

# THE PERFECT VOICE



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## Modi takes decision in view of countrywide protests

# Unified Pension Scheme for Central govt employees

By Correspondent

**New Delhi :** The Union government on Saturday announced a new pension scheme called the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) in which government employees will get assured pension, family pension and assured minimum pension. The new pension scheme will come into force from April 1, 2025.

The decision has been taken in view of the countrywide protest demanding implementation of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS). The scheme, approved by the Union Cabinet, guarantees a pension of 50 per cent of the average basic pay drawn over the last 12 months, provided the employee has completed a minimum of 25 years of service. For those with lesser service, the pension will be proportionate.

It also ensures a family pension of 60 per cent of the pension of the employee immediately before their death.

The scheme guarantees an assured minimum pension of Rs 10,000 per month on superannuation after a minimum of 10 years of service. About 23 lakh central government employees would benefit from the UPS, Railways Minister



The government employees have been demanding Old Pension Scheme since a long time. File picture

Ashwini Vaishnav said.

"Today, the Union Cabinet has approved UPS for government employees providing for assured pension. 50 per cent assured pension is the first pillar of the scheme and the second pillar will be assured family pension," he said.

"There will be an option for employees to opt between the National Pension System (NPS) and UPS," he added.

Under the scheme, there will be a lump-sum payment at superannuation in addition to gratuity and one-tenth of monthly emolument (pay + DA (Dearness Allowance)) on the

date of superannuation for every completed six months of service. This payment will not reduce the quantum of assured pension for employees.

The Centre had said earlier that there were no immediately plans to implement the OPS for its employees, despite protests in non-BJP-ruled states demanding the implementation of the same. The OPS is a defined benefit scheme that guarantees half of the last salary drawn as a pension for life, with adjustments based on pay commission recommendations.

In contrast, the NPS is a defined



**"We are proud of the hard work of all government employees who contribute significantly to national progress. The Unified Pension Scheme ensures dignity and financial security for government employees, aligning with our commitment to their well-being and a secure future," PM Modi said in a post on X.**

contribution scheme where government employees contribute 10% of their basic salary, and the government matches this contribution with 14 per cent.

## In the mind of Sharad Pawar

By Abhijit Mulye

**Mumbai:** Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray on Saturday blamed NCP (SP) Chief Sharad Pawar for communalization of Maharashtra politics as well as the rising number of turncoats in the state politics, even as the octogenarian Maratha Strongman has kept everyone guessing about his next moves.

After inflicting major damage to the ruling combine in the state during Lok Sabha elections, Sharad Pawar was expected to be very aggressive against the state government. However, he appears to be busy tackling the internal problems of the three-party Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) and keeping the state politics revolving around him. Presently he is not going after the state government with the vigour with which he was expected to do so ahead of the assembly polls in the state. However, it needs to be observed whether his moves help the ruling combine in the coming days.

On Friday, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray took a lead in giving details about the Bandh call given by the MVA and explained in detail how the op-



position wants to connect with the people of the state over the issue. However, within the next few hours first the Bombay High Court made it clear that no political party has a right to give a call for such a bandh and Sharad Pawar quickly sent out a social media post to announce that the proposed bandh has been withdrawn.

He didn't care about Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray's appeal while doing so. Pawar displayed a similar 'we are bothered the least' attitude earlier last week when, at a meeting of MVA workers, Uddhav Thackeray called for announcing the name of Chief Minister before going in for the state assembly polls. Sharad Pawar's role was very crucial in making Uddhav Thackeray Chief Minister in 2019. On that backdrop the way Thackeray is being snubbed by Pawar recently has raised eyebrows.

On the other hand Pawar is also meeting some of the leaders and cadres of the ruling Mahayuti which has led to confusion in the ruling camp also. Director of Bhairavnath Sugar factory in Mangalwedha of Solapur district Anil Sawant recently met Sharad Pawar. Though it was said to be a casual courtesy meeting, eyebrows were raised due to the meeting as Anil happens to be nephew of Maharashtra health minister Tanaji Sawant, who is a strong supporter of Chief Minister Ekanth Shinde. Pawar's meeting with Anil Sawant has a potential to change the politics in Southern Maharashtra district of Solapur and hence people have started speculating as to what Pawar's next move would be.

Recently the union home ministry upgraded Pawar's security cover to Z+ category. Though Pawar didn't reject the upgrade, he quipped that this might just be a ploy to seek updates on his connections and movements ahead of the assembly elections.

Pawar is known to keep the state politics revolving around him. That is the reason why people have started speculating about what would be his political moves.



British Paralympian Helene Raynsford holds the Paralympic Torch during the flame lighting ceremony in Stoke Mandeville, widely considered the birthplace of the Paralympic Games, England on Saturday. Pic: PTI

## Kashmiri woman marries Mumbaikar, booked

**Srinagar:** Police have registered a case after a woman from Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district went missing and then allegedly converted to Hinduism to marry a non-local man, an official said on Saturday.

A police official said the Kreeri police station in the north Kashmir district lodged a report after a complainant alleged his daughter had been missing since the morning of August 16. "On Friday, it was learnt

that on August 19, the said girl converted and married Sagar Pradeep Singh of Navi Mumbai," the police official said, adding a case of kidnapping was registered under relevant sections of the BNS. However, he said,

the police's cyber patrol unit has noticed that many miscreants and anti-social elements are creating/sharing posts attempting to use this incident to cause disturbance.

- PTI

## Amit Shah says time for final assault India to be free of Naxal menace by 2026

**Raipur:** India will be free from Left Wing Extremism (LWE) by March 2026 and a strong and ruthless strategy is required for the final assault against the menace, Union Home Minister Amit Shah asserted on Saturday. The minister stated this during a press conference here after he along with Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai and senior central and police officers reviewed the Maoist issue in the state and adjoining areas.

Urging Naxals to shun violence, Shah announced that the Chhattisgarh government would announce a "new look" surrender policy in 1-2 months. "A strong and ruthless strategy is required for launching the last assault against Naxals," he said.

The home minister said Naxal violence is a challenge to democracy and the menace has claimed about 17,000 lives in the country.



He said there was a 53 per cent drop in Naxal incidents during 2014-24 as compared to 2004-14.

It is time to deal the final blow to the problem of Left Wing Extremism with a strong strategy, Shah said.

The minister said the government has been working to fill the security vacuum in LWE-hit areas and the security personnel have undertaken operations along with development works.

He said that besides the security forces, central agencies like NIA and ED

have also worked to dismantle Maoist finances.

"We believe we will be able to free the country from Left Wing Extremism by March 2026," Shah said.

Asked about the now-scrapped Article 370, which gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir, the home minister said that the provision will not be restored ever.

On the probability of starting the delayed decadal census, Shah said it would be carried out at an appropriate time.

- PTI

## Badlapur incident hit Maharashtra's image: Pawar

By Correspondent

**Pune:** NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar on Tuesday said the Badlapur incident involving the alleged sexual abuse of two kindergarten girls at a school has hit the image of Maharashtra in the country.

He accused the state government of forgetting that the responsibility for the safety of women lies with it.

Pawar, who took part in a silent protest in Pune, said the government is insensitive if it thinks the opposition is playing politics over the Badlapur incident.

"The Badlapur incident has hit the image of Maharashtra in the country," said the chief of NCP (SP), which is a constituent of the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA), also comprising Congress and Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT). Pawar said such an incident has taken place in the land of Chhatrapati Shivaji who used to chop off the hands of culprits involved in crimes against women.

## Cheetahs set to roam free in Kuno

By Gaurav Saini

**New Delhi:** African cheetahs brought to India as part of the world's first intercontinental translocation of big cats will soon be released into the wild, nearly a year after they were returned to enclosures in Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park for health check-ups and monitoring, according to officials.

Officials told PTI that the Centre's Cheetah Project Steering Committee on Friday decided to release the African cheetahs and their cubs, born in India, into the wild in a phased manner after the monsoon withdraws from central parts of the country.

"Members of the committee and NTCA (National Tiger Conservation Authority) officials conducted field visits to Kuno and discussed the sched-

ule for releasing the cheetahs. While adult cheetahs will be released into the wild in phases once the rains end, the cubs and their mothers will be released after December," an official said.

All 25 cheetahs -- 13 adults and 12 cubs -- are doing well, according to the official.

The first batch of eight cheetahs from Namibia was introduced in India in September 2022 and the second batch of 12 cheetahs was flown in from South Africa last February.

Some cheetahs were initially released into the wild but were brought back to their enclosures by August last year after the deaths of three cheetahs -- a female named Tbilisi (from Namibia) and two South African males, Tejas and Sooraj -- due to septicemia, an infection that occurs when bacteria

enter the bloodstream and spread.

This condition arose from wounds under the cheetahs' thick winter coats on their backs and necks, which became infested with maggots and led to blood infections, according to the government's annual report on Project Cheetah.

Officials had earlier told PTI that the unexpected growth of winter coats by some cheetahs during the Indian summer and monsoon, in anticipation of the African winter (June to September), was a major challenge in managing the animals in India during the first year.

"Even African experts did not expect this. The winter coat, combined with high humidity and heat, caused itching, leading the cheetahs to scratch their necks on tree trunks or the ground. This resulted in bruises and

exposed skin, which attracted flies that laid eggs, leading to maggot infestations, bacterial infections, and ultimately, the death of three cheetahs," said SP Yadav, Director General of the International Big Cat Alliance and former NTCA member secretary.

The deaths prompted the steering committee to recommend that "future cheetahs for reintroduction should be sourced from countries in the Northern Hemisphere, such as Kenya or Somalia, to avoid biorhythmic complications".

Currently, only one cheetah, named Pavan, is roaming free, with officials noting that he is difficult to spot and capture.

Though such "experimental" projects come with challenges and expected mortalities, experts in both India and Africa have expressed concerns



about keeping the cheetahs in enclosures for extended periods.

"The cheetahs are not truly living in the wild, despite spending two years on Indian soil. Cheetahs prefer long journeys and they could be under severe stress," an African expert who assisted with the cheetah reintroduction in India said on condition of

anonymity.

Since their arrival in India, seven adult cheetahs -- three females and four males -- have died, including four due to septicemia. All these deaths occurred between March 2023 and January 2024. Seventeen cubs have been born in India and 12 of them have survived.

- PTI

27 tourists killed in Nepal

# Special IAF plane departs for Nashik

By Shirish B Pradhan

**Kathmandu/Mumbai:** A special Indian Air Force plane flight with bodies of 25 residents of Jalgaon districts killed in a tragic bus accident in Nepal left for Jalgaon while the bodies of two deceased would be reaching Maharajgunj in Uttar Pradesh on Saturday evening.

At least 27 Indian pilgrims, all from Jalgaon who were in Nepal for a 10-day tour, were killed and 16 others injured after their bus veered off the highway and fell into the fast-flowing Marsyangdi river at Abu Khairani in Tanahun district in central Nepal on Friday.

The deceased and the injured were part of a group of 104 pilgrims on visit to Nepal in three buses.

Indian Embassy sources said here that Union Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports Raksha Nikhil Khadse and Sanjay Savkare, a member of Maharashtra Legislative As-

sembly from Bhusawal constituency, arrived at Kathmandu earlier in the morning by a regular flight to oversee the return of the victims and survivors while the IAF flight special flight directly reached Bharatpur, which is about 170 km from here.

"The Minister met the injured at a hospital in Kathmandu and then went to Bharatpur by a domestic flight. The IAF flight with Khadse, 25 bodies and 10 survivors departed from Bharatpur for India," the sources said.

"Will reach Jalgaon airport by 7 pm along with the mortal remains of the 25 persons from Jalgaon killed in a tragic bus accident in Nepal. Request all the bereaved families to cooperate and not let any inconvenience (happen)," Khadse posted on X ahead of the departure from Bharatpur, where the post-mortem for the bodies was carried out.

Bodies of two people – the bus driver and his as-



Union Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports Raksha Khadse meets injured people who are being treated, at Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital in Kathmandu, Nepal on Saturday.

sistant of the fateful bus that met with the accident – and 51 people from the remaining lot are slated to reach later Saturday evening by road at Maharajganj, a district in Uttar Pradesh state, located near the Indo-Nepal border.

"They will be then taken to Gorakhpur under police

protection and supervision of additional district magistrate," officials said there and added that the district administration has made food and other necessary arrangements for all the passengers at the border.

The reason for the accident is not yet known. The accident site lies on the na-

tional highway, some 90 km west of Kathmandu.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh from the Prime Minister National Relief Fund for the next of kin of each deceased in the mishap in Tanahun district, Nepal. The injured would be given

Rs 50,000, it was announced by the PMO on X.

Earlier in the day, the post-mortem of all the 27 Indians was carried out at the Bharatpur Hospital in the Chitwan district of the Bagmati province, Home Ministry spokesperson Narayan Prasad Bhattarai said.

Khadse, who was accompanied by Savkare, along with Nepal's Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak, visited the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital at Maharajgunj, Kathmandu and met the 16 injured passengers undergoing treatment there.

"Thanked Hon'ble HM and Govt of Nepal for the prompt and timely assistance provided for the search and rescue operations as also for the treatment of the injured," Khadse said in a post on X after the hospital visit.

She also expressed appreciation for the Indian embassy in Nepal for providing "necessary assistance and coordination on

the ground with Nepalese authorities."

Of the 16 injured, the condition of one is said to be critical, while others are stable, according to hospital sources. One passenger, named Rekha Prakash, is admitted to the intensive care unit with serious injuries, while 13 passengers are undergoing treatment at the general ward and one passenger is receiving treatment at a private cabin of the hospital.

Another passenger is being admitted to the emergency room of the Manmohan Cardiac Centre of the hospital.

"As tourists coming from India on a bus met with an accident, some people have lost their lives while the lives of some others could be saved with the hard work and dedication of our security personnel including from the Nepal Army, the Nepal Police and the Armed Police Force, who got involved in the rescue works soon after the incident," Lekhak said.

## PM Modi to visit Jalgaon today

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Jalgaon in Maharashtra on Sunday to felicitate 11 lakh new 'Lakhpati Didis' who achieved the mark during the third term of his government.

A statement on Saturday said Modi would also release a revolving fund of Rs 2,500 crore that would benefit about 48 lakh members of 4.3 lakh self-help groups (SHGs).

He will disburse bank loans of Rs 5,000 crore, which will benefit 25.8 lakh members of 2.35 lakh SHGs, it added.

Since the inception of the scheme for making 'Lakhpati Didis' – a woman member of a self-help group earning Rs 1 lakh annually – one crore women have already joined the rank.

The government has set a target to make three crore 'Lakhpati Didis'.

Modi will also visit Rajasthan where he will be the chief guest at the concluding ceremony of the platinum jubilee celebrations of Rajasthan High Court, to be held on the High Court Campus, Jodhpur.

## Private helicopter crashes near Pune

By Correspondent

**Pune:** A private helicopter flying from Mumbai to Hyderabad crashed in Mulshi tehsil of Pune district on Saturday afternoon but all four persons on board survived, police said.

While the pilot was hospitalised at Paud, about 30 to 35 km from Pune city, the three passengers suffered

minor injuries, an official said.

Bad weather was suspected to have caused the crash as the area is receiving heavy rains, said inspector Manoj Yadav of Paud police station.

The chopper, belonging to Global Vectra aviation company, crashed at Kondhvale village around 2 pm, he said.

Locals rushed to the rescue of the occupants as it came down.

"When they took off from Mumbai, the weather was fine, but when the chopper reached Paud area, which has been receiving rains since last night, it encountered difficulties. The pilot tried to land but it hit a babul tree and then crashed to the ground," said inspec-

tor Yadav.

As the fall was broken by the tree, the impact of the final crash appeared to have been mitigated, he said.

There were no reports of the chopper experiencing any technical problems, the official said.

The occupants were identified as Captain Anand, Veer Bhatia, Amardeep Singh and S P Ram.

## Woman thrown from sixth floor

**Thane:** A 40-year-old housewife suffered serious injuries after her in-laws allegedly threw her from the sixth floor of a building for failing to bring money from the parents, police said on Saturday.

While the incident took place in Mumbra near here last month, the complaint was lodged on Friday, said an official.

## Mahagenco undertakes another project

By Correspondent

**Mumbai:** One more feather in the cap of Mahagenco as the company has undertaken the construction of a Solar power project with a total capacity of 70 MW at Shivajinagar, Sakri in Dhule District which include, Sakri-1 (25 MW), Sakri-2 (25 MW) and Sakri-3 (20 MW) projects on Saturday.

According to Dr P. Anbalagan, Chairman and Managing director Mahagenco, the construction of the solar power plant was carried out by M/S Godrej & Boyce, an EPC developer. (on Engineering Procurement and Construction basis) with crystalline solar panels. The capacity utilization factor (CUF) of this project is 20.59 per cent and the annual pow-

er generation is expected to be 45.09 million units. Sakri-1 was commissioned on 21st august and connected to 220/33 KV Shivajinagar Sakri substation successfully.



Devotees carry an Idol of lord Ganesha through the street, ahead of Ganesh Chaturthi Festival, in Mumbai on Saturday. -Bhushan Koyande

## Two arrested for raping teenager

**Palghar:** The Palghar police have arrested two persons for allegedly raping a 17-year-old girl after taking her on an outing, an official said on Saturday.

An official from the Tulinj police station said that the complainant, a resident of Mumbai, often visited Nallasopara to meet a friend. During her visits, she got acquainted with one of the accused, identified as Sonu, who worked in a studio in the locality.

On Thursday, Sonu and his friend invited the teenager for an outing. They took the girl in an auto to an isolated place where both raped her, the official said citing the FIR. After learning about the sexual assault from their daughter, the girl's parents filed a police complaint. The Tulinj police on Friday registered a case under the BNS.

## Girl runs away from home

**Thane:** A 13-year-old girl from Thane district ran away from home after her mother and elder brother scolded her for not attending school, an official said on Saturday.

The incident took place at about 10 pm on August 21, said the official from Manpada police station in Dombivli.

After being chided by her mother and brother, the girl picked up a book and left her home in the Daslepada area saying she was going to study with a friend. But she never returned, the official said.

The family filed a police complaint on Friday after failing to locate her, the official said.

A case has been registered under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) section 137(2) for kid-

napping and efforts are being made to find her, the official added.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to bring notice all concern people that my client namely **MR. SACHIN YALLANA NARKOROLLU** Residing at: Flat No. 311, 3rd Floor, Ashtavinayak CHS. LTD. Virar Road, Vijay Nagar, Nallasopara East, Tal-Vasai, Dist-Palghar-401209. He is whole and sole legal heir of **LATE SHANTA BALRAJ SUNKE** died on dated 06/12/2023 leaving behind my client and no one other have legal heir except of my client.

**The details of property:** Flat No. 311, 3rd Floor, Ashtavinayak CHS. LTD. Virar Road, Vijay Nagar, Nallasopara East, Tal-Vasai, Dist-Palghar-401209. Village: Tulinj, Admeasuring area about 295.9 Sq/ft ( 27.5 Sq/Mtr ). Situated at Survey No. 25, Hissa No. 6, in the jurisdiction of Vasai Virar City Municipal Corporation.

I am willing to sellout this property to any third person as early as possible.

Any person having any claim or otherwise having objection for the same related to said above property should informed undersigned in writing within 15 days from publication of this public notice. In absence thereof it will be presume that there is no legal hitch/objection for said property subject Matter.

Place: Vasai  
Date: 25/08/2024  
**Awdhesh Kumar Bind**  
Advocate, High Court Mumbai

### PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to public at large that my client Mr. Vasan Dada Gorad resident of Umelman, Taluka Vasai, have purchased Land Property bearing Survey No. 76, Hissa No. 14 part area admeasuring about 0.06.60 H.R. Sq. Mtrs. Polikharaba 0.02.20 H.R. Sq. Mtrs. total area admeasuring 0.06.80 H.R. Sq. Mtrs, assessment Rs. 1.25/- out of which his share area admeasuring 0.02.50 H.R. Sq. Mtrs. assessment Rs. 0.47/- by a registered Conveyance Deed bearing Document No. 4830/2004 dated 23/08/2004 registered at the Office of Sub-Registrar of Assurances at Vasai-1 and the said original Registered Conveyance Deed has been lost or misplaced from my client's custody and he have taken all steps and measure to find the said document but could not find the same till date.

Any person who finds the said Agreement's OR title Documents should intimate to the undersigned & if any person, Banks, Financial institution having any claim or right in respect of the said registered Conveyance Deed and Land Property by way of inheritance, share, sale mortgage, lease, lien, license, gift, possession or encumbrance howsoever or otherwise or having above agreement's is hereby called upon to intimate to the undersigned within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice of his such claim of any with all supporting documents failing which no claim certificate will be issued in favour of my client without reference to such claim & the claims, if any of such person shall be treated as waived & not binding upon my client.

**Dated: 25/08/2024**  
**Place :- Vasai**  
**Adv. Javed Ansari**  
Having office at: Flat No. 2, Deep Sagar Apartment, Siddhivinayak Nagar, Near Sacred Heart School, Nallasopara West, Taluka - Vasai, District - Palghar,  
Pin code-401 203.  
Mobile No. 9797465826.

## Traffic diverted after landslidet

**Mumbai:** Traffic on the key Ratnagiri-Kolhapur road in southern Maharashtra was disrupted after a landslide at the Anuskura ghat, an official said on Saturday.

No one was injured in the landslip that oc-

curred late on Friday night on the arterial road, the official said.

According to the Ratnagiri police control room, earthmoving equipment like JCB machines have been sent to the spot to clear the

debris.

The road towards Kolhapur is blocked and traffic has been diverted, the official said.

The authorities have urged people to use alternative routes, he added.

## 22 injured in boiler explosion

**Jalna:** As many as 22 workers were injured in a boiler explosion at a steel factory in MIDC area in Jalna city of Maharashtra on Saturday, police said.

The condition of three workers is critical, said Superintendent of Police Ajay Kumar Bansal.

The explosion at Gaj Kesari Steel Mill, which occurred around noon, resulted in molten iron falling on workers, he said.

Three workers were admitted to a private hospital in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar city in critical condition.

Another official said that the factory manufactures steel bars from scrap, adding that police are recording statements of injured workers. He said that legal action is being taken against the company owner.

## Court sets aside man's conviction

**Thane:** A court in Thane district admitted a convict's appeal and set aside an earlier order of a sessions court in a suicide abetment case and directed that he be released.

The Bhiwandi court set aside the Thane sessions court's 2015 order convicting Bhaskar Dhavalu Gavit (40) and sentencing him to four years of rigorous imprisonment for abetting a man's suicide.

Additional Sessions Judge N K Karande of Bhiwandi sessions court held that the charges against Gavit were not proven and hence, he needs to be set free, and his conviction should be set aside.

A copy of the order dated August 17 was made available on Saturday.



Appearing for Gavit, advocate Ramrao Jagtap pointed out that the provisions of abetment of suicide were not attracted in the case and cited that section 107 (abetting doing of a thing) of the IPC was not fulfilled.

The prosecution argued that Gavit had an affair with the victim's wife and had threatened to kill him.

The victim and his wife committed suicide at their house on February 11, 2014, following which the accused was booked under relevant sections of the IPC.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY



**Ajit Pawar,**  
Deputy Chief  
Minister

"I personally feel that when such perverts lay hand on our mothers-sisters, our daughters, they should face such a legal punishment that they should not think of (repeating the offence) again. To put it in my language, such persons' private organ should be removed. Some people are so vile, that this must be done."

## Longest Urban Tunnel Project

# Resentment grows among Thane-kars

By Anand Mishra

**Mumbai:** Growing frustration and anger are evident among thousands of residents living near the site of India's longest and largest urban tunnel in Thane city. Residents of six upscale housing societies near Neelkanth Woods in Thane have voiced their concerns about the potential disruptions caused by the upcoming Thane-Borivali Twin Tunnel project. However, they claim their pleas have fallen on deaf ears.

The residents, who have formed an association called 'Thane-Borivali Tunnel Project Affected People' are vehemently demanding that the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) and Megha Engineering Private Ltd., the company responsible for the 11.8 km-long twin tunnel, address their grievances. The makers of the project have, however, denied the charges and said that project being executed under stipulated rules.

Tarak Modi, chairman of the association, has warned that if their concerns continue to be ignored, they will escalate their protests, even taking to the streets to ensure their voices are heard. Modi clarified in an interview with 'The Perfect Voice' that the residents are not opposed to the tunnel project itself but are protesting the lack of consideration shown by the authorities.

"We are opposing the technicality and manner in which MMRDA is handling



all the concerns of the local residents," Modi stated. "Despite several meetings, assurances, and frequent correspondences, neither MMRDA nor Megha Engineering have bothered to address our concerns." The residents, number-

ing around 15,000, are worried not only about their privacy but also about their physical and mental well-being. Modi noted that when they requested the authorities to make project-related documents public, they were met with legal

jargon stating that underground projects do not require full disclosure. Another affected person Shweta Warke from Shivraj Villa, Neelkanth Woods, said, "The contractor Megha engineering is working at night time and dis-

turbing residence despite MMRDA orders not to do so."

Another member of the same society said that they are collecting the evidences of the nuisance and disturbance created by the contractor. Lack of traffic simulation study raises concerns. Another major concern for the residents is the absence of a traffic simulation study, a crucial component of any large-scale transport project. Modi accused the authorities of unprofessionalism, stating that the lack of this

study could have severe implications for the local community. "We have repeatedly asked whether a traffic simulation study was conducted, and if so, what the results were. Unfortunately, our concerns have gone unanswered," Modi said.

He pointed out that the proposed tunnel road and the road for local traffic will be at the same grade level, which could lead to chaos and significantly disrupt the residents' daily lives. Traffic simulation studies are essential for understanding the impact of such projects on traffic flow and volume under various conditions. These studies help planners optimise budgets and resources, ensuring that traffic and mobility remain safe, sustainable, equitable, and resilient.

Despite the project's promise to reduce travel time between Thane and Borivali from one hour to just 12 minutes, residents feel that their well-being is being overlooked.

The foundation stone of Thane-Borivali Twin Tunnel was laid by Prime Min-

### What MMRDA says

- > Civil works are being carried out as per the protocol stipulated by the govt agencies like MPCB,
- > TMC and Forest Ministry among others. In addition to this, works are underway on private land
- > which are out of scope of forest land, besides, work that are being executed are similar to casting yard.

- An MMRDA official

ister Narendra Modi on July 13. This is a Rs 16,000 crore project under the MMRDA. While the tunnel is expected to significantly improve connectivity and reduce congestion, the residents' growing dissatisfaction highlights the need for a more transparent and responsive approach by the authorities.

As the situation intensifies, the 'Thane-Borivali Tunnel Project Affected People Association' continues to push for answers, urging the authorities to prioritise the concerns of those living near the tunnel site.

**The inconsistency of these officials is clear. During the excavation work, we repeatedly requested the use of sound barriers to mitigate noise pollution, but our requests were ignored**

- Tarak Modi, Chairman, Thane-Borivali Tunnel Project Affected People



### Important features of India's longest and largest urban tunnel project

- > Tunnel Length 11.8 km
- > Tunnel Route From Thane side to National Highway 8 at Borivali
- > Estimated Cost Rs. 16,600 crore
- > Operational Lanes 2 operational lanes, 1 emergency lane
- > Carbon Emissions Reduction 1,50,000 MT per year
- > Completion Target May 2028
- > Constructing Firm Megha Engineering

### Importance of the Tunnel

- > The Thane-Borivali Twin Tunnel project is designed to alleviate traffic congestion on both
- > Ghodbunder Road and the Western Express Highway.
- > It is set to drastically cut travel time by one hour, enabling commuters to cover the distance in just 12 minutes.
- > The tunnel will improve east-west suburban connectivity by offering a direct and efficient route.
- > Additionally, its construction is projected to lower carbon emissions by 150,000 metric tons each year.

# Agitation vs Agitation

By Correspondent

**Mumbai :** Undeterred by the Bombay High Court order restraining the Opposition-sponsored Maharashtra bandh, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) on Saturday staged symbolic, silent, sit-in protests all over the state to condemn the growing atrocities on toddlers, women and government's inaction in those matters.

A day after calling off the Maharashtra Bandh in response to the Bombay High Court order, three constituents of Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) staged protests across the state to condemn the sexual assaults on minor girls in Badlapur. Senior leaders of the opposition alliance, including Sharad Pawar, Uddhav Thackeray, Nana Patole, Supriya Sule, and Balasaheb Thorat, led demonstrations in various parts of the state.

Shiv Sena-UBT chief Uddhav Thackeray led the protest at Shiv Sena Bhavan in Shivaji Park. In Pune, NCP-SP chief Sharad Pawar, party MP Supriya Sule, and Congress leaders Mohan Joshi and Ravindra Dhangekar staged a silent protest at the Ambedkar statue near Pune station, braving morning rains.



These leaders and workers, with black ribbons tied on their arms and foreheads, took a pledge to act against atrocities against women.

The protest at Sena Bhavan was attended by wife Rashmi and Aadiya along with party workers. While addressing the gathering Thackeray said, "Instead of acting against the accused, the state government is supporting them. So now the people came together to protest and fight against the injustice. We called a bandh for the security of women, sisters and daughters. Till this moment I don't understand that why has the bandh been opposed in Maharashtra. Signifi-

cantly, there was no such move after the bandh organised in the backdrop of the Kolkata case".

Targeting Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, and his both the deputies Devendra Fadnavis, and Ajit Pawar Thackeray further said, "Prior to this Maharashtra has never seen such a shameless government. When crimes against women are on the rise, these 'Kans Mamas' were busy tying rakhis".

"I urged the President of India to clear the Shakti Act bill. The President, who is also a woman should now clear the dust on the file of the Shakti bill and give nod to it, he added further.

By Correspondent

**Mumbai :** To counter the opposition's protest, the BJP staged demonstrations at various places in the state. In some districts, the ruling Mahayuti alliance also staged protests jointly against the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA).

In order to give justice to the victim of Badlapur incident and to expose the duplicitous role of the leaders of the MVA in the case of women atrocities, BJP organized dharnas across the state on Saturday. State President Chandrasekhar Bawankule, Mumbai President Ashish Shelar, Mahila Morcha Regional President



Chitra Vagh, Praveen Darekar, Prasad Lad and other leaders participated in it. On this occasion, condolences were expressed to the families of the victims of the unfortunate incident that took place in Badlapur.

A protest was held near the Babasaheb Ambedkar statue by carrying placards condemning the MVA. On this occasion, BJP leader came down heavily on opposition leaders. The placards which were carried by the BJP workers highlighted the incidents during the tenure of the Thackeray government. "During that time the incidents of women's abuse had taken place in various places in the state. In this

painful situation, the leaders of MVA are playing dirty politics and are now raising the slogan of culture against perversity. Through this agitation, we were reminded that the MVA government had done nothing to bring justice to the cases of women's abuse," Chitra Vagh said. In Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, BJP workers protest demanding a speedy trial and strict punishment for the Badlapur case accused. State Housing Minister Atul Save, who led the protest, said, "The case should be tried in a fast-track court and the accused be punished severely. We would not tolerate atrocities against women." However, to counter the pro-

test by the opposition, BJP resorted to protests at various places in the district. In Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar city, BJP workers protest demanding speedy trial and strictest punishment to the Badlapur case accused.

BJP leaders demanded that the case should be tried in fast track court and the accused be punished severely. "We would not tolerate atrocities against women," said BJP leader and state housing Minister Atul Save.

Meanwhile, the BJP also staged a silent protest against the MVA in Pune. Office bearers of the BJP, sporting black tapes on their mouths, staged a protest in the city. Dhiraaj Ghate, presi-

dent of the BJP's Pune city unit, said, "The High Court's order has thwarted the MVA's plan to shut down Maharashtra to protest against the unfortunate incident in Badlapur." He claimed that the MVA was making a desperate attempt to politicise the matter, keeping the upcoming assembly elections in mind.

At Chavdar Tale in Mahad under the leadership of Praveen Darekar BJP workers staged a protest. While speaking Darekar mentioned many incidents of women abuse in the state during two and a half years when Uddhav Thackeray was Chief Minister. He said, "the MVA government had tried to suppress the case of Disha Salian's suspicious death. Even a simple FIR was not filed when a woman was sexually assaulted by Sharad Pawar's NCP Youth Congress president Mehboob Shaikh in Sambhaji Nagar. We never did politics at that time". Darekar also mentioned that while there is a long list of unfortunate incidents of women abuse in the country between 2004 and 2014 during the tenure of the UPA government, the leaders of MVA are now brazenly taking political advantage in the Badlapur incident.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY



**Raj Thackeray**  
President,  
Maharashtra  
Navnirman Sena

**"A huge portion of Dalits and Muslims voted against the BJP. These votes against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and (Union Home Minister) Amit Shah went to Uddhav Thackeray, Sharad Pawar and the Congress. These were not votes for the Maha Vikas Aghadi. This wave is now gone."**

By Correspondent

**Mumbai:** The Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and many other parts of Maharashtra are expected to receive heavy rainfall over the next four to five days, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has said.

The Met office on Friday issued an orange alert forecasting heavy to very heavy rainfall in Palghar, Thane, Mumbai, Raigad and Ratnagiri districts of Konkan from August 24 (Saturday) onwards. "The India Meteorological Department has predicted heavy rainfall in some areas of Mumbai city

## IMD issues orange alert for MMR



and its suburbs in the next 3-4 hours. Citizens are advised to be cautious," the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)

said in an SMS alert to citizens on Saturday morning. The IMD has also issued an orange alert for the Pune and Satara districts of west-

ern Maharashtra and Amravati, Bhandara, Chandrapur and Gondia districts of Vidarbha for Saturday.

An orange alert warns of heavy rainfall exceeding 64.5 mm in 24 hours, potentially disrupting normal life and causing flooding in low-lying areas.

A yellow alert, predicting thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and light-to-moderate rainfall with gusty winds of 30-40 kmph speed, has been issued for Saturday in several districts

barring a few in western Maharashtra and Marathwada. The IMD has issued an orange alert for some districts of Konkan and western Maharashtra on August 25 and 26 as well.

A low-pressure area over northern parts of West Bengal and adjoining areas of northeast Jharkhand and another over east central Arabian Sea off the Maharashtra coast will bring rain to most parts of Maharashtra in the next 48 hours, an IMD scientist told PTI.

## BRIEF

## Maha farmers to get Rs 225 cr

New Delhi: The Central government on Saturday directed an insurance company to pay pending claims of up to Rs 225 crore to about two lakh farmers in Maharashtra's Parbhani district within a week.

The order follows Union Agriculture Minister Shivrang Singh Chouhan's interaction with farmers in Nanded on August 21, where issues of pending soyabean crop insurance claims were raised.

On August 22, the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare held a meeting of the National Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The committee rejected the insurance company's objections to crop-cutting experiments and ordered the settlement of pending claims, an official statement said. The name of the insurance company was not disclosed in the statement.

The Central TAC on Saturday issued a formal order to the insurance company to pay the dues within seven days.

This decision will benefit approximately 2 lakh farmers in Parbhani district, with payouts ranging between Rs 200 to 225 crore.

Chouhan had instructed agriculture officials to immediately resolve the issue after farmers from Parbhani district informed him about the problem during his visit to Nanded.

The swift action is expected to provide financial relief to affected farmers in the Marathwada region, known for its significant soyabean cultivation.

- PTI

## Indians spend more on essential things

By Mangesh Kulkarni

Mumbai, August 24: Indians are increasingly spending more money on essential items rather than discretionary things as price levels rise and real income is seen contracting, according to a report.

"Both staples and discretionary experienced subdued demand even as they hoped for a better future on the back of rural revival and festive demand.... The emerging picture indicates that the household (HH) situation has weakened further in recent months with real income continuing to decline," said the report by Systematix Institutional Equities.

The decline in real income has also been substantiated by the ITR (income-tax returns) data as also by Reserve Bank of



India's bi-monthly consumer confidence survey in July.

Real income for an average ITR filer (individuals and HUF) contracted in FY24 (-0.9%) and remained flat over the past 5 years (0.1% CAGR), the report said, indicating a rise in inequality.

While capital gains remain the strongest in the overall income components, it has been highly volatile; real incomes from

salary, business and other incomes (interest on deposits, perks etc) contributing 95% of incomes of ITR filers have remained flat over the past 5 and 10 years, the report said.

RBI consumer confidence survey for urban population shows that the change in proportion of respondents citing rise in income fell to -0.3% in July following a brief and shallow recovery to a peak of 6% in Mar '24. Taken along

with the rising proportion of people experiencing rise in prices (92.6% on a net basis), the income indicators suggest continued impairment in real income.

As a result of declining incomes had an impact on automobiles sales, both passenger vehicles as also two-wheelers and air-conditioners and refrigerators, though tourists' departure from India indicated a rise.

Some element of discretionary spending amid declining income was fueled by lending by banks and NBFCs. However, this dichotomy has exposed banks to twin risks of decelerating deposit growth (10.6% currently vs Jun'23 peak of 15.5%) and rising default risks from consumer loans, the report said.

The silver lining particularly for income from rural India remains the normal monsoon, the report said.

## Amazon announces 12 pc reduction

Mumbai: Amazon India on Saturday announced an up to 12 per cent reduction in selling fees across multiple product categories on the marketplace ahead of the festive season. The reductions in fees, which is effective from September 9, will enable sellers to expand their product portfolio on the platform besides providing a boost to growth, Amazon India said. "With the changes, sellers on Amazon India will benefit from a drop in selling fees, ranging from 3-12 per cent across various product categories", the company said.

By  
Kaustubh Kale

While we celebrate India completing 77 years of Independence, it is a good time to touch upon a sensitive topic that troubles many in India: after-retirement planning. The nation's progress towards economic empowerment has inspired many individuals to pursue their journey toward financial independence and financial freedom. These concepts, though often used interchangeably, carry distinct meanings that are crucial for anyone seeking long-term financial stability and security. I have given here my own interpretations in financial parlance.

## FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE (FI):

FI is a state where an individual has accumulated education, skillsets and expertise to earn enough monthly income that exceeds living expenses. This way he or she isn't dependent on parents/spouse/children to take care of expenses. The person lives an upright life on his/her own terms. Basically, till the person is able to actively work, the expenses are well taken care of. Additionally, he is also able to save for his future financial goals like house, car, vacation, children's education, children's future wedding and importantly the person's retirement.

This is the reason why we also see a lot of women rightfully taking charge of their lives in terms of well being, decision making and ensuring their financial security. Because they are 'FI', they do not have to necessarily be dependent on their parents or spouse. Money does give a lot of power! A FI person has a great chance of achieving financial freedom in future.

## FINANCIAL FREEDOM (FF):

Incomes are not permanent, expenses are permanent. By 'incomes' here, we mean 'active' income which a person has to earn by devoting his time, efforts and resources.

A financially independent person as a virtue of consistently saving, investing and stay-



ing invested can build assets making him financially free.

A person who has achieved FF has sufficient wealth or income-generating assets to cover their living expenses without relying on a traditional job or external financial support. He isn't dependent on his children to take care of his after-retirement expenses. This basically means that investments can give him income streams which are substantial enough to meet or exceed their regular expenses (adjusted for inflation), for his entire lifetime.

Let us look at few investments and what incomes those can generate:

- > Mutual Funds - Systematic Withdrawal Plan and/or Dividends
- > Stocks - Dividends
- > Bank Fixed Deposits - Interest Income
- > Insurance Pension Schemes - Pension Income
- > Real Estate - Rental Income

Achieving financial freedom allows an individual to break free from the need for a regular paycheck, enabling them to pursue their passions, travel the world, explore entrepreneurial ventures, or even retire early. Further, giving back to the society, contributing to social causes and leaving a legacy can also be pursued. As India continues its journey of growth and self-reliance, the pursuit of financial independence and financial freedom has become more relevant than ever. Both require careful planning, disciplined saving, and smart investing, paving the way for individuals to enjoy a life of stability and abundance.

(The writer is a Chartered Accountant and Investment Consultant. Views personal)



The Sarang team of Indian Air Force on their way to the first edition of the Egypt International Airshow

## Pak new currency of polymer plastic



Karachi: Pakistan's central bank will experiment with a new polymer plastic currency banknote later this year while redesigning all the existing banknotes for enhanced security and hologram features.

State Bank of Pakistan Governor Jameel Ahmed told a Senate committee on banking and finance in Islamabad that all the existing paper currency notes are being redesigned with new security features by December this year.

Ahmed said the newly redesigned banknotes in the denominations of Rs 10, 50, 100, 500, 1000 and 5000 would be issued in December.

"The old notes would remain in circulation for five years being eased out of the market by the central bank," a source close to the committee said.

The State Bank governor also informed the Senate committee members that a new polymer plastic bank note would be issued in one denomination for the public and if it is received well, plastic currency would follow in other denominations.

Presently around 40 countries use polymer plastic banknotes which are hard to counterfeit and have more enhanced security features like hologram and see-through-window.

Australia was the first country to introduce polymer banknotes back in 1998.

Ahmed also confirmed that the central bank had no plans to cancel the Rs 5,000 note even as one member, Mohsin Aziz, insisted it made it easier for corrupt people to do their business.

- PTI

## Coal India's impact may touch 35,000 cr

Kolkata: Coal India's financial impact may run into Rs 35,000 crore in a "worst-case" scenario if the Supreme Court's review on mining taxes yields no favourable outcome or if the company fails to recover the taxes from its customers, a top official said on Friday.

The miner is awaiting final clarity before considering any "provisioning" in its accounts. "Two subsidiary companies - Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd and Central Coalfields Ltd - are being affected, while the rest of the subsidiaries remain unaffected. Mahanadi Coalfields in Odisha is the most impacted. In the worst case scenario, our impact could be about Rs 35,000 crore, if we are unable to recover from long-term fuel supply agreements (FSAs) customers," Coal India Chairman P M Prasad said. Talking to reporters on the sidelines of a Bharat Chamber of Commerce interaction, he said Central Coalfields in Jharkhand will be affected by about Rs 350 crore.

- PTI



## Indian telcos aim for 10 pc share in 6G patents

New Delhi: Indian telecom players are targeting a share of 10 per cent of all 6G patents and one-sixth contributions to global standards in the next three years, an official statement said on Saturday.

Telecom industry players have proposed to systematically align research to 'India's needs' and put in place a vibrant 'Standards Community'.

The proposal came up during the second meeting of Stakeholders Advisory Committee (SAC) on Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) which was chaired by union telecom minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Friday.

"Industry leaders proposed systematically aligning research to 'India's needs' and put in place a vibrant 'Standards Community' targeting a share of 10 per cent of all 6G patents and one-sixth contributions to global standards in the next 3 years," the statement said.

During the first SAC on telecom operators, certain focus areas were identified.

Deliberations on international standards and India's share

in Intellectual Property and Standard Essential Patent (SEP), connectivity gaps in telecom and quality of telecom services were held in the meeting.

"India has already taken various initiatives like launch of Bhart6G Vision and Bhart6G Alliance, patent and IPR support framework, commissioning of testbeds, etc., and country

can aspire for achieving 10 per cent of all 6G patents and

one-sixth contributions to global standards promoting India's needs. SAC proposed a 3-year roadmap for achieving it," the statement said.

The SAC emphasises on India becoming a deep-tech leader, penetration of both wireline and intelligent wireless broadband networks, with reliable connectivity.

"Minister Shri Scindia asked the SAC members to define a critical path to achieve the targets discussed and to define roles they see for different stakeholders, including the government, in achieving the same. He also exhorted TSPs to take all necessary measures to

ensure that citizens get good quality telecom services," the statement said.

Reliance Jio Managing Director Pankaj Pawar, Vodafone Idea CEO Akshaya Moondra, BSNL Chairman and Managing Director Robert J Ravi, Tejas Networks' Chairman of the Board of Directors, N G Subramanian and industry body COAI Director General S P Kochhar attended the meeting.

The telecom operators sought a supportive policy framework to encourage investments towards the path of 100 per cent broadband coverage in the country.

- PTI

## Cognizant files lawsuit against Infosys

New Delhi: IT major Cognizant's subsidiary TriZetto has slapped a lawsuit on Infosys in a US federal court, accusing the Bengaluru-headquartered company of stealing trade secrets and information related to healthcare insurance software.

Infosys, in a statement, denied all allegations. The company asserted it is aware of the lawsuit and will defend its position in the court.

Cognizant in a lawsuit filed in Texas federal court has accused Infosys of illegally ac-

cessing data from TriZetto's software -- Facets and QNXT -- and using the same to develop and market a competing product.

Cognizant offerings include TriZetto's Facets and QNXT, which healthcare insurance firms use to automate tasks. Teaneck, New Jersey-based Cognizant has the bulk of its employees in India. Cognizant has reportedly alleged that Infosys misused TriZetto's software to create "Test Cases for Facets," which repackaged its



Infosys

data into an Infosys product. Further, it has reportedly alleged that Infosys created software to extract data from QNXT, that contained confidential TriZetto information. It is interesting to note that just this week, Cognizant named former Infosys execu-

tive Rajesh Varrier as global head of operations and India Chairman and Managing Director, following the resignation of Rajesh Nambiar, who is set to take over as Nasscom president.

Moreover, Cognizant's Chief Executive Officer Ravi Kumar S is also an Infosys veteran, whose 20-year career at the Bengaluru-based firm saw him holding various leadership roles, including as President from January 2016 through October 2022.

- PTI

## Chevron invests in Karnataka

Bengaluru: Chevron, a global leader in providing energy solutions, on Saturday announced an investment of Rs 8,300 crore to set up its Engineering and Innovation Centre of Excellence here. The investment was announced during a high-profile meeting attended by the Karnataka Minister for Large and Medium Industries and Infrastructure Development, M.B. Patil and others.

## India needs 400 M more women in workforce

By Uzmi Athar

New Delhi: India requires an additional 400 million women in the workforce to contribute USD 14 trillion to the economy which would necessitate nearly doubling the current female labour force participation rate (LFPR) from 37 per cent to 70 per cent by fiscal year 2047, according to a new report.

Non-profit The/Nudge Institute has unveiled a new report, Labour Force Participation Distillation Report, outlining a crucial ele-



ment for India's economic future. The report is based upon Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) over the years.

As the country aims to become a USD 30 trillion

economy by 2047, the report highlights the need for a substantial increase in female labour force participation to achieve this goal.

According to the report, India requires an additional

400 million women in the workforce to contribute USD 14 trillion to the economy. This would necessitate nearly doubling the current female labour force participation rate (LFPR) from 37 per cent to 70 per cent by fiscal year 2047.

With only 110 million women projected to join the labour force by then, an additional 145 million women need to be integrated to meet this target. The report reveals a stark disparity in job security and recovery between men and women.

Women were found to be

seven times more likely to lose their jobs and eleven times more likely not to recover from job loss. By 2020, nearly half of the women employed in 2019 had exited the workforce, the report said. Women predominantly work in low-productivity sectors, such as agriculture and manufacturing, where they face limited advancement.

According to the report, in construction, women represent just over 12 per cent of the workforce, often earning significantly less than men in unskilled roles.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

Jayant Chaudhary  
Union Minister, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

"We are in talks with state governments and are having continuous dialogues with various industry associations on to upgrade 1,000 ITIs and 5 NSTIs. Maharashtra will play an important role in the upgradation."

# Ranjith accused of misbehaviour with female actor

**Thiruvananthapuram/Kolkata:** A Bengali actor has levelled accusation of misbehaviour against eminent Malayalam film director and chairman of the state-run Kerala Chalachitra Academy, Ranjith, spelling fresh trouble for the Pinarayi Vijayan government which is facing opposition heat on its alleged inaction over the Justice Hema Committee report.

The report had revealed instances of harassment and exploitation of women in the Malayalam cinema industry, prompting calls for action against the guilty.

The filmmaker has reportedly rejected Mitra's charge and said he was the "real victim" in the case.

Key LDF constituent CPI was among those seeking a probe into the allegation of Bengali actor Sreelekha Mi-



tra, who has recalled a years-old incident in the backdrop of the ripples being created by the Justice Hema Committee findings.

"The person concerned (Ranjith) is a big name in Malayalam film industry and a national award winning director. I went to his residence to discuss an up-

coming film project and I did not like his behaviour. He made certain advances subtly and I felt uncomfortable while we were discussing the script," Mitra told PTI in Kolkata.

He did this without her consent and she her made her disapproval very clear. "I immediately communi-

ated my decision not to be part of the project any more, left the place and came back to Kolkata the next day," she added.

"I don't know if he has treated other female actors in the film industry in the same way. It is upto them to open up or not if they had faced similar situation. May be his power and influence played a role for others to not to speak out," she added.

Mitra said she did not have any such experience in the Bengali cinema industry, but that there could be similar situations for other female actors as well with regard to someone. Such women should muster the courage and speak out without any fear.

"The incident in Kerala was years back...but it is heartening that women are

speaking out with greater vigour and conviction against any form of misconduct now, taking out rallies, and I am looking forward to the day when number of any instance of gender abuse, misconduct will go down and women will not have such harrowing tales any more," Mitra added.

Ranjith's ouster demanded

In Kerala, many demanded Ranjith stepped down as the Chairman of the film academy. Several people including well-known filmmaker Dr Biju came out against Ranjith.

While opposition Congress said it expects Ranjith would step down as film academy chairman, BJP said he has no moral right to continue.

CPI national leader Annie Raja urged the govern-

ment to carry out a probe based on Mitra's allegations and wanted to keep Ranjith away from the position during investigation.

Kerala Cultural Affairs Minister Saji Cheriyan assured the government would not protect anyone who had committed a wrong.

If the allegations against Ranjith were proved, action would surely be taken against him, he said in a Facebook post on Saturday.

He told the media earlier Ranjith is one of country's eminent filmmakers and that he had already responded to the actor's allegation.

"The allegation raised by the actress and the reply given by Ranjith are in front of us. If she has a complaint, let her come here and lodge a complaint.

Then we will take action in accordance with the law," he said.

No case can be registered based on just allegations and such cases wont stand, Cheriyan added.

He underlined the government's support for women who face harassment at their workplaces and said stringent action would be taken against wrongdoers.

Health Minister Veena George said all facilities and support would be provided to the actress to lodge a complaint against the director.

"If she wishes to go ahead with the complaint, the government will provide all facilities for the same. The government's stand is clear in this. The CM has already made it clear that the government won't protect wrongdoers," she said.

# Rajasthan employees in RSS



**Jaipur:** Rajasthan's BJP government has lifted the ban on government employees participating in the activities of the RSS.

Joint Secretary of the Department of Personnel Rajendra Singh Kavia citing previous orders has issued a circular to lift the 52-year-old ban.

As per the circular, after reviewing the instructions of 1972 and 1981, it has been decided to remove the name of RSS from the list of organisations whose activities were banned earlier.

Earlier, the Centre had lifted a ban on government employees taking part in the RSS activities. The ban imposed in November 1966 during the rule of former prime minister Indira Gandhi was removed by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances, and Pensions.

Several state governments, including Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh, have already removed the restrictions on government employees being linked to the RSS.

- PTI

# Prajwal Revanna charge sheeted

**Bengaluru:** The Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Criminal Investigation Department has filed a charge sheet against former MP Prajwal Revanna for rape and his father and MLA H D Revanna for sexual harassment.

The SIT, which is probing four cases against Prajwal, said the over 2,000-page charge sheet comprises the statements of about 150 witnesses.

The charge sheet, submitted in a special court for public representatives, pertains to one of the cases involving alleged sexual assault on a domestic help of the family.

The charge sheet con-

tains spot inspection, biological, physical, scientific, mobile, digital and other relevant evidences which were gathered.

Further, expert opinion was taken before filing the charge sheet, the SIT said.

While the MLA Revanna, who is son of former Prime Minister and JD(S) supremo H D Deve Gowda, has been charged with section 354 and 354(A) of the IPC, his 33-year-old son Prajwal has been booked under sections 376, 376 (2)(K), 354, 354(A) and 354(B) of the IPC.

The first complaint against the father-son duo was registered based on a complaint by the domestic help at their residence.

# Lanka arrests 11 Indian fishermen

**Colombo:** The Sri Lankan Navy has arrested 11 more Indian fishermen for allegedly poaching in the country's territorial waters, taking the total number of arrests this year to 333, according to an official release.

On Friday, 11 Indian fishermen were arrested, and their trawler seized off the coast of Point Pedro in Jaffna in the northern province, the Sri Lankan Navy said in a press release.

Those apprehended were brought to the Kankesanthurai fishing harbour for further action, it said.

With this, the number of Indians arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy this year has risen to 333, and their trawlers seized to 45, according to the press release.

# Prime accused in Assam rape case dead

**Guwahati:** The prime accused in the rape of a minor girl allegedly escaped from police custody, jumped into a pond and died on Saturday morning at Dhing in Assam's Nagaon district, police said.

The villagers of Borbheti, the family home of the accused, have taken a decision not to participate in his funeral prayers and not allow his burial in the village graveyard.

Nagaon Superintendent of Police Swapneel Deka told reporters that the accused, who was arrested on Friday, was taken handcuffed to the location where the crime was allegedly committed for a recreation of the crime scene around 3.30 am.

"The accused hit out at a policeman, escaped from police custody and jumped into the pond", Deka said.

The SDRF was immedi-



ately informed, a search operation was launched and his body was recovered after nearly two hours, he added.

The policeman was also injured and admitted to a hospital, the SP said.

The other two accused are still absconding and search was continuing with raids conducted at several places on Friday night.

The 14-year-old girl was allegedly raped by three persons who came on a motorcy-

cle and surrounded her while she was returning home from tuition on her bicycle at Dhing on Thursday evening. She was left injured and unconscious on the roadside near a pond, before being rescued by locals who informed police.

Meanwhile, villagers of Borbheti held a meeting on Saturday morning and took three decisions regarding the crime committed by the youth.

"We have decided not to allow his burial in the village graveyard, not participate in his 'janaza' (burial prayers) and social boycott of his family", a village elder Md Shahjahan Ali Choudhury told PTI.

"The village youth's crime has shamed us and we cannot allow his burial in the community graveyard", he added.

Meanwhile, a march was also taken out from the village mosque to protest against the incident.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had said on Friday that stern action will be taken against the culprits.

Sarma, who is currently touring the three districts in Barak Valley, had said on Friday night that there is a difference between Assam and Bengal in dealing with such cases.

- PTI



# Will ask son to withdraw bid: Satpal

**Dehradun:** Uttarakhand Tourism Minister Satpal Maharaj has said that he would ask his son to withdraw his application for a tender to operate a cruise boat on the Tehri lake following a controversy over the issue.

The minister's son Suyash Rawat was among six applicants selected for consideration by the Tehri Special Area Tourism Development Authority (TADA), which allocates tenders for operating cruise boats on the lake.

An interview of eligible applicants was scheduled for August 28.

However, following a controversy, the minister told reporters in Gairsain on Friday that he would ask his son to withdraw his application while also asserting that complete transparency was maintained in considering the application.

TADA falls under the jurisdiction of the tourism department.

# Lord Jagannath's Ratna Bhandar SJTA urges ASI to start inspection

**Bhubaneswar:** The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) on Saturday wrote a letter to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to start the inspection work of the 'Ratna Bhandar' of the 12th-century shrine in Puri before undertaking repair and renovation of the Lord's treasury.

The SJTA Chief Administrator, Arabinda Padhee in a letter to the ASI DG urged the central agency to take over the Ratna Bhandar and initiate scanning and geo-physical investigation using latest technology, conservation, repair and restoration of inner and outer chambers of the treasury of Lord Jagannath's temple in Puri.

With both the inner and outer chambers of the treasury empty, the SJTA feels that the inspection works are required amid apprehensions about the presence of some secret tunnels or chambers inside the Ratna Bhandar.

The SJTA has also urged ASI to conduct the necessary inspection work



through IIT or CBRI-like institutions that have expertise while ensuring no adverse impact on the 12th-century shrine. Once the necessary survey and inspection works are completed, the process for the repair works will begin, the SJTA mentioned in the letter. On Friday, all the seven empty iron chests and almirahs were shifted from the Ratna Bhandar to a room near Niladri Vihar museum located on the

premises of the 12th-century shrine.

Jewellery and other precious items stored in those containers were shifted to temporary strong rooms inside the temple in two phases in July when the Ratna Bhandar was reopened after 46 years for an inventory of valuables and the repair of its structure.

The empty iron chests along with iron and wooden almirahs were shifted in the presence of Justice Biswa-

nath Rath, chairman of an empowered committee and other members of the panel.

The entire proceedings were videographed, Padhee said, after completion of shifting of the empty chests and almirahs, both the inner and outer chambers of the treasury were sealed. Similarly, the room where those containers were stored was also locked and sealed, Padhee said.

- PTI

# Gauri Lankesh murder case Plea seeking cancellation of bail dismissed

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court has dismissed a plea of Kavitha Lankesh against a Karnataka High Court order that granted bail to an accused in the murder case of her elder sister and journalist Gauri Lankesh.

A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and S C Sharma noted that the accused, Mohan Nayak, has cooperated with the trial court in the proceedings and has not sought any adjournment.

"Under the circumstances, we are not inclined to interfere with the impugned orders passed by the high court. However, it is directed that the trial court shall

expeditiously conduct the trial and all the parties shall cooperate with the trial court in concluding the trial.

"It goes without saying that if the respondent - accused - does not cooperate or asks for unnecessary adjournment(s) or commits breach of any condition, the State of Karnataka or the complainant shall be at liberty to apply for cancella-

tion of bail, and if any such application is filed, the same shall be decided on its own merits and in accordance with law," the bench said.

Kavitha had moved the top court against the high court order dated December 7, 2023.

Senior advocate Sidharth Luthra, appearing for Karnataka, told the court that so far, 137 witnesses have been examined by the prosecution, 137 witnesses have been dropped and the prosecution is also likely to drop 150 more witnesses, and now about 100 witnesses are still to be examined.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

**Pandurang K Pole,** Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Jammu and Kashmir

**"Kashmiri migrant voters residing in various relief camps in Jammu, Udhampur, and Delhi, who have opted to cast their votes in person through Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) in the election, can do so at 24 polling stations -- 19 in Jammu, 1 in Udhampur and 4 in Delhi.**

# Nag Ashwin advises Arshad on choosing words

**New Delhi:** "Kalki 2898 AD" director Nag Ashwin on Saturday opened up about the controversy surrounding actor Arshad Warsi's comments about Prabhas looking like a "jokar" in the sci-fi movie, saying the "Munnabhai" star should have "chosen his words better but it's ok".

Arshad had stirred up a storm with his comments in an interview about the film and Prabhas' portrayal of Bhairava in it, which many of the south superstar's fans took as a personal dig against the actor.



But Ashwin, in a post on X, said Arshad's comments should not be used to cause divide between north and south film industries.

"Let's not go backwards... no more north-south or bol-

ply to a handle. The filmmaker said he will work hard on the sequel to the movie so that people say that Prabhas was the best in "K2".

"Too much hate in the world already bro. we can try not to add to it I know Prabhas garu will also feel the same," he added.

Arshad, in an interaction with Samdish, had expressed his dislike for how Prabhas was portrayed in the movie. "Prabhas, I am really sad, why was he... he was like a joker. Why? I want to see a Mad Max. I want to

see Mel Gibson over there. Tumne usko kya bana dia yaar. Kyu karte ho aisa ma jhe nahi samajh mein aata (What have you made of him? I don't understand why they do such things)."

"Kalki 2898 AD", which has earned 1050 crore across the world since its release on June 27, featured top talent from both south and Bollywood with names like Amitabh Bachchan, Deepika Padukone, Kamal Haasan and many others.

It is now available on streaming platforms.

- PTI

# Investments in space sector added to India's GDP

Environment should be safeguarded: Sharma

**New Delhi:** India has invested nearly USD 13 billion in the space sector over the past decade which has contributed USD 60 billion to the GDP through direct, indirect and induced benefits, a report by global consulting firm Novaspaces said on Friday.

The report 'The Socio-Economic Impact of the Indian Space Programme', released by Union Minister of State for Space Jitendra Singh, also said that India was the eighth-largest space nation in the world in terms of funding and has seen faster growth of start-ups in the sector.

"The Indian space sector has contributed 60 billion dollars to the GDP in the last decade through direct, indirect and induced effects. In addition, it has generated 4.7 million jobs. The sector directly employs 96,000 persons through the public and the private sector," Steve Boehinger, affiliate executive adviser at Novaspaces, a Paris-based consulting firm, said.

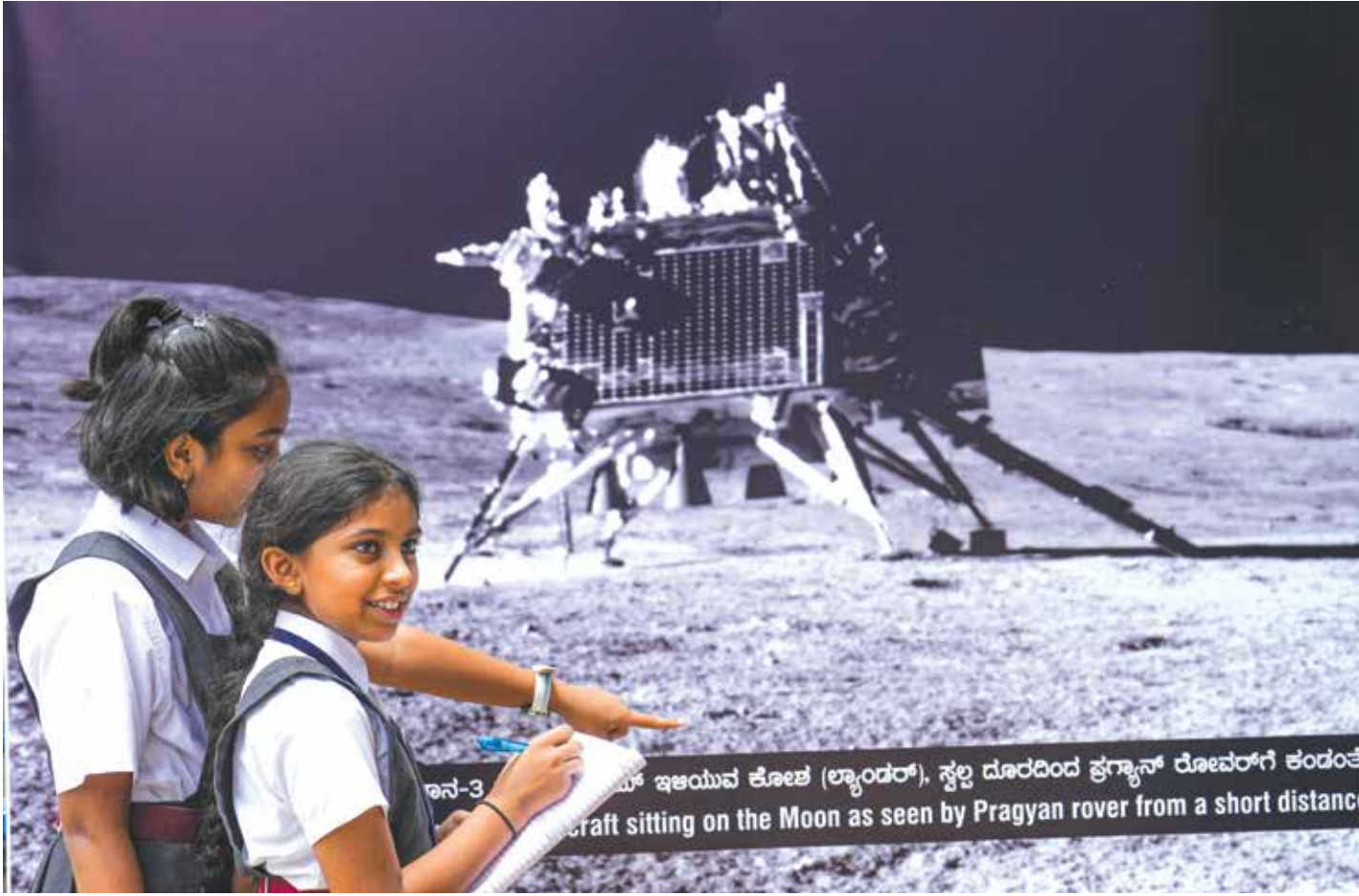
ISRO had tasked Novaspaces with preparing a report on the socio-economic impact of its space missions.

Boehinger said the estimated revenues of India's space sector have increased from USD 3.8 billion in 2014 to USD 6.3 billion in 2023.

"Every dollar generated by the space economy in India translates into USD 2.54 of indirect and induced benefit," Boehinger said.

"This is what we call the multiplier effect," he said.

Outlining the vision for the future, Union minister Singh said India aims to commission



Students visit an exhibition during the celebration of India's first National Space Day, at Jawaharlal Nehru Planetarium, in Bengaluru on Friday.

Pic: PTI

the Bharatiya Antariksha Station (BAS) by 2035 and land Indian astronauts on the Moon by 2040.

He expressed confidence that the human spaceflight in Low Earth Orbit next year will be the first step to expand India's scientific activities onboard an indigenous space station, leading to further lunar exploration and

beyond. The Novaspaces report said ISRO helps eight lakh fisher folk daily. In addition, 1.4 billion Indians get the benefit of satellite-based weather forecasts.

Pawan Kumar Goenka, Chairman of Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (INSPACe) said it had launched a seed fund scheme for

start-ups, facilitated transfer of technology to the private sector and established a design lab with simulation softwares for budding space sector entrepreneurs.

"We are encouraging the private sector to launch an earth observation constellation in the PPP mode. Efforts are being made to make use of unused ITU

filings for non-government entities. We are working on fiscal and non-fiscal incentives along with state governments to promote space sub-systems manufacturing in India," Goenka said.

He said Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced Rs 1,000 crore venture capital fund for the space start-ups to help bridge the critical financing

gaps faced by budding enterprises and ensure their growth and sustainability.

Subba Rao Pavuluri, President of the Satcom India Association-India, said the progressive policies by the government, including the India Space policy, and the formation of New Space India Limited, have actively encouraged Indian private companies by creating a conducive environment.

"While challenges like funding and infrastructure exist, the overall outlook is optimistic. With sustained government support and private investments, India has the potential to emerge as a global space leader," Subba Rao said.

Lt Gen A.K. Bhatt (retd), Director General of Indian Space Association (ISpA) said initiatives such as the new comprehensive Space Policy, setting up of IN-SPACe, reforms including liberalised FDI regulations and the New Telecom Act allocating spectrum by administrative method have already given much needed kickstart to the private industry.

"We really look forward to the continuity of policy reforms and further momentum towards ironing the remaining bottlenecks to enable the private space industry to take on more responsibility in building and supporting India's contribution to the global space economy," Bhatt said.

He said such reforms will be instrumental in fostering a vibrant and competitive space ecosystem, paving the way for India's continued leadership in space exploration.

- PTI

- PTI

## TN space startup launches first reusable hybrid rocket

**Chennai:** Tamil Nadu-based startup Space Zone India on Saturday launched its first reusable hybrid rocket, Mission RHUMI-2024, onboard a mobile platform to take up research on global warming and climate change.

City-headquartered Space Zone India has been conducting various projects under Mission RHUMI over the last two years.

The RHUMI rocket launched early in the day at Thiruvananthapuram on the scenic East Coast Road near Chennai is powered by a generic-fuel-based hybrid motor and electrically triggered parachute deployer.

"It is 3.5 metre tall rocket and was launched at about 7.25 am from the earlier 7am lift off schedule," Space

Zone India Founder-CEO Anand Megalingam said.

"It is more of a sounding rocket. It flew to an altitude of about 35 kms and right now my team is there to collect it as per our plan (since it is a reusable rocket)," he told PTI.

"Compared to an 89 degree inclination, we had launched the rocket with 70 degree inclination due to heavy wind and gusts," he explained on the launch from the mobile launch pad near the coast.

Mission RHUMI has been claimed to be the world's first mobile launch of a hybrid rocket.

Anand Megalingam has said that RHUMI is named after his son Rhumithran.

The rocket launched today carried three CUBE sat-

ellites designed to monitor and collect data on atmospheric conditions, including cosmic radiation intensity, UV radiation, air quality, among others.

It also deployed 50 different Pico satellites to study various aspects of atmospheric conditions like accelerometer readings, altitude, ozone levels, to understand the environmental dynamics.

"India is rapidly emerging as a global leader in space innovation, consistently launching groundbreaking missions that push the boundaries of what is possible. As our nation continues to advance in this crucial sector, the need for sustainable and cost-effective solutions becomes more pressing. Mission

RHUMI 2024 is a direct response to this need," Megalingam said.

"By introducing a reusable hybrid rocket, we are not only reducing the financial burden of space exploration but minimising its environmental impact. This mission reflects our commitment to making space missions more accessible and sustainable for the future," he said.

Dubbed as 'Moon Man of India', the project director of India's Moon Mission "Chandrayaan", Myslwamy Annadurai, is the mentor for Space Zone India.

"The launch of hybrid rocket through our Hydraulic mobile launchpad is a first-of-its-kind initiative that sets a new benchmark in aerospace technology."



Space Zone India on Saturday launched its first reusable hybrid rocket, Mission RHUMI-2024, onboard a mobile platform to take up research on global warming and climate change.

## 'Right mix of measures' crucial for cutting emissions

**New Delhi:** Merely a higher number of climate policies aimed at reducing emissions do not lead to better outcomes, instead, the right mix of measures is crucial, according to researchers who analysed 1,500 policy interventions implemented between 1998 and 2022.

In their study, published in the journal Science, the authors described 63 success cases, which involved "rarely studied policies and unappreciated policy combinations".

"For example, subsidies or regulations alone are insufficient; only in combination with price-based instruments, such as carbon and energy taxes, can they deliver substantial emission reductions," lead author Nicolas Koch from the Potsdam Institute for Cli-

mate Impact Research (PIK), Germany, said.

The climate policies that the researchers studied covered wide-ranging aspects, from energy-related building codes to purchase subsidies for climate-friendly products and carbon taxes.

The team used a new Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) database, representing the most comprehensive one for climate policies worldwide to date, to identify the measures that achieved large-scale reductions in emissions.

"We systematically evaluated policy measures that have rarely been studied until now, providing new insights into well-designed combinations of complementary policy instruments," Koch said.

## 'Waste Wise' initiative to Combat Plastic Waste Crisis

**Mumbai:** House of Hiranandani, a leading real estate developer, proudly unveils 'Waste Wise,' the second pillar of its ambitious Tomorrow Matters campaign, a five-year endeavour dedicated to advancing sustainability and securing a better future for the next generations.

'Waste Wise' aims at combating the plastic waste crisis with a twofold mission for the next five years: recycling 18,000 kg of plastic waste and transforming over 3.4 million kilograms of wet waste into organic manure. The manure produced during this tenure will be used in gardens and distributed among local communities. By addressing the waste management

crisis head-on, the initiative strives to significantly reduce landfill dependency while fostering sustainable waste management practices across communities.

The campaign's launch is marked by the release of a witty and engaging video starring Polly, a plastic bag, designed to raise awareness and provoke thought on the perils of improper waste disposal. This creative effort emphasises House of Hiranandani's commitment to recycling and encourages active participation in environmentally responsible actions.

The brand also initiated the first activity under this pillar by distributing coffee mugs and steel bottles among its over 1000 em-

ployees to dissuade use of paper cups and plastic bottles, thus asserting its commitment towards the cause. In the next five years, it aims to conduct multiple programs such as workshops on waste management, collection of plastic and E-waste, distribution of bins and other initiatives in collaboration with different communities and organisations to achieve the larger goal.

Prashin Jhobalia, Chief Marketing Officer, House of Hiranandani, said, "According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Global Plastic Outlook, global production of plastic waste has more than doubled since it was in 2000,

### The initiative

- Convert 3.4 million kg of wet waste in to organic manure
- Ensure responsible handling and recycling of up to 18,000 kg of plastic waste
- Create awareness on the issue through an engaging video



and is set to triple by 2060. Only 9 per cent of this waste was recycled. With 'Waste Wise,' we are not just addressing critical environmental concerns but also galvanizing the community towards a meaning-

ful change. Educating locals on hazards of plastic, importance of wet waste composting, distribution of bins, collection of e-waste are some of the initiatives that will be regularly conducted under this pillar."

## 11 killed after heavy rain hits China

**Beijing:** Torrential rains have left at least 11 people dead and 14 others missing in the city of Huludao, northeast China's Liaoning province which left a trail of destruction causing heavy damage to the roads and bridges amounting to USD 1.44 billion, official media reported on Saturday.

The latest round of heavy rainfall caused severe damage in Huludao, particularly in the city's Jianchang County and Suizhong County, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Roads, power lines, communication networks, houses and crops were badly affected. Currently, roads and communication networks are gradually being restored in affected areas and efforts are being made to search for the missing persons. - PTI

# Knife attacker kills three at festival

**Solingen (Germany):** An attacker with a knife killed three people and seriously wounded at least five late on Friday at a festival in the western German city of Solingen, authorities said.



Witnesses alerted police shortly after 9:30 p.m. to an unknown perpetrator having wounded several people indiscriminately with a knife on a central square, the Fronhof. Police said the attacker was on the run, and that they so far had only very little information on the man.

They said they believe the stabbings were carried out by a lone attacker.

One of the festival organizers, Philipp Müller, appeared on stage and asked festivalgoers to "go calmly, please keep your eyes open, because unfortunately the perpetrator hasn't been caught."

He said many people had been wounded by "a knifeman."

At least one helicopter was seen in the air, while many police and emergency vehicles with flashing blue

lights were on the road and several streets were closed off.

Police put the number of seriously injured at five. The region's top security official, Herbert Reul, gave a figure of six as he visited the scene in the early hours of Saturday.

"None of us knows why" the attack took place, said Reul, who is the interior minister of North Rhine-Westphalia state.

"I can't say anything about the motive now" and it isn't clear who the assailant was, he also said and added that the attacker had left the scene "relatively quickly."

Mayor Tim Kurzbach said

in a Facebook post that "this evening, we in Solingen are all in shock. We all wanted to celebrate our city's anniversary together and now have dead and wounded to lament."

"It breaks my heart that an attack on our city happened," he added.

The local newspaper Solinger Tageblatt quoted Celine Derikartz, its reporter covering the festival, as saying that "the atmosphere is spooky." She said a party atmosphere had turned to shock within minutes and she saw festivalgoers weeping.

The "Festival of Diversity," marking the city's 650th

anniversary, began on Friday and was supposed to run through Sunday, with several stages in central streets offering attractions such as live music, cabaret and acrobatics.

The city cancelled the rest of the festival after the attack. Solingen has about 160,000 residents and is located near the bigger cities of Cologne and Duesseldorf.

There has been concern about an increase in knife violence in Germany recently.

In May, a knife attack by an Afghan immigrant on members of a group that describes itself as opposing "political Islam" left a police officer dead.

Germany's top security official, Interior Minister Nancy Faeser, this month proposed toughening weapons laws to allow only knives with a blade measuring up to 6 centimeters (nearly 2.4 inches) to be carried in public, rather than the length of 12 centimeters (4.7 inches) which is allowed now.

-AP

## Protection for Jewish places of worship

**Paris:** France's acting interior minister ordered police reinforcements to protect Jewish places of worship after a suspected arson attack Saturday on a synagogue in a southwestern Mediterranean town.

Two cars parked at the Beth Yaacov synagogue in the seaside resort town of La Grande Motte near Montpellier were set ablaze on Saturday morning, injuring a police officer, according to French media reports.

It was not immediately clear how many people were inside the synagogue at the time. There are no reports of other injuries.

Acting Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said the incident was being treated as an "attempted arson" that is "clearly a criminal act." One of the cars allegedly contained a propane gas tank, local media reported.

"I want to assure our Jewish fellow citizens of my full support and say that at the request of President Emmanuel Macron all means are being mobilized to find the perpetrator," Darmanin said.

## Iranian hackers targeted WhatsApp accounts in Biden administrations

By Eric Tucker and David Klepper

**Washington:** The same Iranian hacking group believed to have targeted both the Democratic and Republican presidential campaigns, tried to go after the WhatsApp accounts of staffers in the administrations of President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump, Meta Platforms said Friday.

Meta said it discovered the network of hackers, who posed as tech support agents for companies including Microsoft and Google, after individuals who received the suspicious WhatsApp messages reported them. Meta's investigators linked the activity to the same network blamed for the hacking incident reported by Trump's campaign.

The FBI this week said a hack by Iran of the Trump campaign and an attempted breach of the Biden-Harris campaign was part of a broader Iranian effort to interfere with the U.S. presidential election.

A statement Friday from Meta, the parent of Facebook and Instagram, said that the hackers had tried to target the WhatsApp account of individuals in the Middle East, the United



States and the United Kingdom, as well as political and diplomatic officials — including unidentified officials associated with the

### Meta Report

Trump and Biden administrations. A "small cluster" of accounts was blocked by Meta, the company said.

"We have not seen evidence of the targeted WhatsApp accounts being compromised, but out of an abundance of caution, we're sharing our findings publicly, in addition to sharing information with law enforcement and our industry peers," Meta said in a statement.

U.S. intelligence officials say Iran's increasingly aggressive use of cyberattacks and disinformation has several motives: to confuse and polarize voters in an effort to undermine confidence in

U.S. democracy, to erode support for Israel, and to oppose candidates that it believes will increase tension between Washington and Iran.

Iran has vowed revenge against Trump, whose administration ended a nuclear deal with Iran, reimposed sanctions and ordered the killing of an Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani.

In July, Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines said Iran's government gave covert support to American protests against Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza. Groups linked to Iran posed as online activists, encouraged campus protests and provided financial support to some protest groups, Haines said.

Messages left with the Trump and Harris campaigns were not immediately returned Friday.

-AP

## Moscow, Kyiv exchange attacks

**Kyiv:** Russia and Ukraine exchanged drone, missile and artillery attacks on Saturday as Kyiv marked its third Independence Day since Moscow's full-scale invasion.

A woman was killed and a man wounded when Russian forces shelled the southern Ukrainian city of Kherson, the capital of the partially occupied Kherson

region, according to the regional prosecutor.

Ukraine's air force said it had intercepted and destroyed seven drones over the country's south. Russian long-range bombers also attacked the area of Zmiinyi (Snake) Island with four cruise missiles, while the wider Kherson region was also struck by aerial bombs.

## Raj Guru's birth anniversary in Lahore

**Lahore:** Independence war hero Shaheed Raj Guru's 116th birthday anniversary was celebrated by the Bhat Singh Memorial Foundation Pakistan here on Saturday. The foundation held a cake-cutting ceremony at Jinnah Hall on the premises of Lahore High Court in presence of lawyers.

# Hundreds of police raid religious compound

**Manila:** Hundreds of police officers backed by riot squads raided a vast religious compound in a southern Philippine city Saturday in search of a local preacher accused of sexual abuse and human trafficking, police officials said.

A supporter of the group, called Kingdom of Jesus

Christ, reportedly died due to a heart attack during the massive police raid that started at dawn in the group's compound in Davao city, livestreamed online by a local TV network owned by the group, police said, adding that the death was not related to the police operations.

Officers brought equipment that could detect people behind cement walls. But by mid-afternoon, they found no sign of Apollo Quiboloy in the compound — some 30 hectares (75 acres) that includes a cathedral, a school, a living area, a hangar and a taxiway leading to Davao Inter-

national Airport. Quiboloy and his lawyer have denied the criminal allegations against him and his religious group, saying these were fabricated by critics and former members, who were removed from the religious group after committing irregularities.

Quiboloy's followers, many filming the police raid with their cellphones, yelled at the police, questioning the legality of the raid and pronouncing the innocence of Quiboloy, who was a close supporter and spiritual adviser of former President Rodrigo Duterte.

## Plane was threatened by flares fired from Chinese island



**Manila:** A Philippine fisheries bureau plane was threatened by flares fired from a Chinese island base while conducting a routine patrol in the South China Sea, Philippine officials said Saturday.

It's the latest territorial spat between Beijing and Manila over one of the world's busiest trade routes, with confrontations spreading from the disputed waters to the airspace above.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources' Cessna 208B Grand Caravan plane was flying near Subi Reef on Thursday when it spotted flares being fired from the fishing atoll, which has been transformed by China into a militarised island base, a Philippine government

interagency task force said in a statement.

No other details were

### Another clash between Philippines, China

provided, including the distance of the flares from the Philippine plane and if it proceeded with its patrol to monitor for poachers in the internationally recognised exclusive economic zone of the Philippines.

The same Philippine fisheries plane was subjected to "harassment" on August 19 when a Chinese air force fighter jet "engaged in irresponsible and dangerous maneuvers, deploying flares multiple times at a dangerously close distance of approximately 15 me-

tres" near the disputed Scarborough Shoal, the Philippine task force said.

"The Chinese fighter jet was not provoked, yet its actions demonstrated hazardous intent that jeopardised the safety of the personnel onboard the BFAR aircraft," according to the task force, which includes the Department of National Defence, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine coast guard.

Chinese officials did not immediately issue any reaction, but they have accused Philippine ships and aircraft of encroaching into what they said was Chinese territory in the sea passage.

"We firmly reiterate our call on the government of the People's Republic of China to immediately cease all provocative and dangerous actions that threaten the safety of Philippine vessels and aircraft engaged in legitimate and regular activities within Philippine territory and exclusive economic zone," the Philippine task force said. "Such actions undermine regional peace and security and further erode the image of the PRC with the international community."

## Alarm on Rohingya

**Bangkok:** The U.N.'s human rights chief joined a chorus of concern Friday for members of Myanmar's Muslim Rohingya ethnic minority after many were reported killed in recent fighting between the military government and the Arakan Army, an armed ethnic rebel group.

According to a statement from the Geneva office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk, he "expressed grave alarm and raised profound concerns about the sharply deteriorating situation across Myanmar, particularly in Rakhine State where hundreds of civilians have reportedly been killed while trying to flee the fighting."

His agency had documented that "both the military and the Arakan Army, which now controls most of the townships in Rakhine, have committed serious human rights violations and abuses against the Rohingya, including extrajudicial killings, some involving beatings, abductions, forced recruitment, indiscriminate bombardments of towns and villages using drones and artillery, and arson attacks."



Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with Ukrainian students who are learning Hindi language at the School of Oriental Studies, in Kyiv, Ukraine. -PTI

## Have concerns but Bangladesh close to our hearts: Indian family

By Kunal Dutt

**Dhaka:** Meera Menon, an Indian expat living with her family in Bangladesh for 16 years says her mother in Kerala is constantly urging them to leave the country due to safety concerns, but for her young daughter "Dhaka feels like home" and separation is not easy.

A large number of Indians have left the violence-torn country since the mass anti-quota protests began in July which took a turn into an unprecedented resistance against the Sheikh Hasina government and led to her ouster on August 5.

Menon, 45, a native of Thrissur district of Kerala lives in the heart of Dhaka,

along with her husband, who works here as a senior manager in a company, and their 14-year-old daughter Avantika.

"We were in Kerala on a holiday and landed back in Dhaka on August 4. It was a curfew day, but we had no idea the situation would turn so dramatically in a day. The area where we live wasn't disturbed during the

protests, but there is patrolling by security personnel at night and the sound of whistles, etc. My sleep also has been affected," Menon told PTI at her home.

Dhaka has a vibrant Indian community belonging to different regions of India and Menon, a homemaker, is also the current president of the Dhaka Malayalee Association (DMA).

### QUOTE OF THE DAY



Nikki Haley, former US Ambassador to the United Nations

"I think that all of that strength that we showed is the reason that we didn't see any wars, we didn't see any invasions, we didn't see any harm that happened during that time. I think Donald Trump would bring that back."

## Bollywood Orchestra to bring iconic film songs alive

By Aditi Khanna

**London:** A brand-new Bollywood orchestra is all set to curate a regular series of performances to bring iconic Hindi film melodies alive on stage in the UK, with a talented ensemble of artists in homage to some of India's best-known musicians.

London Bollywood Orchestra will kick off with its inaugural show on October 5 at Wilton's Music Hall in east London, a historic venue dating back to the 1850s and often serving as a



film set. It has been chosen as an ideal setting for singers Rekha and Navin Kundra to croon along with a talented 15-piece orchestra composed of a diverse range of instruments from

tabla and dholak to flute, oboe, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, trombone, guitars and violins.

"We wanted a diverse show which gives us a span of decades and a span of

styles, with music from the 1940s right up to the present day," Tim Pottier, the music director of the new project told PTI.

"When you are performing live music, everything is spontaneous, almost like living on the edge. The old Bollywood tracks used to have that same nervous energy because they were often recorded in a very short time with a small number of microphones but hundreds of performers. So, the London Bollywood Orchestra will be bringing some of that everything-is-

alive-right-now magic to stage," he said.

The new project marks a very natural progression for the Belgium-born London-based musician, who worked with A.R. Rahman in the early nightingales on his City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) concerts.

This was followed by a Mohammed Rafi album and concert series with Sonu Nigam, shows with Rahat Fateh Ali Khan and BBC Philharmonic celebrating the music of R.D. Burman.

MY CORNER

# Is Jarange's Agitation Causing Caste Division?



By  
Ashok Rane

In progressive Maharashtra, with its legacy of Mahatma Phule, Shahu Maharaj, and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, who fought against caste discrimination, a new challenge to the state's stability has emerged. Manoj Jarange's Maratha reservation movement is fostering divisions in the Hindu community along caste lines. This situation has been worsened by social media posts, reels, and graphics that fuel caste-based sentiments igniting communal unrest across Maharashtra.

In certain Marathwada districts, there have been social boycotts, village bans, and other divisive experiments due to Jarange's uncompromising stance. Districts such as Jalna, Beed, and Dharashiv are experiencing considerable unrest, with the OBC community living in fear. This situation debates the legitimacy of village bans on OBCs, the demand for Muslim reservations from OBC quotas, and the subsequent embrace of Muslims, all under the guise of the Maratha reservation movement.

Multiple Hindu nationalist organisations across Maharashtra desire reservations for the needy within the Maratha community. Even Sambhaji Bhide visited the hunger strike site at Antarwali Sarati in support. However, the recent events and statements made by Manoj Jarange

**Manoj Jarange's Maratha reservation movement in Maharashtra is fostering divisions within the Hindu community along caste lines.**

create doubts about whether this fight is genuinely for reservation or if it is a ploy to destabilise Maharashtra and secure votes for a particular political party.

Jarange's rhetorics are often riddled with crude language directed at BJP leaders, while the real opponents of the Maratha reservation go unscathed. Leaders like Sharad Pawar, who explicitly stated that he doesn't support Maratha reservations from the OBC quota, and other MVA leaders who warned the government not to touch OBC reservations, are indirectly advocating against Marathas getting OBC reservations. However, Jarange reserves his vile language towards Chhagan Bhuwal and Prasad Lad, while sparing Pawar and MVA leaders. This double standard is being quietly discussed by the common man in Maharashtra.

Additionally, Jarange's advocacy for Muslim reservations from the OBC quota, despite such reservations being prohibited on religious grounds in India. He seems intent on appealing to the Muslim community, as gathered by significant Muslim participation during his rallies. This raises concerns that this movement might be politically motivated, aiming to forge an unnatural Maratha-Muslim alliance for electoral gains. By sowing discord between OBCs and Marathas and rallying Muslim support, Jarange appears to be inciting a conflict within the Hindu community. This is particularly concerning in the context of past tensions, such as Love Jihad incidents and riots during Shiv Jayanti processions. The involvement of Muslims in the Maratha reservation movement appears increasingly problematic and politically motivated.

Finally, aligning with those who opposed the renaming of Aurangabad to Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar in honor of Sambhaji Maharaj, who was brutally tortured by Aurangzeb, further complicates the narrative. The efforts to create an unnatural Maratha-Muslim alliance under the guise of the reservation movement must be scrutinised.

*(The writer is a resident of Akola. Views personal)*



By  
Priya Samant

**“U**nder the guise of democracy, freedom, and human rights, the United States has used NED (the US-based NGO) for infiltration, interference and subversion against other countries,” the Chinese Foreign Ministry railed against the United States this month! In its report titled 'The National Endowment for Democracy: What It Is and What It Does,' China elaborates on US engagement in misleading public opinion, inciting division, meddling in other countries' internal affairs and promoting a coup. The report also details how the US-funded periodical 'The Journal of Democracy' spreads false narratives about the Modi government.

This isn't the first time China has criticised the U.S. for its Information Warfare and Legal Warfare are the three fundamental aspects of China's political guidelines. China, to achieve her middle kingdom dream, has been using these brainwashing techniques since Mao's time!

China's stake in the US film industry is so huge that the American star had to apologise for calling Taiwan a country! On the Indian front, China's hostility towards Ladakh, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh has grown ever since China formulated her Five Finger Policy. The insurgencies in these Indian states have roots in communist China. Currently, the Indian state machinery is investigating China-backed 'The Newsclick' for stoking farmers' protests, CAA protests, inciting Delhi riots and carrying out disinforma-

tion campaigns on Covid-19!

Influence and subversion are not new concepts. The 'Mitrokhin Archives' published by the UK gives a detailed account of how Russia infiltrated Indira Gandhi's government back then.

Influence, civic mobilisation and destabilisation strategies have been used in the Great Power game over decades. It is called 'The Color Revolution' and is infamous amongst Russia and the Communist bloc since the Cold War. They considered this revolution 'externally fuelled coordinated acts' that manipulated the community sentiment and toppled the existing regime. Whereas in the West, this insidious influence to distort democracy is termed as 'Influence Operations'.

Influence Operations (IOs) are cognitive war techniques wherein psychological, financial, political and technological influence is used to subvert the internal security and sovereignty of the targeted country. The authoritarian states use NGOs and Media houses to carry out long-term infiltration in targeted states. The academicians, journalists, film writers and media personalities are employed to craft strategic messages and fabricated distractions. The troll factories are set up to organise hate movements. These protests are aligned with globally appealing ideologies. The lavishly funded influence campaigns then make headlines in local and foreign media. The digital media is pitched in to legitimate the operation and mobilise larger groups to action.

Young students are sent abroad to run propaganda campaigns against their motherland. The foreign diplomats actively participate in the consolidation of the opposition and extremists. And then the diplomatic pressure is built on the existing regime to perish or to be a puppet government!

The recent coup in Bangladesh highlights a typical standard operating procedure of IOs by the West. The Color Revolution history of Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine and Arab Spring exposes the US involvement to a great extent! Recently, the Biden government granted \$50 million to an anti-Israel NGO on the pretext of saving the planet and fighting inflation! In 2023, Biden's month-long Iran's sanctions-relief enriched the anti-Israel front by more than \$50 Billion!

IOs are now employing advanced technologies to access sensitive data. In 2020 the US Senate reported that President Putin personally directed the hacking and leaking of Hillary Clinton's account to ensure Trump's 2016 win! IOs are using AI and deepfake technology for interventionism. China's doctored video on the Galwan Valley Flag and the fake videos of Bollywood A-listers criticising PM Modi and urging people to vote for Congress are recent examples of the disruptive information operation against the Indian government. Pakistan, India's troublesome neighbour too is engaged in non-kinetic operations. It has raised a network of 4000 Information Warfare Specialists to wage a cognitive war

against India. The Pakistan Army's Green Book 2020 exhorts its agencies to intensify Influence Operations against India by employing thousands of trolls to spread communal hatred. Their objectives include projecting the terrorist activities in J&K as an indigenous movement and supporting anti-Modi, anti-India elements. The Pak agencies run many illegal radio channels to spread fake news. They are polarising narratives about India's inner conflicts to stoke religious and political tension. Though illegal stations are shut down frequently by Indian agencies, they are swiftly replaced by new ones!

IOs could have been an effective tool in the non-violent democratisation process of countries by exposing tyranny; instead, they are used by large geopolitical players for shifting global power dynamics at the cost of civic life.

The conventional war is costly and is governed by International Laws. On the other hand, technologically advanced non-military means like IOs have proven to be cost-effective. And so they are rapidly gaining a strategic role in world politics. In the absence of an international regulatory framework to punish malevolent foreign states, IO aggression has become boundless.

This is the fifth-generation warfare where the faceless people with invisible hands are waging Influence Operations for personal gains. All we see is these useful idiots unwittingly serving them! In this scenario, political awareness is the key. The knowledge and understanding can empower individuals to make informed decisions and safeguard their rights and freedom. We have more duties than just electing the right candidate; to be wise is one of them! Yuri Bezmenov rightly said, "The useful idiots are instrumental in the process of the subversion only to destabilise a nation...When their job is completed, they are not needed anymore, they will be lined up against the wall and shot."

*(The writer is a foreign affairs expert. Views personal)*



NEWSMAKER

# Quiet Pioneer



By  
Shoumojit Banerjee

In the annals of Indian science, few figures have embodied the nation's march towards scientific excellence with such steadfastness as renowned biochemist Govindrajan Padmanabhan, who was recently recognized with the first Vigyan Ratna Puraskar, arguably the country's most prestigious science award.

Padmanabhan's contributions to biochemistry and molecular biology have been as understated as they have been profound and have done much to shape the contours of Indian biochemistry. Though he has already been feted with the Padma Shri (1991) and Padma Bhushan awards (2003) as well as the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize (1983), and his life's work has reshaped Indian biochemistry, Padmanabhan has largely eschewed the spotlight.

It was only when President Droupadi Murmu conferred the 86-year-old with the Vigyan Ratna award earlier this week that Padmanabhan, a former director and towering figure at Bengaluru's Indian Institute of Science (IISc), came into the spotlight again. He was born in 1938 in a small Tamil Nadu village, a world drastically apart from the scientific hubs he would later frequent. But Padmanabhan, who came of age with newly independent India, was consumed by a relentless pursuit of knowledge.

From his early days at the IISc, where he completed his doctorate, to his tenure as one of the institution's most revered figures, his career has been defined by a quiet tenacity. His early foray into microbial genetics laid the groundwork, but it was his pivot to biochemistry that solidified his standing in the scientific community.



Govindrajan Padmanabhan received first Vigyan Ratna Puraskar.

It was in the world of molecules that Padmanabhan found his true calling. His research into gene regulation and protein synthesis garnered acclaim, but it was his work on malaria—particularly the biochemistry of the parasite *Plasmodium falciparum*—that would cement his standing within the scientific community. His leadership turned the Department of Biochemistry at IISc into a hub of research and innovation, fostering an environment where intellectual curiosity thrived alongside rigorous scientific methodology.

Padmanabhan's investigations into heme metabolism within the malaria parasite offered new pathways for treatment, placing India at the forefront of global malaria research. His research has advanced our understanding of how certain proteins, crucial for processing drugs in the body, are made and regulated (notably his work on the regulation of the biosynthesis of cytochrome P-450 and cytochrome oxidase). This work is significant in uncovering the molecular details of how our bodies break down and metabolize medications.

It was Padmanabhan who was instrumental in ushering in recombinant DNA technology in the country. Recombinant DNA technology is a method that allows scientists to combine DNA from different sources, creating new genetic material with desired traits and is the foundation of modern genetic engineering. Yet, he was a scientist first, a public figure

only by necessity.

Despite his numerous accolades, Padmanabhan remained a humble and approachable figure, dedicated to the advancement of science for the greater good. He was a tireless advocate for better funding and support for scientific research in India, being thoroughly familiar with the roadblocks posed by bureaucratic hurdles and inconsistent financing. The trailblazing biochemist has steadfastly resisted the temptations of moving to the West, harbouring a deep conviction that science in India should not merely mimic Western practices but carve its own path, tailored to the country's unique challenges.

This belief led him to decline directorship offers at international research centers, keeping him rooted in Bangalore to his beloved IISc. Even after retiring as the Director of IISc, Padmanabhan's commitment to science did not wane. He continued to engage in research, mentor young scientists, and contribute to public debates on critical issues, such as India's nuclear weapons program and genetically modified crops.

In his sunset years, Padmanabhan represents a model of scientific rigor, intellectual curiosity, and dedication to the public good. As India continues to carve out its place in the global scientific community, it stands on the shoulders of giants like Govindrajan Padmanabhan—a quiet pioneer whose work speaks louder than words.

SPOTLIGHT

# The Historian Who Mastered India's Economy



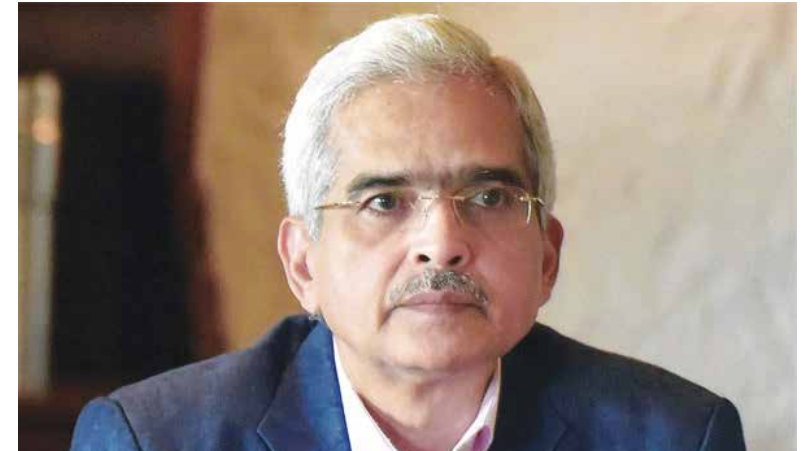
By  
Mangesh Kulkarni

The hot seat of Reserve Bank of India's Governor has, for the second consecutive year, been recognized as the top central banker globally by the US-based *Global Finance* magazine. The incumbent in this prestigious position, Shaktikanta Das, defies popular perception—not as a student of economics but as a postgraduate in history with a background in civil services.

Das, the RBI Governor, shares the top honours with Denmark's Christian Kettel Thomsen and Switzerland's Thomas Jordan, all receiving 'A+' ratings. These grades, based on a scale from A to F, reflect success in managing inflation control, economic growth, currency stability, and interest rate management. In 2015, then RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan became the first Indian to be recognized by the magazine. Since 1994, the Central Banker Report Cards, published annually by *Global Finance*, have graded the governors of 101 key nations. These awards have become a trusted standard of excellence for the global financial community.

Unlike his three immediate predecessors the 67-year-old Governor Das has maintained cordial relations without capitulating to the government's wishes. His firm stance on cryptocurrencies and inflation, even amid increasing calls for growth, exemplifies his balanced approach.

However, Das, whose origins trace back to Odisha, has faced his share of setbacks since taking over in 2018 after the abrupt resignation of Urjit Patel. Notable challenges included the



RBI governor Shaktikanta Das

crises involving Yes Bank, Lakshmi Vilas Bank, and PMC Bank.

Despite critics blaming the RBI for the chaos surrounding these banks, Das's leadership saw the regulator addressing each issue with tailored solutions rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

During the pandemic, the decision to inject Rs 17 lakh crore in liquidity, with a sunset clause for withdrawal after three years, was executed seamlessly, preventing any major economic disruptions. Leaving past challenges behind, Das has successfully managed to control retail inflation, drive economic growth, maintain currency stability, and manage interest rates through a tight monetary policy. Striking a balance between inflation control and economic growth, the RBI under Das raised rates by 250 basis points, compared to 500 bps by the US Federal Reserve, ensuring both inflation control and continued growth.

Ensuring a stable currency relative to most developed nations, Das elevated governance and compliance standards for banks, increasing risk weightage and additional provisions through a counter-cyclical approach. Despite the inflation-growth dilemma, Das has kept RBI's focus on developmental issues, with a particular emphasis on digital payments.

Congratulating Das on his achieve-

ment for the second consecutive year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on social media, "This is a recognition of his leadership at the RBI and his work towards ensuring economic growth and stability."

Before assuming charge as the 25th Governor of RBI in December 2018, Das was a member of the 15th Finance Commission and India's G20 Sherpa. With nearly four decades of experience in various areas of governance, he has held several key positions in finance, taxation, industries, and infrastructure. Das played a pivotal role in negotiating the GST framework, including the five-year compensation plan for states, and devised the constitutional amendment for its implementation. He also played a crucial role in negotiating tax evader information sharing with the Swiss government, drafting the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code, outlining the Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, and formulating laws on overseas black money.

Having worked under three different finance ministers—Pranab Mukherjee, P. Chidambaram, and Arun Jaitley—Das was directly involved in preparing eight Union Budgets and served as India's alternate governor in the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, New Development Bank, and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.





**KALEIDOSCOPE**

1. Animal rights activists during a protest demanding 'Freedom for all Animals' by Vegan India Movement, at Jantar Mantar, in New Delhi on Saturday.
2. An artist of the Shiram Bharatiya Kala Kendra performs during the presentation of its 48th edition of the dance drama 'KRISHNA' at Kamani Auditorium, in New Delhi on Friday.
3. Devotees at the Dhakeshwari National Temple at Old Dhaka area, in Dhaka on Friday.
4. People carry their belongings as they arrive by boat from Diara area, in Patna on Saturday.
5. Students dressed as Lord Krishna during celebrations ahead of the 'Janmashtami' festival, in Amritsar on Saturday.

All Pictures PTI, AP



**LETTER FROM PAKISTAN**

# Imran Khan's Fall from Grace



By Kaswar Klasra

confident and commanding, his body now shows a sense of unease and agitation. Those who met him describe a waning spirit, a stark change for a leader once known for his steadfastness in adversity.

The journalists described Khan as a man who is aware that his political party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), is losing its once-iron grip on the nation's imagination a realisation that visibly shook him.

The PTI, once a magnet for massive crowds and inspired loyalty among its supporters, is now struggling. The much-hyped rally scheduled for August 22 in Islamabad, was embarrassingly cancelled due to a lack of public interest. Khan, in a bid to save face, claimed that the rally was called off to avoid potential violence. In a sign of growing desperation, Khan rescheduled the rally for September 8 and directed his party leaders to overcome any obstacles. This defiant stance is typical of Khan's confrontational style, and his public directives highlight his insecurity about his party's ability to mobilise support.

While Khan outwardly appears calm and composed, the multiple cases against him and his time in jail have left him isolated and struggling with loneliness. Even in this difficult situation, he remains in the headlines, thanks to his uncanny ability to stay in the public's eye. Khan recently made headlines by applying for the University of Oxford Chancellorship, a move initially dismissed as a rumor but confirmed by his spokesman, Sayed Zulfikar Bukhari. As an Oxford alumnus, Khan would be the first Asian to take the role. Many see this bid as a strategic play to leverage his international profile against Pakistan's establishment, a move that has kept him prominently in the media spotlight.

The political landscape in Pakistan is deeply divided. Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, in his second term, has failed to address critical issues including unemployment, soaring infla-

tion, and deteriorating law and order. His administration's inability to deliver on its promises has only deepened the public's disillusionment, leading to growing nostalgia for Khan's past leadership.

Shahbaz Sharif's government is a source of frustration for the Pakistani people and a cause for concern for the country's military. Historically, the military has shaped Pakistan's political trajectory, stepping in when civilian governments falter. The military reportedly is growing uneasy about the government's performance especially Sharif's inability to stabilize the country and mend relationships with key neighbors, particularly India. Additionally, its deteriorating ties with Afghanistan and Iran have



months. However, Khan's ability to navigate the current political landscape is far from guaranteed. The PTI's diminishing support, coupled with the increasing pressure from the establishment, raises questions about Khan's long-term strategy. His recent moves, including the application for the Oxford Chancellorship, suggest a leader willing to explore unconventional avenues to maintain his relevance. But whether these tactics will translate into a successful political comeback remains to be seen.

Pakistan's political future is more uncertain than ever. Imran Khan's journey from cricketing legend to political maverick has been extraordinary. Still, as he faces the toughest challenge of his career, the question remains: Can he once again defy the odds and reclaim his place at the helm of Pakistani politics, or is this the beginning of the end for an once unstoppable leader? Khan's story is a testament to the complexities of power and the unpredictable nature of political life in Pakistan. His rise, driven by charisma, populism, and a genuine desire for change, now faces the realities of personal and political challenges, raising the possibility that his time may be running out.

Imran Khan is a beacon of hope for his supporters, and a polarizing figure for detractors, whose ambitions have often clouded his judgment. As the nation watches, the world is left to wonder: What will Imran Khan's next move be? And more importantly, what does it mean for the future of Pakistan? The coming months will be critical not only for Imran Khan but for Pakistan as a whole. The decisions made during this period will shape the country's trajectory for years. Whether Khan emerges victorious or is consigned to the annals of history as a fallen leader, one thing is certain: The story of Imran Khan is far from over.

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

**EXPLAINER**

# Why Hong Kong is looking at India for investment and tourism?



Hong Kong's pivot towards India in its tourism and investment strategies is a multifaceted decision driven by shifting global economic dynamics and strategic priorities.

As China grapples with economic challenges and slow growth, many Hong Kong family offices are diversifying their investments by increasingly turning their attention to India. Analysts and global investors view India as a promising growth story with significant expansion potential in the coming years. This shift is evident from the investment strategies of entities like Raffles Family Office, which has allocated 10 to 15 percent of its portfolio to Indian stocks and exchange-traded funds. India's stock market capitalization surpassed Hong Kong's for the first time in January 2024, highlighting its growing economic prominence.

In parallel, Hong Kong's tourism industry is also adjusting its focus. The city is aiming to double the number of Indian tourists this year, leveraging a market



that shows strong potential for growth. With around 2,08,000 Indian visitors in the previous year and 1,81,000 in the first half of 2024, Hong Kong's tourism board is optimistic about reaching and surpassing pre-Covid levels. The city's strategy includes promoting itself as an all-year-round destination with a series of festivals and events, which aligns with the interests of Indian Gen Zs and Millennials, who are keen on frequent travel and cultural experiences.

The shift towards India reflects a broader strategic repositioning in response to China's economic challenges and political uncertainties. By focusing on India, Hong Kong aims to tap

into a burgeoning market with significant economic potential and reduce reliance on its traditional sources of tourists and investors. This diversification aligns with global trends where investors and businesses are increasingly looking to India for growth opportunities.

In essence, Hong Kong's move towards India is driven by both a combination of economic necessity and strategic foresight. As it seeks to recover from recent setbacks and build a more resilient and diversified economic base, India emerges as a crucial partner in both tourism and investment, offering new avenues for growth and stability.

Once celebrated for his leadership, Imran Khan is now confronting severe setbacks, including imprisonment and a struggling party. His recent actions, such as rescheduling a failed rally and applying for the Oxford Chancellorship, reflect a desperate attempt to retain influence. Amidst Pakistan's turmoil, Khan's political future is in jeopardy.



# SHIKHAR DHAWAN ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

**New Delhi:** Veteran India opener Shikhar Dhawan announced his retirement from all forms of cricket two years after he last donned the national jersey, saying that he leaves the scene a content man after representing the country in all three formats.

The 38-year-old made his international debut in 2010 in an ODI against Australia in Visakhapatnam and his last India game was also a 50-over match, against Bangladesh in 2022.

"As I close this chapter of my cricketering journey, I carry with me countless memories and gratitude. Thank you for the love and support! Jai Hind!", Dhawan said in a post on 'X'.

"It's important to turn the page to move forward in life and that's why I am announcing my retirement from international and domestic cricket. As I bid goodbye to my cricket journey, I have peace in my heart that I played for so long," he said.

Dhawan appeared in 34 Tests, 167 ODIs and 68 T20Is for India but had fallen out of favour in the last couple of years due to patchy form and emergence of younger opening talents like Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shubman Gill.

His best came in the 50-over format in which he amassed 6793 runs at an average of 44.11, including 17 hundreds and 39 fifties. He averaged 40.61 for his 2315 Test runs, which featured seven centuries.

"I am standing at a point in my life where when I look back, I see only memories, and when I look ahead, I see a new world. I had just one goal in life, to play for India, and I made it happen," he said.

"I am very thankful to DCCA (Delhi and Districts Cricket Association), the BCCI and my fans. And that's why I tell myself, don't be sad that you won't play for India again but be happy that you played for your country. And that's

the biggest thing for me, that I played," he said in his concluding remarks in the social media post.

At his peak, the Delhi swashbuckler was a sight to behold with his range of strokes and ability to hit powerfully.

He is a bonafide IPL legend, appearing in 222 matches, that yielded 6769 runs, including two hundreds and 51 half centuries.

His 768 fours in the tournament are the highest by

any batter and he also holds the distinction of being the first to hit consecutive hundreds in the event.

He was a part of the title-winning Sunrisers Hyderabad team in the 2016 season. He has also played for Delhi, Mumbai and Punjab. Of these, he captained Delhi and Punjab at various stages of his career. He had appeared for Punjab this season but played in only five matches owing to fitness issues.

- PTI

## 'Stay relaxed' advice helped



**Lausanne:** Indian javelin throw star Neeraj Chopra has revealed that an advice to "stay relaxed" from his Kenyan counterpart Julius Yego proved decisively helpful in calming his racing mind before he pulled off a season's best effort to finish second in the Diamond League here.

The 26-year-old was at the fourth spot at the end of the fourth round before managing a throw of 85.58m in his fifth attempt that kept him inside the top three. His final attempt of 89.49m on Thursday helped him finish second behind Grenada's Anderson Peters (90.61m).

The performance was a marginal improvement on the 89.45m he achieved in the Paris Olympics a few days ago. Only the top three after five rounds can make the final attempt.

"(Anderson) Peters threw 90m, my body didn't feel good but the fighting spirit was nice today. I really liked my comeback. In the last throw I didn't think too

much, just gave my best," Chopra told the host broadcaster in the mixed zone.

"In the first throw, I thought I will do this, I will do that but in the last throw, I did not, also Julius Yego said 'relax, you will throw far'. I tried to relax," he added. Yego finished sixth with an effort of 83m.

Chopra said the competition on the day was "strange" as he did not feel he was up to it when he started.

"...in the beginning I did not think I will throw very far but in the end it was good," he said. Asked how much more would he compete this season, the Indian said, "May be two or one competition and then finish the season. I am not sure, may be Brussels (Diamond League finale)." With seven points from Thursday's second-place finish, Chopra is joint third alongside Weber in Diamond League standings with 15 points. Peters jumped to top spot with 21 points.

- PTI

## Sarabjot says he barely got to train with Manu

**Bengaluru:** Sarabjot Singh, who partnered with Manu Bhaker to win India's first ever Olympic medal in a mixed shooting event, on Saturday said they "barely" got to train together in the run-up to their event.

Bhaker and Sarabjot scripted history with a bronze medal in the 10m air pistol mixed team shooting event at the Paris Games.

"My training was due at 9, hers was due at 12, individually. Mixed session lasted for 30 minutes, before which she trained separately, and I separately.

"Our conversation was usually brief and limited to 'Apna 100 per cent dena hai (we have to give our 100 per cent)'. Apart from that, we enjoyed some banter.



Sometimes I would make fun of her, sometimes she would of me," recalled Sarabjot. Sarabjot also revealed his longtime fandom for Yusuf Dikec and said he has been looking up to the Turkish shooting icon for inspiration since 2011.

"I have been watching his (Yusuf's) videos since 2011. He has always been like this. He is 51 today. Even though I have tried, I could not match his perfection. If I had the chance, I would ask him what he

means?" said the 22-year-old from Dheen village of Haryana during an interview with PUMA India.

Sarabjot said that his pistol is engraved with SSINGH30, comprising his initials and a significant date in his journey.

"I didn't give it a name. When I achieved my personal best at the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou, I got the weapon engraved with 'SSINGH30'. That is my best weapon. Because my medal (gold) came on September 30 and that was a significant achievement," he said. The athlete also shared that he has had to deal with his fair share of setbacks in his journey. Meditation, and a rare yoga technique called Trataka, helped him.

### Monsoon Pickleball Championship Sarah and Vishal win mixed double

**Mumbai:** Australia's highest-ranked women's player Sarah Burr teamed up with Vishal Masand to win the Mixed Doubles Open at the Monsoon Pickleball Championship 2.0 here.

The final was a closely contested match with Isha Lakhani and Jason Taylor pushing the Australians in the corner, but the experienced Burr proved to be the deciding factor as they won 2-0 on Friday night.

The fourth day of the championship saw winners in six categories with Burr and Masand, Dev Shah, Nicola Schoemen, Shlok Gaba, Janhavi Iyer, Priyanka Mehta in the 30+ Mixed Doubles, U18 Boys Singles, U18 Girls Singles, U14 Boys Singles, U14 Girls Singles and 40+ Women's Singles respectively.

- PTI

By Kushan Sarkar

**New Delhi:** The numbers will favour Jay Shah to mount the saddle as the next ICC Chairman but there is no clarity if he decides to join the world governing body, who will replace him as BCCI secretary.

Shah is supposed to have the backing of 15 out of 16 members in the ICC Board but has less than 96 hours to decide if wants to make the move when he still has one year left in his second consecutive term as BCCI secretary.

The new ICC chairman will take charge on December 1, and the last date for filing nomination is August 27.

The mandatory three-year cooling off period to

### Jay Shah in ICC fray

## Race for BCCI secretary post



make a come back to the wealthiest cricket board will start for Shah after completion of his term in October 2025.

But there is a big question mark as to who will replace Shah in the BCCI since neither he himself nor the people close to him have yet divulged his immediate plans.

PTI takes a look at possi-

there is Maharashtra BJP heavyweight Shelar, who is BCCI treasurer and big name in MCA administration. Shelar however is a consummate politician and BCCI secretaryship is a time consuming job. However, being an influential name, he could be in the mix.

Arun Dhimal: The IPL Chairman has requisite experience to run the board. He has been a treasurer and now heads cash-rich league. Dhimal and Shukla swapping designations could be the easiest way out but often BCCI throws up names that no one could envisage.

There is joint secretary Devajit 'Lon' Saikia, not the most popular name but a vital cog in current BCCI administration, who could also be elevated.

- PTI

## I'm more mature in my technique: Avani

By Ajai Masand

**New Delhi:** Avani Lekhara would have never taken up shooting if not for the persuasion of her parents two years after a catastrophic car mishap left her paralysed waist down and confined to a wheelchair at the age of 11.

As the 22-year-old, who is one of the most recognisable faces in Indian para sport, embarks on a journey to win more medals for the county in rifle events at the Paris Paralympic Games, she thanked her family for giving meaning to her life at a time she was struggling to overcome the trauma.

Just six years after trying her hand at archery and then shooting at the Kend-



riya Vidyalaya No.3 in Jaipur during the summer vacations in 2015, Avani became the toast of the nation by winning India's first medals in shooting at the Tokyo Paralympics in SH1 category -- 10m air rifle gold and 50m rifle 3-positions bronze.

"Before the accident I was

not into any sport and after that too I was not at all thinking about joining any sport. But my parents always thought that I need to do something other than studies. I went back to school two years after the accident. I went to KV No. 3 Jaipur.

"They have these regional games, national games, so my parents also thought of enrolling me in some sport, and then I went there during my summer vacations in 2015 and I tried archery, I tried shooting.

"I liked shooting more because it was an indoor game, I thought 'ok, let's start'. Then I started competing, started liking it more...that's how it went after that," Avani, a former world No.1 in

10m air rifle (SH1), who is also an assistant conservator of forest with the Rajasthan government, told PTI.

For Avani, the Tokyo success brought with it lots of expectations but the vivacious shooter, who has a new set of rifles and feels more "mature" in her technique going into the Paris Games, said it only motivates her to do better.

"I think we have been in a very positive environment throughout. We are just focussing on the process rather than the outcome. There, obviously, will be expectations but those expectations only motivate me and inspire me more to give my best. I'm also more mature in my technique.



Suresh Wangjam of Bengaluru FC (in blue) and a player of Kerala Blasters FC vie for the ball during the 4th quarter-final match of 133rd Durand Cup 2024 between Bengaluru.