dominant political force.

Although Morocco avoided the violent upheavals that consumed its neighbours, it is not without its challenges. Critics argue that many of the constitutional reforms were superficial and that the monarchy retains overwhelming control over policy and governance. Nevertheless, Morocco's experience stands out as a rare example where the Arab Spring fostered incremental progress rather than

Nowhere has the Arab Spring's tragic aftermath been more visible than in Syria, where it seems like open season after Assad's recent collapse.

The Arab Spring began as an awakening of hope—a collective call for dignity, justice, and reform. Yet its outcomes reflect the stark disparities within the region. Tunisia, the birth-place of the uprisings, remains the lone democratic success story, albeit with growing economic woes. Egypt's revolution led to a brief experiment

with democracy before the military reclaimed control. Libya, like Yemen and Syria, descended into warlordism and chaos.

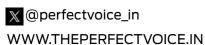
The unrest had also opened the door for extremist groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda to exploit power vacuums, exacerbating instability across the region. Syria's war spilled across borders, reshaping geopolitics in ways that continue to reverberate after Assad's fall. Yemen, once on the cusp of reform, now symbolizes the collapse of state institutions under the weight of external interference and internal divisions.

Bahrain and Morocco offer contrasting lessons. The former reveals the durability of Gulf monarchies, underpinned by external support and heavy-handed repression. Morocco, by contrast, demonstrates that carefully managed reforms—however limited—can prevent violent upheaval.

More than a decade on, the Arab Spring remains unfinished. Its legacy is visible in the bombed-out buildings of Sanaa, the enduring repression in Bahrain, and the hesitant reforms in Morocco. Syria stands as the most enduring and tragic reminder of what happens when peaceful demands for change are met with unchecked brutality.

The region's youth, who once filled squares with chants of hope, are now left to navigate the wreckage of failed revolutions, deepening economic crises, and entrenched authoritarianism. While the international community has provided humanitarian aid and facilitated peace talks, the broader aspirations of the Arab Spring like accountability, dignity and democracy remain elusive.

In the end, the Arab Spring was less a single event than a protracted reckoning. For Yemen, Bahrain, Morocco, and perennially strife-torn Syria, that reckoning continues, each on its own jagged and unfinished path.











- Indian Coast Guard personnel during a rehearsal for the Republic Day parade at Kartavya Path amid dense fog in New Delhi.
- Katy Perry performs at Q102's iHeartRadio Jingle Ball on Monday in Philadelphia.
- 3. Military personnel perform during 'Military Tattoo' on the occasion of 'Vijay Diwas 2024'.
- 4. People perform yoga during the Rishikesh Yoga Festival at Parmarth Niketan 'ashram' in Rishikesh of Uttarakhand.
- 5. Tourists take a boat ride on Ganga river in Varanasi on Monday.

All Pictures PTI, AP





FILMS & ME

Centenary Tribute to Raj Kapoor: An Ode to Awaara (1924 – 1988)



Shoma A. Chatterji

he centenary of Raj Kapoor is celebrated with great pomp and glory through the collaboration of several organizations like R.K. Films, Film Heritage Foundation, NFDC-National Film Archive of India in association with PVR-Inox and Cinepolis that have organized the public screenings across many theatres in India on the 13 th, 14 th and 15 th of December through tickets sold at a flat rate of Rs.100.00. The films screened were - Aag, Sangam, Barsaat, Awara, Mera Naam Joker, Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai, Jagte Raho, and Bobby. The films were screened in every corner of the country from Kerala to Assam, Odisha to Punjab.

The grand launch of the festival took place on December 13, 2024 in Mumbai in the presence of the entire RK family. Though Raj Kapoor turned producer at a very young age with Aag in 1948 when he was just 24, he tasted the obsessive drink called cinema and was obsessed with this creative form of art right till he passed away nearly four decades later soon after he had been bestowed the Dadasaheb Phalke Award for his rich contribution to cinema in May, 1980.

He was so critically ill at that time that he had to step into the award venue wearing an oxygen mask and the President of India walked down from the dias and presented him with the award, the certificate and the cheque personally which was unique in the history of the National Awards till then. Though he is now dubbed as



the "King of Entertainment" in Indian cinema, it would be right to remember that in his earlier films, he espoused the cause of the marginal, downtrodden man in the street exploited, neglected, misguided by the capitalists in power. One may recall that Awaara was released in 1951 soon after Independence when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the Prime Minister of India focused on a socialist, democratic republic announced on 26 th January the same year. This ideology is said to have inspired Raj Kapoor to create the tramp Raju who is inducted into a life of crime by the criminal (K.N. Singh) who brought him up to become a thief.

The process through which Raju evolved from a life of crime to a life minus crime with the help of his lady love Rita (Nargis) a modern, sophisticated and practicing lawyer brought up by a judge (Prithviraj Kapoor) yet falls helplessly in love with this hopeless tramp. Raju is actually the legitimate son of the judge who had thrown out his pregnant wife accusing her of being 'used' by the criminal who abducted her and held her prisoner for some days. The script was by the noted K.A. Abbas whose story formed the very foundation of many RK films in the beginning of his career. The publicity brochure brought out by the sponsors and organizers of the centenary tribute, write, "Awaara, garnered unprecedented success in the former Soviet Union. To commemorate 100 years of world cinema in 1990, the then Soviet Union honoured Raj Kapoor alongside eminent global film personalities like Ingrid Bergman, Jean Gabin, Charlie Chaplin and Marilyn Monroe.

In post-World War II, post-Par-

tition India, when the entire sociopolitical system was under strain and thousands of migrants were pouring into the cities, millions identified with Raj Kapoor's dispossessed heroes. The tramp of 'Awaara' reappeared in 'Shree 420', but with a difference and was rediscovered as a circus clown in 'Mera Naam Joker'. The vision that Kapoor staged and sang was recognizably Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's India, featuring an urbanizing, modernizing milieu and the rural-urban and the class divide, the challenges of the common man and the moral ambivalence of a changing society." The exploitation of the marginal man by a capitalist society defined the hero in early Raj Kapoor films and the best example is Awaara. If one were to define it as a film with a Leftist slant, the credit perhaps goes to K.A. Abbas who began his working life as a political journalist and earned great fame for his weekly column, The Last Page in Blitz, a weekly tabloid newspaper which became popular mainly

for his column. Abbas has reportedly gone on to say, "Raj Kapoor evolved into the cultural

ambassador and global messenger of post-colonial Indian cinema." According to Abbas, Raj Kapoor through his films, had inspired the war-torn victims of war to learn to dream and also to believe in those dreams. Actually, there were two Raj Kapoors. One was the private person devoted to his mother and ever desirous of beautiful women and the other is the pillar of Hindi cinema he shaped up to become and ruled the film industry for four long decades. Yet, he is the most outstanding entertainer born within the more than 100 years of Indian cinema. Awaara was filled with beautiful song sequences, a very long dream scene where one song telescopes into another imaginatively choreographed and cinematographed with chorus dancers as if stepping down from heaven alongwith a beautiful princess who is actually Rita in a surrealistic image.

It is one of the most imaginative and aesthetic song-and-dance sequences in the annals of Hindi cinema and perhaps set the trend of dream sequences in films. The film is so immortal in the annals of history of Indian cinema that its music keeps playing endlessly on music videos and reels across the screen monitors beginning with the wonderful title song Awaara Hoon through Dam Bhar Jo Dam Bhar Jo Udhar Moon Phere, to Ghar Aaya Mera Pardesi, all set to tune by his favourite duo Shankar-Jaikishen. The lyrics were by Shailendra and all songs lip-synced by Raj Kapoor were sung by Mukesh. He would say that he wanted his epitaph to read: "Here is a man who only wished to love." He would also keep repeating that when he died, his dead body be brought to the RK Studios before being carted away to the crematorium. We have no idea if this really took

> (The author is a film scholar. Views personal)

EXPLAINER

Will AI Save the Planet?

ptimistic advocates for AI say this environmentally costly technology will become more sustainable with time. We can use AI more efficiently, and explore less energy-intensive designs inspired by the human brain. We can build data centres more sustainably, using wood or low-carbon concrete and steel. The heat from the data centres can warm homes in the local area. Of course, if we start using AI systems too widely (including where we don't really need them), the growth might outweigh any of these potential gains in efficiency.

But recently, I've been hearing another argument: that AI itself is tackling climate change. AI can help to model wild-fires, optimise energy consumption to stabilise the grid, accelerate the development of low-carbon materials, and much more. My research team recently published a report that digs into these claims – and found some cause for concern.

As it turns out, it's difficult to compare the environmental impacts of asking AI to carry out a task versus asking people. Take writing and making art. One study says that it is much more environmentally friendly for AI to do these creative tasks than humans. But one of its methods for investigating this is to allocate a slice of the carbon footprint from all human activities to the creative activity. By this logic, there would be the same carbon emissions from an hour's work by an artist, a dairy farmer, a billionaire CEO, or an ecologist restoring a wetland.

A related paper acknowledges the simplification and instead allocates carbon just for the electricity a human consumes. The authors say this is a practical approach to carbon accounting. Establishing a fair comparison between human and AI work is hard because the tasks may look alike, but their underlying processes are fundamentally different. What about the current total carbon impact of AI? Another paper, partly funded by Microsoft, mentioned that AI is today responsible for just 0.01 per cent of global carbon emissions.

When we looked closer, we found this figure was based on the emissions of one year's AI server sales by Nvidia – the biggest manufacturer of such hardware – as estimated in one analysis. This prediction hasn't been verified, and if it is accurate, it wouldn't include AI being run on servers installed in previous years. When contacted for comment, some of the authors said that this estimate wasn't the article's main focus. Assessing the climate impacts of AI is complicated be-



cause we don't know how future AI models will be built, operated and used.

Another study reviewing AI's sustainability benefits cited several other articles that, in our view, appeared to feature mistakes – like referring to studies to back up their claims which did not contain relevant information. AI systems sometimes make mistakes - known as "hallucinations" – like when Microsoft Copilot accused a journalist of committing the crimes he had reported on. So we asked the authors if they had used an AI to write the article. They dismissed this idea and stood by the integrity of their review. They agreed that not all of the AI sustainability solutions their review referred to can be supported by existing studies. But they said that they had also included predictions about what AI might one day be capable of, based on their own expert judgement, which they said was standard practice.

Questions to ask about Al

Meanwhile, we should avoid lumping all kinds of AI together. There are in fact diverse forms of AI: big, small, discriminative, generative, machine learning, symbolic and more. I can be excited about an AI that excels at counting carrots, and helps farmers to plant them more effectively, without offering a blanket endorsement of all AI systems.

There are different types of climate action too. Climate mitigation is about getting carbon emissions down to net zero to stop global warming. Climate adaptation is about learning to live and thrive in a warmer world. We need both.

AI for climate adaptation is very welcome indeed (say, helping us to increase carrot yields, despite more volatile weather). But it doesn't simply offset the carbon cost of AI. It would be like comparing apples with oranges (or carrots). It's a tricky calculation to make, one with political and ethical dimensions.

-The Conversation

MUMBAI'S NEXT WONDER KID WHO TOOK

SMAT BY STORM

By G Unnikrishnan

Bengaluru: Thirty six is an important number in Suryansh Shedge's fledgling career. The two unbeaten 36s in the span of five days during the justconcluded Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy showcased the bubbling talent and maturity inside this 21-year-old from Mumbai.

The first 36 (12 balls) came on December 11 at Alur against Vidarbha. Mumbai needed 65 runs off 29 balls and Shedge took Mandar Mahale to cleaners, striking him for 6, 6, 6, 4 to bring the equation down to more manageable levels.

The second 36 (15 balls) came on Sunday in the SMAT final against Madhya Pradesh. Shedge walked in when Mumbai needed 46 from 34 balls not tough in T20s but the pressure of the final could make a difference.

However, Shedge coolly clobbered Venkatesh Iyer for two sixes before smashing Tripuresh Singh for 4, 6,

6 to put a lid on the match. Being a finisher in T20s can be a nerve-jangling job even for the seasoned names, and this young man has pulled it off twice under pressure situations.

"I was told beforehand that this would be my role. I would be batting at 5 or 6.



But when you go for it, I

think you'll connect it. So, it

kind of becomes a muscle

It is of no wonder then

that Shedge is an admirer

of Hardik Pandya and Ben

Stokes two of the cleanest

strikers in contemporary

cricket. But Shedge has not

limited himself to the bar-

riers of cricket in his quest

"I like competition. I like

pressure because it tests

me. And at the end of the

night, when my head hits

the pillow, I want to feel

that satisfaction of doing

breathing exercises before

matches. It increases re-

laxation because I have

Shedge received a vote of

"We all have seen him

confidence from his skipper

perform in the last few

games. But I saw him in the

nets. I wasn't judging him

high energy," he said.

Shreyas Iyer.

"So, I have inculcated

something for the team.

to maximise his abilities.

memory.

So coming into this tournament, I tweaked my practice sessions a bit. I was playing 6-ball sets, trying to score a certain amount of runs in those 6 balls. That kind of helps," Shedge said after the SMAT final here.

"I was taking breaks after every 6 balls because when you go into bat, you will only get 10-15 balls to face. So, I was trying to simulate that in the practice session," he added.

However, the simulation routine does not programme his brain to play premeditated shots.

"Before the bowler is on his run-up, I don't think of any shots. When he starts running, then my brain starts working. Then I commit (to a shot). There are no double thoughts in my head

"That's an important point. If you're in a dilemma whether to play the shot or not, then 5 out of 10 times you won't connect it.

through his performances elsewhere.

He's a phenomenal tal-

achieving success and that's what fascinates me about him," he added.

This self-awareness is possibly coming out of the tough year Shedge had to go through in 2023.

was last year when I got a stress fracture in the L4 region. I was just going to enter the Syed Mushtaq Ali season. Lucknow Super Giants was going to retain me, but then they had to release

Bangera sir, they helped me a lot when I was going through the motions.'

is a cricket nerd who is glued to YouTube footage of matches when he is not on

"I really love his work

ethic. He is someone who puts in hard yards. Even after the game, he goes, he trains and you could see it in his athletic ability," said Shrevas

ent. He's that kind of a player who is always there for the team. "He goes full throttle,

he's hell bent towards

"A huge blow that I got

me because of injury. "I couldn't attend an NCA camp also because of the injury. So, the first two months were hard for me. But my parents, my coaches, Abhishek Nair sir, Monty Desai sir and Manish

Beyond all these, Shedge



Akash Deep ducks plays a shot during play on day four of the third cricket test between India and Australia at the Gabba in Brisbane on Tuesday.

Eyes on Gambhir as Rohit, Virat fail

By Kushan Sarkar

New Delhi: Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are copping maximum criticism for being walking wickets during the ongoing Test series against Australia but even Shubman Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Rishabh Pant haven't shown the patience needed to survive Down Under, indicating a larger problem.

Patience is a virtue that one develops over time and Kohli had once showed how it's done during his golden phase between 2014 and 2019. KL Rahul, blessed with sound technique, has displayed that during the current series with scores of 77 and 84 in Perth and Brisbane.

In case of Jaiswal, save his second innings knock of 161 at Perth, a shuffle across the crease is making him a candidate for leg-before.

Gill loves to play on the rise outside the off-stump and away from his body and could be impatient when

one bowls the stump and even for Pant, a compulsive stroke player, the ball that leaves him from five metre length with adequate bounce, is creating issues.

So, will head coach Gautam Gambhir and his deputy Abhishek Nayar, who is highly regarded in Mumbai cricket circuit for being a "Mind Coach and Life Coach rolled into one", do anything about it?

A former India great, who didn't wish to be named, offered his perspective.

"Not all great players or players of repute happen to be great coaches. They might have done some incredible things as players and knew what to do and how to react during a particular situation," the veteran of 100-plus Tests said.

"But coaching is science and not many can tell why certain things need to be done. Even Gautam used to play with hard hands and dab towards slips in Australia and England

"You can still work with younger guys but difficult to mould the older ones who don't get enough time to work on their game in a packed calender," he added.

Watching the dismissals of especially Kohli in Australia, which seemed like a replay of previous ones, has led to growing concerns. Rohit, barring the Eng-

land tour in 2021, he does not really have a track record in SENA countries in Tests. But with Kohli, the problem of reaching for deliveries on and outside the off-stump has resurfaced once again and has been a persistent issue for quite some time.

Devang Gandhi, who was a touring selector between 2016-17 to 2020-21, had a more nuanced take compared to the veteran India

"It would be very easy to target Nayar as a low hanging fruit or for that matter Gautam," Gandhi, who has coached the Delhi Ranii

team and Bengal U-19, told PTI during a conversation.

"But they have just come into system. To discuss or nudge a player, first you need to be around for some time and once there is some kind of mutual trust between the two, you can offer him solutions. But at this level, it is more about the experienced player's own mental make-up.

So what is Kohli's problem? Gandhi, a former Test opener and an NCA Level-2 coach, believes it's all about his mental approach.

Sachin Tendulkar's epic 241 in the 2004 New Year's Test in Sydney is often cited as a prime example of patience. He didn't hit a single cover drive until he scored his double hundred.

"It's about controlling the mind. You can be a sounding board for players like Tendulkar and Kohli but at this stage, you can't coach them. Coaching happens at junior level," Gandhi

'Fit India Cycling Drive' launched

ter Mansukh Mandaviya flagged off the 'Fit India Cycling Drive' at the Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium here on Tuesday.

Close to 500 cycling enthusiasts joined the three kilometres ride from the stadium to Raisina Hills and back, the initiative aimed at promoting cycling as a healthy mode of transportation.

The event was flagged off by Mandaviya in the presence of Raksha Khadse, the minister of state (Sports), MP Tejasvi Surya, as well as elite athletes, including Paris Paralympics bronze medallist Simran Sharma, Commonwealth Games gold medallist Nitu Ghanghas and Asian Games bronze winner Preeti Pawar.

Mandaviya said, "We

'Fit India Cycling Tuesdays' but for the convenience of cycling enthusiasts, this will now be conducted on Sundays and be called 'Sundays on Cycle'.

"Doctors, journalists, teachers, corporate professionals and youth will join for an hour-long cycling ride on Sundays, not only in New Delhi but also all parts of the country. Cycling gives a big boost to the environment; it is the solution to pollution and also con-

tributes to sustainability." The event, held simultaneously in over 1,000 locations across India, was organised by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports' Fit India movement, in collaboration with the Cycling Federation of India (CFI), MY Bharat, and various sports authorities

Shaw dropped from Mumbai's Vijay Hazare squad

New Delhi: Troubles keep mounting for Prithvi Shaw, who on Tuesday expressed his frustration after being dropped from Mumbai's squad for the Vijay Hazare Trophy beginning on December 21.

The 25-year-old, who was once hailed as a generational talent and scored a hundred on Test debut, has had a season to forget.

He was dropped in the middle of Ranji Trophy league stage on fitness and disciplinary grounds, before returning for the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (SMAT) that Mumbai won. He also went unsold at the IPL auction in November

His performance in the premier domestic event was not eye-catching but he did make a couple of 40s and as many 30s over the course of the event

"Tell me God, what more do I have to see? If 65 innings, 3399 runs at an average of 55.7 with a strike rate of 126 (in Vijay Hazare), I'm not good enough. But I will keep my faith in you and, hopefully, people still believe in me, because I will come back for sure. Om Sai Ram," Shaw wrote in his Instagram story.



Shreyas Iyer will captain the 17-man squad picked for the first three games. Following the SMAT, Iyer had said sky was the limit for Shaw if he worked on his work ethics.

Ajinkya Rahane, who was the star batter for Mumbai in SMAT, had captained the 50-over side last season. Veteran spinner Shams Mulani also doesn't feature in the squad alongside Shaw.

India T20 skipper Suryakumar Yadav is also part of the side.

Mumbai open their campaign against Karnataka in Ahmedabad on December

Squad: Shreyas lyer (Captain), Ayush Mhatre, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Jay Bista, Suryakumar Yadav, Shivam Dube, Suryansh Shedge, Siddhesh Lad, Hardik Tamore, Prasad Pawar (WK), Atharva Ankolekar, Tanush Kotian, Shardul Thakur, Royston Dias, Juned Khan, Harsh Tanna, Vinayak Bhor.

Vaibhay, Om, Saraswati, Vidyarthi in semis

Mumbai: In the Under-14 Mumbai District Sub Junior Kho-kho championships, teams Vaibhav Sports Club, Om Saishwar Seva Mandal, Saraswati Sports Club and Vidyarthi Krida Kendra reached the semi-finals. Om Saishwar Seva Mandal will face Vaibhav Sports Club whereas Saraswati Sports Club will lock horns with Vidyarthi Krida Kendra in the semi-finals.

In the first match, Vaibhav Sports Club defeated Saraswati Mandir High School by 9-5.

In the second match, Om Saishwar Sewa Mandal defeated Students Sports Club 8-1 by 1 innings and 7 runs. For Om Saishwar, Shrathik Gami played an unbeaten 7 minutes and took two opponents out in the attack. Saraswati Sports Club defeated Om Samarth Bharat Vyayam Mandir 10-8 by 1 innings and 2 points. For Saraswati, Mahek Advade took out four opponents in the attack after defending for 3:30 minutes

Vidyarthi Krida Kendra defeated Shri Samarth Vyayam Mandir (21-1-4) 21-5 by 1 innings and 16 points.

India to host World Boxing Cup Final in 2025

Final in November next year, reaffirming its support for the breakaway World Boxing body.

The Boxing Federation of India will also simultaneously host the third World Boxing Congress, which will include elections for the Presidency and Executive Board. The tournament will be

the first international event hosted by the BFI after opting to join the new governing body earlier this year.

Last time BFI hosted the International Boxing Association Women's World Boxing Championship in 2023. "It is a proud moment for India to be recognised by World Boxing for hosting such prestigious events. This opportunity not only highlights India's organisational excellence but also underscores our unwavering commitment to ensuring boxing remains an integral part of the Olympic movement," BFI President Ajay Singh said.

"We are honoured to contribute to the sport's legacy and look forward to wel-

New Delhi: India is set to coming the global boxing host the World Boxing Cup community to India in 2025," Singh added.

> The date of the tournament will be confirmed in January.

The first World Boxing Cup of the year will be held in Brazil in March, followed by competitions in Germany, Kazakhstan and India. "After the huge success

of our first World Boxing Cup series in 2024, it is fantastic that we have four such strong bids to host the competition in 2025. I would like to thank the National Federations of Brazil, Germany, Kazakhstan and India for their ongoing support and commitment," World Boxing President Boris van der Vorst said.

"I am also very grateful to the Boxing Federation of India for its ongoing support in bidding to host both a World Boxing Cup and our next Congress in 2025 in New Delhi," he added.

WB is a breakaway international federation aiming to secure recognition from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and ensure that boxing remains on the Olympic roster.

How Maharashtra produces so many Kho-Kho players?



By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Kho-Kho World Cup 2025 which is scheduled to take place in Delhi between January 13-19, is less than a month away now and preparations for the global event are going in full flow. In build up to the multi-nation tournament, Kho-Kho Federation of India (KKFI) in collaboration with the Sports Authority of India (SAI) and the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports (MYAS) is conducting an intensive training camp at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium which comprises of 60 male and as many female players taking part in it.

The final squad for the World Cup will be picked on the basis of players' performance in the camp. A total of 15 men and 15 women players will be selected to represent India in the competition. Coach Ashwani Kumar

Sharma talked about the importance of this camp and how difficult it would be for him and the other coaching members to pick and choose players for the

"The camp is an opportunity for the players to showcase their talent and skill set and be a part of the squad that will represent India in the World Cup. We have picked players who have performed exceptionally well in the Nationals for this camp. There are 60 players in each category and we will be choosing 15 out of them for the final squads," Ashwani said.

The coach also explained how club culture in Maharashtra has been helpful in boosting more talent in the state. "A lot of talent comes

from states like Maharashtra, Karnataka, Odisha, Delhi, Kerala, Punjab and Haryana. We have some brilliant players from Maharashtra purely because Kho-Kho is very popular as a sport there. No matter what, each and every kid plays the sport in that region. Also, there is club culture in Maharashtra which creates some good rivalry among the players to do well that eventually helps Kho-Kho on the

"Moreover, the Kho-Kho players get good job options which creates a sense of security among the players. Each player of the team that wins the national gets INR 7 lakh in the prize money. Also, the Shiv Chhatrapati Award is a prestigious annual sports award given by the Government of Maharashtra to recognize the achievements of athletes and sports contributors in the state. So, this all adds up and we get to see so many good players from Maharashtra," he added.