

THE PERFECT VOICE



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Elections announced in J & K

Haryana too goes for poll, Maharashtra on wait

By Correspondent

New Delhi: Assembly elections will be held in Jammu and Kashmir after a decade in three phases from September 18, setting the stage for the people of the union territory to elect a government after the scrapping of Article 370 in 2019. The Election Commission also announced that elections to the 90-member Haryana assembly will be held on October 1 and results for both the polls will be declared on October 4.

The two assembly elections will be the first popularity test for the BJP and the INDIA bloc following the Lok Sabha polls.

The three-phase elections to the 90-member Jammu and Kashmir assembly will be held on September 18, September 25 and October 1, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar told a press conference in the presence of Election Commissioners Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu.

After suffering reverses in the Lok Sabha polls, including in Haryana, the BJP is keen to regain political momentum by retaining power in the state and putting up a strong show in Jammu and Kashmir, where its strongholds have



Jammu National Conference President Farooq Abdullah addresses a press conference, in Jammu on Friday

been traditionally confined to the Jammu division.

The Congress, however, is hoping to continue with its political revival by toppling the BJP from power in Haryana after 10 years and inflicting losses on its rival in the Jammu region where the two parties are the main contestants.

Two regional parties, the National Conference and PDP, have won most of the seats in the Kashmir valley between them in past elections. Both parties are part of the INDIA bloc along with the Congress but all three of them fought separately in the Lok Sabha elections, a scenario likely

to persist in the assembly polls too.

In the 2019 polls in Haryana, the BJP had 40 of its 90 seats and formed the government in alliance with the Jananayak Janta Party. In the last assembly in J and K in 2014, the BJP had won 25 of its 87 seats and had joined hands with the PDP to form government under the leadership of the regional party's leader Mufti Mohammad Sayeed.

Its assembly now has 90 seats following delimitation.

CEC Kumar said assembly elections in Maharashtra, which were held along with Haryana in 2019, will be announced later due to security requirements for Jammu and Kashmir.

He said four elections are due this year and by early next year and since Jammu and Kashmir was not in the picture last time (2019-20) the Commission decided to group two assembly elections together.

Besides Jammu and Kashmir and Haryana, elections are due in Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Delhi.

Kumar said the next set of elections will be announced after the completion of the polls in Jammu and Kashmir and Haryana.

- With PTI



A banner demanding freedom of Vidarbha region from Maharashtra was spotted at an agitation by doctors to condemn the rape and killing of a trainee doctor in Kolkata in Nagpur on Friday.

Pic: PTI

Metro in Thane, Pune gets approval

By Correspondent

New Delhi: The Union Cabinet on Friday approved metro rail projects in Thane, Pune and Bengaluru. Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the government has approved infrastructure projects worth nearly Rs 2 lakh crore since assuming office in June, making it clear that its priority was to generate jobs and boost connectivity to further economic growth.

The Union Cabinet, at a meeting chaired by Prime



Minister Narendra Modi on Friday, approved metro rail projects in Bengaluru in Karnataka, and Thane and Pune in Maharashtra, where assembly elections are due later this year.

The Phase-3 of the Bangalore Metro, comprising two corridors - JP Nagar to Kempapura and Hoshahalli to Kadabagere - will be completed at a cost of Rs 15,611 crore.

The Thane Integral Ring Metro, to be built at a cost of Rs 12,200 crore, will provide connectivity to the residential and industrial areas of the city with interchanges provided for the Mumbai Metro rail lines 4 and 5.

The Pune Metro, which will be extended from Swargate to Katraj at a cost of Rs 2,954.5 crore, will provide underground connectivity to Market Yard, commercial and residential areas at Padmavati and Katraj, which has residential areas, a university campus and a zoological park.

Vandalism in Kolkata Hospital Absolute failure of state machinery: HC

Kolkata: Observing that the mob violence in R G Kar Medical College and Hospital was an absolute failure of state machinery, the Calcutta High Court on Friday directed the police and the hospital authority to file affidavits on the situation there.

A division bench presided by Chief Justice T S Sivagnanam said it was hard to believe that the police intelligence did not have information about the gathering of 7,000 people, when the state's lawyer told the court that a mob of such a number had assembled at the hospital in the early hours of Thursday.

After knowing that there was some renovation work on one floor of the hospital after the body of a woman doctor, who was allegedly raped and murdered, was found, the Chief Justice said the court can order closing down the medical establishment.

The bench directed the police and the administrator of the hospital to file separate affidavits narrating the "true state of af-

fairs" at the hospital and all connected matters on August 21 when the matter will be heard again.

The court, also comprising Justice Hiranmay Bhattacharyya, said that the police should place on record the entire sequence of events that led to the vandalism in the hospital.

A group of people, posing as protesters, entered the hospital and vandalised the emergency department, nursing station, and medicine store, while also damaging CCTV cameras.

The mob also ransacked a stage where junior doctors had been demonstrating since August 9. The body of a woman post-graduate trainee, who was allegedly raped and murdered, was found in the seminar hall of the RG Kar Hospital on that day.

The CBI was also directed by the court to file an interim report about the progress of its investigation into "rape and murder" of the medic, which led to a cease-work by junior doctors in different government hospitals in the state

demanding exemplary punishment to the culprits and security at the workplace.

Stating that the bench had on August 13 urged the doctors to consider returning to work reminding them of their "pious obligation" towards the patients, the court said that the incident of vandalism and violence at the hospital on August 15 would definitely have an impact on the mindset of the protesting doctors.

The court said that the doctors working in the hospital have to be given adequate protection, or else they will not be able to discharge their duties.

The Additional solicitor general, appearing for the CBI, stated that a special team set up to probe into the rape and murder case is proceeding with the matter.

He also submitted a copy of the FIR lodged by the CBI following the court's order transferring the investigation to it from the Kolkata Police. The bench wondered what would happen if a similar incident happened in any other facility in West Bengal.

Yunus assures Hindus' safety

New Delhi: Muhammad Yunus, the chief adviser to the interim government in Bangladesh, called up Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday, assuring protection, safety and security of Hindus and all other minorities in his country.

This is the first conversation between Modi and Yunus after he assumed the responsibility following the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government.

Modi said in a post on X that he reiterated India's support for a democratic, stable, peaceful and progressive Bangladesh.

He said, "Received a telephone call from Professor Muhammad Yunus, @ChiefAdviserGoB. Exchanged views on the prevailing situation. Reiterated India's support for a democratic, stable, peaceful and progressive Bangladesh. He assured protection, safety and security of Hindus and all minorities in Bangladesh."

The prime minister had in his Independence Day address on Thursday voiced concern over the safety of Hindus and others.

Uddhav finds no takers for his demand

By Anand Mishra

Mumbai. Shivsena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray's push for early CM candidate declaration found no takers on Friday as two major allies of MVA Congress and NCP (SP) preferred to discuss this position after the election. Uddhav Thackeray, while making a public appeal during an event in Sion, urged Congress and NCP to declare chief ministerial candidate before the poll, a demand that was parried away by the other party leaders in the meeting. Sharad Pawar remained silent on the issue, while Congress leader Nana Patole deferred the matter to the party's high command in Delhi. Notably, political parties in Maharashtra have begun gearing up for the upcoming Assembly elections, with all parties conducting outreach campaigns. Uddhav Thackeray openly expressed his disappointment over his recent visit to Delhi saying that congress did not prefer to declare Chief Ministerial candidate before election.



Its me or someone else, make the decision today- Uddhav Speaking at the rally, Thackeray exuded, "Announce the candidate now, we all will support them. Whether it's my name or someone else's, make the decision today." Uddhav also recalled a 30-year-long alliance with Shiv Sena and BJP, noting that the party with the higher number of seats would get the Chief Minister's position. This formula however, according to him, led to candidates from both parties working against each other during elections. Thackeray emphasized that if such a sce-

nario repeats, it defeats the purpose of an alliance, making it imperative to announce the Chief Ministerial candidate before the elections. He also clarified that he has no personal interest in the Chief Minister's position within the MVA, stating that he would support whoever is chosen by Sharad Pawar and Congress state president Nana Patole. Thackeray took the opportunity to launch a scathing attack on the state government as well.

Senior Pawar shrugs off Thackeray's demand received no response from either Congress or NCP

(SP). Throughout his speech, Sharad Pawar remained silent on the subject, not uttering a single word about the Chief Minister's position. Congress and NCP's stoic silence has fueled speculation about whether Pawar is unwilling to back Uddhav Thackeray as the Chief Minister if the MVA returns to power. Sharad Pawar's reputation as the strategist of the MVA, his silence on this issue has raised questions and stirred discussions within political circles.

'Take this decision after election'

Senior Congress leader Prithviraj Chavan had recently remarked that the decision on the Chief Minister's post within the MVA would be made collectively after the elections. NCP President Sharad Pawar agreed, suggesting that discussions on the Chief Ministerial candidate should not take place before the assembly elections. Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut has been strongly advocating and pitching for a pre-poll declaration of the chief minister's face.

Pakistan reports three mpox cases; first in Asia

By Sajjad Hussain

Islamabad: At least three patients with mpox virus have been found so far in Pakistan, it emerged on Friday as the government decided to strengthen the screening system at the airports.

The mpox detection in Pakistan is the first in Asia and it might be more easily transmitted. The World Health Organisation has declared the spread of mpox a global health emergency. All three patients belong to the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province in the north-west, the militancy-whacked region bordering Afghanistan.

Salim Khan, the director



general of health services for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said that two patients were detected on their arrival from the United Arab Emirates, while a third patient's samples had been sent to the National Health Institute in Islamabad for confirmation.

According to the spokes-

person of the Federal Ministry of Health, the last patient in whom this virus was found belongs to the Mardan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

It is not yet clear which strain of mpox the said patient contracted and whether it is the same variant that was first confirmed outside

of Africa in Sweden.

"Contact tracing of the affected person has been started and samples of more people are being obtained," the spokesman said.

Officials said that all three patients were being quarantined and their contact tracing was going on.

Pakistan's Ministry of Health also issued an advisory on the disease on Thursday, which states that "the screening system at airports and entry points is being further strengthened."

Prime Minister's Coordinator for Health Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed Bharath says that federal hospitals have been instructed to take precautionary measures

and the Ministry of Health and Border Health Services are "alert to deal with any kind of situation."

The WHO declared the outbreak of mpox in parts of Africa as a cause of international concern and a threat to public health.

The highly contagious disease, formerly known as 'monkeypox', killed at least 450 people in the Republic of Congo. It is caused by the monkeypox virus, which belongs to the same group of viruses as smallpox but is less harmful.

The virus was originally transmitted from animals to humans, but now it is also transmitted from humans to humans.

- PTI

Bodies of six children found

Deoghar/Garhwa: The bodies of six children were recovered from water bodies in Jharkhand's Deoghar and Garhwa districts on Friday. They were identified as Suraj Oraon (11), Manish Minz (13) and Chandrakant Kumar (9).

According to Deoghar Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Ritvik Shrivastava, the bodies of the children were found in a pond in Dodia village. Their parents said the kids were missing since Thursday and after they failed to trace them, they lodged a complaint with police. Another three children drowned in a dam in Jharkhand's Garhwa district on Friday.

Hasina booked again

Dhaka: A murder case was filed against Bangladesh's former prime minister Sheikh Hasina on Friday over the death of a teacher, the latest in the string of cases filed against her after her ouster.

The case was filed against Hasina and Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader in Bogura. Hasina, 76, fled to India on August 5 after she was forced to resign following a massive protest by students against a quota system in government jobs.

Ninety-nine other local leaders and activists of her party were also sued in the case filed with Bogura Sadar Police Station over the murder of 35-year-old Selim Hossain, a resident of Palikanda village of Shibganj upazila,

on August 4. On August 4, the day before Hasina resigned and fled the country in the face of a student-led mass uprising, Hossain joined students' protest in Bogura's Satmatha area.

According to the complaint, Awami League (AL) leaders and activists attacked the protesters and hacked Hossain to death with sharp weapons.

Hossain's brother alleged that AL men killed his brother after getting orders from Hasina and Quader.

This is the latest in a string of cases filed against Hasina following her ouster on August 5. A case of enforced disappearance was filed on August 14 against Hasina and several others.



By Shoumojit Banerjee

'Ladki Bahin' Scheme Political Game Changer for Mahayuti



Pune: As the Eknath Shinde-led Mahayuti coalition looks to solidify its position in the upcoming Maharashtra Assembly election, a question being hotly debated in political circles is the possible impact of the Maharashtra government's recently announced 'Ladki Bahin' scheme.

The scheme has sparked significant debate, not just for its potential impact on women's empowerment, but also as a canny political strategy on part of the Mahayuti comprising of CM

Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Ajit Pawar's Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). It has also led to tensions within the tripartite ruling coalition, say sources.

Predictably, the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) has been quick to criticize the initiative, branding it as 'an election gimmick'.

The scheme offers 1,500 per month to women earning below 2.5 lakh annually, thus covering lower-middle-class families which would include Muslim and Scheduled Caste communities.

This makes good political sense as in the recently concluded Lok Sabha election, it was clear that the minorities gravitated towards Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT) over and above the Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) and the Congress, which anyway, have been their traditional 'go-to' parties.

To woo these critical constituents towards the Mahayuti, the Mahayuti parties, particularly CM Shinde's Shiv Sena and Ajit Pawar's NCP, who has stressed so often on pursuing 'secular and progressive'

politics notwithstanding its alliance with the BJP, have been extensively promoting this scheme.

The scheme has received enthusiastic support from women following its announcement, with over 1.62 crore registrations recorded as of August 14.

The first phase of the 'Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin yojana' officially commenced today, with over 80 lakh eligible women receiving benefits so far, according to Women and Child Development Minister Aditi Patkar. She said that till date, Rs.



3,000 for two months' benefits have been deposited into the bank accounts of 80 lakh women across the state. The remaining eligible women are expected to receive their benefits by August 17.

Under this scheme, the government plans to provide financial assistance, healthcare benefits, and educational incentives to girls from economically

weaker sections.

The scheme hopes to enhance the quality of life for women and ensure that girls receive the necessary support to pursue education opportunities by giving monthly stipends for girls attending school and college. Healthcare benefits in form of free health check-ups and subsidized medical treatment for women in rural and underprivileged areas and significant educational incentives in form of scholarships and grants for girls pursuing higher education, particularly in STEM fields

are envisioned as part of the project.

For the Mahayuti coalition, led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, the scheme represents a strategic move to consolidate its voter base among underprivileged women and rural voters. However, some BJP sources say the party is treading cautiously in promoting a scheme closely linked with CM Shinde and in wooing groups not traditionally aligned with the BJP.

The rollout saw some contretemps after Ravi Rana, an Independent MLA aligned

with the BJP, remarking that the benefits of the scheme would be reclaimed if recipients did not vote for him in the Assembly elections.

NCP (SP) leader Supriya Sule today hit out at the government over the scheme, accusing it of committing the "sin of fixing a price for a sisters' love" while caustically adding Mahayuti leaders remembered their sisters only after the Lok Sabha elections.

Opposition MVA leaders have also raised concerns about the financial viability of the scheme.

Tension during protest over anti-Hindu violence in Bangladesh

Mumbai: Tension erupted in Jalgaon and Nashik cities in north Maharashtra on Friday during a bandh called by a Hindu organisation to condemn the atrocities on Hindus in Bangladesh, officials said.

In Jalgaon, stones were hurled at a vehicle showroom when Sakal Hindu Samaj, an umbrella body of several outfits, took out a protest march.

"The incident occurred in Jalgaon city this morning during a protest march by the Sakal Hindu Samaj against the anti-Hindu violence in Bangladesh. Some unidentified persons hurled a few stones at a two-wheeler showroom," an official said.

The glass facade of the showroom got damaged, he



said.

"Hundreds of supporters of the Sakal Hindu Samaj took part in the march, and the protesters later went to the collector's office and handed over a memorandum of their demands," the police official said.

The incident triggered tension for some time, but

the situation came under control following the intervention of the local police, he said.

Police personnel were deployed in the city as a precautionary measure, he said. Jalgaon city is located more than 400 km from Mumbai.

The police resorted to a

mild lathi charge after two groups clashed during a bike rally of the Hindu outfit in Nashik, an official said.

Stones were pelted, and some vehicles were damaged in the clash that erupted after some shops were found open in the Bhadrakali area.

The police resorted to a mild lathi charge to disperse the crowd. There is still tension in the Old Nashik area, but the situation is under control now.

"When the rally was on, some shops were open. It led to a verbal dispute. I appeal to everyone to maintain peace. I have spoken to the commissioner of police and district collector, and the situation is under control," state Minister Girish Mahajan said.

Three boys detained for morphing

Pune: The Pune police have detained three Class 10 students of a private school who allegedly morphed and circulated obscene photographs of their classmates on social media, an official said on Friday.

A case was registered under relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code, Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) and Information Technology Act with Hadapsar police station, and the boys, all aged 16,

were detained on Thursday, the official said. "One of the boys allegedly morphed photographs of girls from his class on an AI-enabled application and shared it with the others on Instagram," he said.

Court refuses bail to ED official

Mumbai: A special court in Mumbai on Friday refused to grant bail to Sandeep Chand Yadav, an assistant director of the Enforcement Directorate held in a bribery case, after noting there was prima facie evidence to show his involvement.

Yadav, who was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation on August 8 for allegedly taking a bribe of Rs 20 lakh from a Mumbai-based jeweller, sought bail after he was sent to judicial custody.

In his plea, Yadav claimed there was no evidence against him and contended he need not languish in jail any further since the investigation into

the case was complete.

Refusing to accept these contentions, the court rejected Yadav's bail plea by observing there was prima facie evidence to show his involvement in the case.

As per the CBI, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) had earlier this month conducted searches in the premises of jeweller Vipul Harish Thakkar.

As per the CBI, Yadav allegedly threatened to arrest Thakkar's son if he did not pay him Rs 25 lakh. This amount was later reduced to Rs 20 lakh.

Thakkar approached the CBI, which laid a trap and held Yadav when he allegedly accepted the bribe.

Man on run held from Haridwar

Palghar: Police in Maharashtra's Palghar district have arrested a man, who had been on the run for allegedly raping his foster daughter in 2021, from Haridwar in Uttarakhand, an official said on Friday.

The accused, identified as Anil Bidan, had allegedly raped the 19-year-old victim in September 2021 at her house in Nalasopara in the district. After the sexual assault, he also threatened to kill her, he said.

Based on the complaint by the victim, the police had registered an case under sections 376 (rape) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

"Mahayutiseat-sharingtalksmovingpositively"

Pune: Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, who heads the Nationalist Congress Party, has said that helming the NCP away from the shadows of his uncle and founder Sharad Pawar after the split is a huge responsibility.

In an interview with PTI during his Jan Sanman Yatra, Pawar said on Thursday that the seat-sharing talks among the ruling Mahayuti partners - NCP, Shiv Sena and BJP - for the assembly polls are proceeding positively.

Ajit Pawar and his loyalist MLAs broke away from NCP in July last year to align with the ruling alliance. He later got the party name and its clock symbol. Party founder Sharad Pawar, who now heads NCP (SP), is a part of the opposition bloc Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), also comprising Shiv Sena (UBT) and Congress.

"This is the biggest responsibility that I have ever received. Till now, (Sharad) Pawar saheb was our leader and our chief. When I joined politics in 1991, there was no NCP by then.

"When I was in Congress, there were several leaders. Therefore, there was no question about it (extra re-

sponsibility). When NCP was formed in 1999... I was given responsibilities only after 2004. Now the final responsibility lies with me because I am the NCP chief."

Speaking about seat sharing for the upcoming state polls, Pawar said he had spoken to Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, who leads the Shiv Sena, and Deputy CM and senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnis two to three times and the talks were positive.

Everyone wants to contest from maximum seats and a solution will be found, he said.

"However, we need to hold talks with our other alliance partners as well... Let's wait for a few days," said the deputy CM.

On being asked if the polls could be held in November, he said there was such a buzz but added the schedule was the prerogative of the Election Commission and "not in our hands".

Ajit Pawar also battled for an all-party meeting to discuss the demand of the Maratha community for reservation in education and government jobs, saying the opposition parties cannot be neglected since they also represent the people.

"Maratha quota activist



Manoj Jarange wants reservation under the OBC segment. Chief Minister Eknath Shinde had called an all-party meeting to discuss the quota issue but the opposition stayed away. I don't know if the boycott was deliberate. It has been decided to seek their (opposition) time again," he said.

Hailing the Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana, under which women get a monthly aid of Rs 1,500 if their annual family income is less than Rs 2.5 lakh, Pawar said it would be launched on August 17 at an event in Balewadi here with beneficiaries getting money for July and August. CM Shinde and Deputy CM Fadnis will attend the event.

It is a transparent scheme in which money is transferred to accounts linked to the beneficiary's Aadhaar,

leaving no room for any illegality, Pawar added.

Slamming the opposition for calling it an election gimmick that would burden the exchequer, Pawar said he had presented 10 budgets and knew about finances.

On the issue of raising resources, Pawar said Maharashtra accounts for 16 per cent of the country's GST collections, with 50 per cent coming back to the state.

Moreover, the state also has revenue coming in from excise and other taxes, Pawar pointed out.

Pawar said his Jan Sanman Yatra was getting a good response from women, adding that schemes meant from them as well as farmers and youth were well received since beneficiaries include the poor and from all castes.

Asked whether the mistake he alluded to in connection with the Baramati Lok Sabha fight between Supriya Sule and his wife Sunetra was political or personal, he said, "There is nothing deliberate about speaking about a mistake. I am the master of my mind. I speak my mind. I am a straightforward person."

He refused to speak on the split in the Pawar household

(due to the NCP's break up) and asserted such matters need not be discussed in an open forum just because he was a public figure. "I am a public figure but I would not like to speak about my family. I will speak about my family within the family," he said.

On a question about chances of reuniting with Sharad Pawar, the deputy CM said, "I will only speak about my work and vision for Maharashtra. We will tell people to give us a chance again so that we can bring more funds for the state. The opposition is always negative."

Asked to compare bitter rivals CM Shinde and Shiv Sena (UBT) leader and former CM Uddhav Thackeray, Pawar said, "Everyone is different in behaviour and temperament. But everyone works for Maharashtra's interests and development. Shinde has worked with Thackeray for several years. What happened between them only Shinde can say."

On former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh's claims about moves to get Fadnis and some other leaders arrested during MVA rule, Pawar said he knew nothing about the matter.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Supriya Sule
MP, NCP (SP)

"There is no money involved in the emotion of love. But the state government has linked the brother-sister relationship to electoral politics. When money and relationships are mixed, the relationship does not remain intact any longer."

NGO for more e-vehicles at Matheran

Thane: An NGO has pitched for replacing horses with electric vehicles in Matheran, saying there is a high prevalence of irreversible and untreatable conditions in working equines at the hill station caused by a "lifetime of gruelling labour".

Matheran, about 90 km from Mumbai, is a popular pedestrian hill station in Maharashtra's Raigad district.

In a release on Friday, the Plant and Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) said animal-free means will stop the abuse of animals and



protect the livelihood of locals at Matheran.

It said PAWS founder Dr Nilesh Bhanage has demanded that the number of e-rickshaws be increased

at the hill station.

The NGO and an animal husbandry clinic organised a vaccination drive for the ponies at Matheran on August 15, it added. - PTI

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the public at large that Mr. Ravindra Chandrakant Shinde Res. At B/104, Gandhar Apartment, Swarganga, bolinj Rd, Virar west, Tal. Vasai, Dist. Thane, 401303 have agree to sell his ownership land property bearing pardi no. 2 having area H.R. 0-02-10 pot kharaba 0-03-0 (i.e. 510.00 sq mtrs) forming part of larger land area admeasuring H.R.0-07-10 pot kharaba H.R. 0-03-00 Total area admeasuring H.R.0-10-10, situated at Revenue Village Wagholi, Tal. Vasai, Dist. Palghar, to my client forever. Any person/s having any right, title, interest or any claim over the above said land property may inform the undersigned with in 14 days of this public Notice along with proper documentary evidence. Otherwise, the sale transaction will be concluded as if there is no such right interest.
Date: 17/08/2024 Sd/-
Adv. Dinesh Nana Admane
Off. Shop no. 7, Prathamesh Dreams, Royal Garden, near Agarwal Lifestyle, Brooklyn Park, Global city Virar (w), Tal. Vasai, Dist. Palghar, 401403.

Row over religious leader's remarks

Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar/Nashik: A controversy erupted on Friday over alleged objectionable remarks made by Hindu religious leader Ramgiri Maharaj against Prophet Mohammad and Islam, with police filing cases against him in two districts of Maharashtra following complaints by members of the Muslim community.

The remarks were made recently by Ramgiri Maharaj at Shah Panchale village in Sinnar taluka of Nashik district during a religious event and its video went viral on social media, police said.

Amid the row over his comments, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde shared the dais with the religious leader during an event in Nashik district on Friday, and called him a "saint", while minister Girish Mahajan and former Ahmednagar MP Sujay Vikhe Patil touched his feet on stage.

Speaking at the function, Ramgiri Maharaj, the mahant of Sarla Bet Dham in Shrirampur taluka of Ahmednagar district, defended his controversial remarks, saying that they were in response to the atrocities being committed

against Hindus in Bangladesh, and that his objective was to unite members of the Hindu community.

Speaking to Marathi news channel ABP Majha on the controversy surrounding his statement earlier in the day, he said, "Hindus should remain alert. I have spoken what I wanted to. I am firm on it and I am ready to face its consequences."

All India Majlis-e-Ttehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) leader Intiaz Jaleel claimed that Ramgiri Maharaj's comments were part of a political conspiracy and demanded strong

action against him.

Police registered cases against Ramgiri Maharaj at Yeola in Nashik and Vajapur in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar districts.

The FIR in Vajapur was filed under section 302 (uttering words with deliberate intent to wound religious feelings of any person) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) based on a complaint lodged by a local resident, the police said.

The complainant in the case, Rafehasan Ali Khan, said he came to know about the video of Ramgiri Maharaj in which he was heard

saying, among other things, that one crore Muslims have abandoned Islam and also passed a comment against Prophet Mohammad.

"These words by Ramgiri Maharaj have hurt the religious sentiments of Muslims and created a rift between the two communities," the complainant said.

Tension prevailed for some time on Friday afternoon in part of Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar city after a group of Muslims gathered outside the City Chowk police station to demand action against Ramgiri Maharaj.

Jaleel wrote a letter to the city police commissioner to seek action against the Hindu religious leader.

The statements were made deliberately to malign the image of the Muslim community, he alleged.

"This is done to foment communal riots. So strict action should be taken against him," he said.

Meanwhile, while sharing the stage with Ramgiri Maharaj, Shinde said, "As many as 25 lakh people visited Pandharpur on Ashadi Ekadashi this year. The 'warkari' community creates public awareness

through sermons. As a result, many people have overcome their grief. Saints like Ramgiri Maharaj carry out the work of giving direction to people."

Speaking on the occasion, Ramgiri Maharaj said, "Though the Hindu community is tolerant, the community should remain alert. Therefore, I made the statement in reaction to the atrocities against Hindus in Bangladesh. The only motive was that Hindus should unite. Now, I will face whatever may come. If a case has been filed, I will see whenever I get a notice."

Resident doctors' strike intensifies

Mumbai: The resident doctor's indefinite strike intensified in Maharashtra on its fourth day on Friday, with their seniors joining the protest, disrupting services at government and civic hospitals and inconveniencing thousands of patients in the state.

Dr Pratik Debaje, president of Maharashtra State Association of Residential Doctors (Central-MARD) told PTI that 6000-7000 senior resident doctors affiliated to the Maharashtra Association of Bonded Resident Doctors (MABRD) and the Association of State Medical Interns (ASMI) joined the strike on Friday.

"17,000-18,000 (resident) doctors in Maharashtra

are on strike at present," Debaje said.

Resident doctors in the state launched an indefinite strike on Tuesday morning to express solidarity with the nationwide agitation against the rape-murder of a post-graduate trainee in Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital last week.

On the fourth day of the resident doctor's strike, elective services, including OPDs, OTs, and lab procedures, remain affected due to the strike, causing inconvenience to thousands of patients in Mumbai and other parts of the state.

Emergency services, however, continue uninterrupted, said officials.

The Central-MARD has demanded an impartial and transparent investigation into the Kolkata incident, speedy formation of an expert committee for implementation of the Central Healthcare Protection Act, improved security measures, including fully functional CCTVs and well-equipped guards, quality hostels, and proper on-call rooms for resident doctors.

Debaje said that the resident doctors at JJ Hospital in Mumbai and other major hospital campuses are peacefully protesting over their demands, but they have planned a sit-in at Azad Maidan in the Fort area later in the day. A large number of resident doctors are likely to

join the protest on the ground.

On Wednesday, MABRD announced its support for the resident doctors' strike and threatened to intensify it from August 16 if their demands remained unfulfilled.

Meanwhile, Dr Santosh Kadam, president-elect of the Indian Medical Association (IMA)-Maharashtra, has given a call to doctors across the state to withdraw services on Saturday (August 17) over the Kolkata rape-murder.

IMA has announced a 24-hour nationwide withdrawal of non-emergency services from 6 am on August 17 to protest against the incident and the subsequent vandalism at the Kolkata hospital. - PTI



Resident doctors and medical students across the city's government hospital staged a protest against the alleged rape and murder of a woman doctor at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Mumbai on Friday. Pic: Umesh Goswami

HC says vision is to make Mumbai slum-free

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court on Friday said the vision should be to make Mumbai a slum-free city and raised concerns about the plight of slum dwellers who become "victims at the hands of private developers".

A division bench of Justices G S Kulkarni and Somasekhar Sunderesan emphasised the need for strict and robust implementation

of the Maharashtra Slum Area (Improvement, Clearance and Redevelopment) Act.

"Vision is to have Mumbai, which is considered an international city and the financial capital of our country, slum-free. We need to have an absolutely slum-free city. This Act will help that vision," the court said.

The bench said the implementation of provisions of

the Act lies with the government as the mandate lies with them.

The bench was set up last week to undertake a "performance audit" of the Act pursuant to the Supreme Court's directives in July.

The apex court had raised concerns about the working of the Act.

The high court, on Friday, stressed the need for sustainable development.

The bench directed the government, Slum Rehabilitation Authority and other parties to file their affidavits and posted the matter for further hearing on September 20.

"Think about the future generation...this is what will happen in 100 years. Are there going to be only skyscrapers? Don't we need open spaces?" the court questioned.

HC issues summons to Narayan Rane on UBT leader's plea

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court on Friday issued a summons to BJP MP Narayan Rane on Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Vinayak Raut's plea seeking cancellation of the former's election from the Ratnagiri-Sindhudurg constituency.

Rane defeated Raut, a two-term MP, by a margin of 47,858 votes in his debut election for Lok Sabha. He polled 4,48,514 votes, while Raut secured 4,00,656 votes.

Raut had last month filed an election petition in the high court, claiming that Rane had won the polls by "fraudulent means", and demanded the cancellation of the BJP leader's election from the Ratnagiri-Sindhudurg seat and that he be banned from contesting elections and voting for five years.

A single bench of Justice S V Kotwal issued a summons (notice) to Rane and sought his response to the plea.



The court has posted the matter for further hearing on September 12.

Raut, in his petition, also sought directions to the Election Commission of India (ECI) for fresh or re-election in the constituency.

Pending the hearing, the Shiv Sena (UBT) leader has sought direction to restrain Rane from continuing as the Ratnagiri-Sindhudurg MP.

He alleged that after the poll campaign ended, a video surfaced in which Rane's supporters were seen distributing money to voters by showing them an EVM and asking them to vote for the BJP leader through "illegal and unfair" means.

Raut sought direction from the court to constitute an independent committee to investigate the videos. He cited that as per the

Representation of People Act, 1951, the campaign activities are to be halted 48 hours before elections. However, the acts of Rane and his campaigners were in "clear violation of statutory provision".

In May, Raut filed a complaint before the chief electoral officer of Maharashtra. However, when there was no response, Raut moved the high court.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Manoj Jarange-Patil, Maratha activist

"The state government is listening to and giving time to only OBC leaders. It is almost clear now the Maratha community will not get reservation by the government. Therefore, we need to remove them (government)."

Narad Awards

Mumbai: In a glittering ceremony held at the Vishwa Samvad Kendra in Mumbai, eight outstanding journalists were conferred with the coveted Devarshi Narad Journalism Award for 2024. The awards, presented by Vishwa Samvad Kendra, recognise excellence in journalism and honour the contributions of media professionals who have made a significant impact through their work.

Brajesh Singh (IPS), Director General, Information and Public Relations, Govt of Maharashtra, will be the Chief Guest.

Man loses Rs 36 lakh in cryptocurrency fraud

Thane: A Navi Mumbai-based man involved in stock market trading lost more than Rs 36 lakh as two persons allegedly lured him into investing in cryptocurrency by promising high returns, police said on Friday.

The accused contacted the victim, a resident of Kharghar, in April this year, stating that they were representatives of a financial institution, and urged him to get training in cryptocurrency trading. After the victim agreed, the accused started the training sessions, an official said.

However, they later siphoned off Rs 36,80,151 in several instalments after linking him to different trading platforms. When the



victim sought his invested money back and demanded returns on investment, the accused did not respond, he said.

The man then approached the police and based on his complaint, the police on Thursday registered a case under sections 316(2) (criminal breach of trust), 318(4) (cheating) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and also Information Technology (IT) Act, the official at the cyber police station said.

A probe into the crime was underway, he added.

Shiv Sena criticises Uddhav

Mumbai: The Chief Minister Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena on Friday said Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray's opposition to the Waqf Amendment Bill is driven by his desire to retain Muslim votes in the upcoming assembly elections in Maharashtra.

Shiv Sena spokesperson and Thane MP Naresh Mhaske also asked why Thackeray was opposing the Ram Janmabhoomi temple.

"Thackeray's stance is driven by a desire to retain Muslim votes in the upcoming elections," Mhaske said in a reference to the Lok Sabha polls in which the Sena (UBT) garnered votes in Muslim dominated seats.

BJP dubs MVA as Majhabi Vyabhichari Aparadhi alliance

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Amidst massive demonstrations against the rape and murder of a trainee doctor in Kolkata, the Baharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday dubbed Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) - the principle opposition alliance in the state - as the Majhabi Vyabhichari Aparadhi (Communal Pervert Criminal) alliance and hit out at it for the rise in communal and violent crimes against women at several places across the nation including Maharashtra.

"The BJP is determined to act against Majhabi Vyabhichari Aparadhi alliance," said BJP spokesperson Prem Shukla while giving details of several of



"Jehadi crimes" in the state over past two months. "Electoral success of the INDI Alliance in Maharashtra has emboldened the Jehadi elements. But, the government shall deal with it firmly," he added.

Blaming the Trinamool Congress and its leader Mamata Banerjee for the ever declining law and order situation in West Ben-

gal, Shukla said. "The law and order apparatus in Bengal has completely deteriorated which has been reflected in the rising crime rate and increasing atrocities against women in the state. Despite having a female Chief Minister, women in Bengal are not safe and their rights are being violated. Whether it's in Sandeshkhali, Chopra,

or Kolkata, these recurring incidents make it clear that women are far from being safe in the state." In the case of rape and brutal murder of a female PG Doctor in a government hospital in Kolkata, Mamata Banerjee delayed the transfer of the case to the CBI by several days and failed to ensure a proper investigation of the crime scene. This delay also resulted in the tampering and destruction of crucial evidence. A swift investigation and immediate action against the culprit were necessary. However, due to the failure of Mamata Banerjee's administration, the perpetrator remains free despite committing a heinous crime, Shukla added. He

also accused Ms Banerjee of shielding culprits like she did with Sheikh Shahjahan.

Congress and INDI Alliance leaders become the firsts to politicize issues in BJP-ruled states, but remain silent on Bengal. Will the response to atrocities against women depend and vary according to the state and coalition involved?, Shukla asked.

He also asked, why the INDI Alliance that parades around with the Constitution not utter a word when the fundamental spirit of the Constitution is being shattered in West Bengal?

Shukla, who presented details of several gruesome cases of violence against women in Bengal over the past 12 years.

Shinde defies Modi on revadi

By Suyash Padate

Mumbai: The Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has totally turned a blind eye towards the narrative of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi While implementing his much hyped 'Ladki Bahin Yojana. PM Modi had warned about revadi (freebies) culture saying its dangerous for development of the country. However, the state government totally ignored the PM while launching this Scheme.

It may be recalled that Modi had categorically pointed out that to get the votes in the election, distributing revadis is dan-



gerous for the development of the country. This was a signal for all the BJP run states as well as allies. The state government went ahead and implemented the scheme which is estimated to cost the exchequer Rs 46,000 crores annually, almost on the eve of Assembly election.

CM Shinde has repeatedly termed Modi as a Vikas Purush before the Parliament election. While lauding the Prime Minister for his developmental work Shinde stated that the Maharashtra government will stand by him. Now for the political gain the Mahayiti government rejected Modi's instructions.

As the implementation of the scheme started on Thursday, around 80 lakh women beneficiaries received Rs 3000 each through their bank accounts. The government has allocated Rs 33,000 crores for this year. In spite of this the BJP leaders in the state have re-

maintained deceptively quiet. No BJP leader was ready to go on record about this scheme.

The women and Child Welfare Minister Aditi Tatkare said, "First of all I will proudly say that our government has kept its promise made to sisters across the state. This scheme will provide Rs 1500 per month to married, divorced, widowed, deserted and destitute women whose annual family income is below 2.5 lakh and are domiciled in the state".

"So far money have been deposited in the accounts of 80 lakh women. Nearly 27 lakh women are yet to complete formality."

Kenyan held with cocaine

Mumbai: A Kenyan woman was arrested at Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport on Friday allegedly with cocaine worth Rs 20 crore concealed in liquid form in two shampoo and lotion bottles, which DRI officials said was a new modus operandi to smuggle the contraband.

The appearance of the liquid cocaine was similar to the normal shampoo and lotion contents of these bottles, which increased the difficulty in its detection, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence officials said.

UBT brought to terms: Shelar

By Correspondent

Mumbai: UBT group that was boasting "Our candidate will only become the chief minister..." and "All are invited for the oath taking ceremony..." was brought to terms during the Maha Vikas Aghadi's gathering on Friday. Uddhav Thackeray also acknowledged that during his Mahayuti alliance, the formula for the CM position was depending on who got the most seats. This demonstrates that his desire for the chief ministerial position during his alliance with the BJP was absolutely fake, slammed Mumbai BJP president MLA Adv. Ashish Shelar.

When asked to comment upon Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray's speech at MVA rally, Shelar stated that based on Uddhav Thackeray's remarks from today, it appears that he has come to terms with their alliance's stance over the chief ministerial position.

"Tall assertions were being made by UBT party members that Uddhav Thackeray will again be seated as the chief minister in Maharashtra. He even travelled to Delhi for that. But it appears his request was ignored. He also held meetings at Silver Oak, but was disappointed. Thus came his comment. Currently he is fretting and eventually might become

resentful," added Shelar.

Shelar also listed the wrongdoings during Uddhav Thackeray's tenure as the chief minister. There was rampant corruption during Covid-19 period and careers of graduates and post-graduates were at stake. There was injustice meted out to women and projects that guaranteed employment and investments to Maharashtra were opposed. Editors of publications were arrested and refrained from speaking against the administration, sabotaging democracy. Investments in the interests of Maharashtra were rejected and there were attempts to bring disgrace to Maharashtra, Shelar said.

EDITORIAL

A Calculated Bid

Uddhav Thackeray's ambition to be the Chief Ministerial face of the opposition Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in the forthcoming Maharashtra Assembly election reflects a complex interplay of personal, political, and strategic considerations. It is a calculated gamble that seeks to address both personal and political imperatives. However, the success of this ambition will depend on his ability to navigate the complexities of alliance politics where the MVA's cohesion will be rigorously tested.

Thackeray's desire to lead the opposition bloc stems from a need to reassert his relevance in Maharashtra's political landscape. After the dramatic fall of his government in June 2022, following a rebellion within his party led by CM Eknath Shinde, Thackeray has been on a quest to rebuild his stature. His projection of himself as the face of the MVA is not merely a bid for power but an existential necessity, a strategic move to consolidate his leadership within his party and the broader opposition, offering him a platform to challenge the BJP and Shinde's faction.

For Uddhav Thackeray, vying for the Chief Ministerial candidacy is also a deeply personal mission to restore the Thackeray legacy. The Sena, founded by his father Bal Thackeray in 1966, has long been synonymous with Mumbai's and Maharashtra's politics. The intra-party split and the subsequent loss of the Chief Ministership have been perceived as a significant blow to this legacy. By leading the MVA, Uddhav seeks to reclaim the political narrative and restore his family's dominance in State politics.

This quest is also fuelled by the need to avenge the perceived betrayal by Shinde and BJP leader Devendra Fadnis and to re-establish the Shiv Sena (UBT) as the rightful heir to the Thackeray brand.

However, Thackeray's ambition places the MVA in a delicate situation. The alliance, comprising the Shiv Sena (UBT), the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), and the Indian National Congress (INC), was originally forged out of a shared antipathy towards the BJP after the 2019 Assembly election result.

While Thackeray may be a unifying figure against a common adversary, his leadership within the MVA is not without controversy. The NCP, under Sharad Pawar, and the Congress, buoyed by their resounding success in the recently concluded Lok Sabha election, will be disinclined to cede ground unconditionally to Thackeray whose strike rate was the lowest among the three MVA allies.

The case of the Sangli Lok Sabha seat before the Lok Sabha, which saw the Congress and the Sena (UBT) nearly coming to blows, is microcosmic of the inherent schism within the MVA. The challenge for the MVA is to balance competing ambitions of all three parties while presenting a united front. Thackeray's insistence on being the Chief Ministerial candidate could strain this fragile alliance, risking the very unity that is its strength.

Death of Bangabandhu's Dream



By Priya Samant

Bangabandhu bestowed his land with a secular Bengali identity. His dream of independent secular Bangladesh was reduced to ashes merely within 50 years!

With freedom comes responsibility. To retain sovereignty, we must have wisdom, power, and a strong sense of emotion that leads us towards independence! For secularism, the country needs a common legal framework to ensure a conducive socio-political environment!

Under Sheikh Hasina's leadership, Bangladesh transformed from a struggling nation into a new 'Asian Tiger'. The electricity grids reached far-flung areas; Sheikh Hasina built infrastructure previously unseen in Bangladesh. In 2020 Bangladesh's ranking on the Global Youth Development Index was 126 of 181 countries, in the middle among Bharat's rank 122 and Myanmar 130. Yet compliance with labour rights, accessibility to health insurance, minimum wage rate, unemployment benefits were few of the areas where Sheikh Hasina's government was limping along.

During her tenure, Bangladesh emerged as the second largest readymade garment (RMG) exporter in the world. The RMG sector alone contributes a whopping 85% of its export revenue. Heavy reliance on garment industry, ignoring the potential of other competitive merchandise, absence of diversification weakened the import-export dynamics of Bangladesh and made the country vulnerable to external pressure. The imposition of excessive trade and exchange controls also reduced capital flow, dropped forex reserves and hampered its manufacturing growth. Declined GDP, rising trade deficits and unemployment rate brought "the miracle development" under scrutiny.

With 80% of its key exports directed only towards Western markets, Bangladesh's vulnerability to external pressures becomes very much evident. For instance, the World Bank declined the Padma bridge loan to Sheikh Hasina on the pretext of corruption that later judicially proved to be non-existent! In response to the western political bullying, Sheikh Hasina completed the project with internal finance. By the end of 2021 the United States banned Bangladesh's Rapid Action Battalion, a premier counterterrorism force, unilaterally!

The strained relations with the West made Sheikh Hasina's government attract Russia for the imports of food grains and arms. Russia also financed Bangladesh's 1st nuclear power plant. Bypassing US sanctions on Russia, Hasina's government agreed to repay Russia in Yuan. In Nov 2023, Russian warships entered Bangladesh's Chittagong port for joint exercises. Sheikh Hasina's efforts to strengthen defence trade with China and Russia alarmed the West. The Great-Power Competition in Bay of Bengal and Sheikh Hasina's refusal to sign a Military Infor-



mation Agreement with the US reportedly irked Washington.

With the heavy media criticism, restrictive policies and pressure tactics US had pushed itself backward in its competition with China and Russia for influencing Hasina-led Bangladesh!

Hasina's government faced various massive protests throughout her tenure. The June 2024 episode came as a final nail in the coffin for Hasina's Awami League government. The student protest was infiltrated by radical Islamists and other anti-government elements. Sheikh Hasina's supporters were murdered, and her government was overthrown for "the democratic future" of Bangladesh!?

Sheikh Hasina's 15 years long governance had failed to protect minority interests. She could only prevent extremists from making things worse. In this muslim majority land, Hindu population decreased since 1952 from 22% to 7.95% in 2022; the other minorities in Bangladesh share the same fate. The Awami League that once dropped the word 'Muslim' from its name to form a 'secular' Bangladesh could not counter anti-secular elements as it imposed threat to their political power and survival.

It is not just the radicals or anti-government elements that caused the fall of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League. Nepotism and corruption are equally to blame. Sheikh Hasina's 8 family members were entrusted with key responsibilities in Bangladesh's government regardless of their qualification. Four of them who were elected MPs had amassed a huge

wealth. Her son, ICT adviser to the Bangladesh government, was accused of corruption too. Sheikh Hasina's peon who was nicknamed "Pani Jahangir" as he used to carry drinking water for her, pocketed a fortune worth Tk400 crore! The complete control over national apparatus invariably breeds autocracy, discounts the leader's integrity and then the stench of corruption grows stronger.

On 5th Aug 2024 Protesters set fire to 'Bangabandhu Memorial Museum'. Father of the Nation 'Bangabandhu' Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members were assassinated in this same house, on 15th August 1975. The place that witnessed the new dawn of Independent democratic Bangladesh was looted by own countrymen. Bangabandhu gave their land a secular Bengali identity. Within 50 years, his dream of independent secular Bangladesh was reduced to ashes. The bullet trounced the ballot, once again! The literary legacy of the Bengal Renaissance could not shape the country's future the way it did in the past. The idea of nationalism, rights and social justice could not flourish in Bangabandhu's land.

With freedom comes responsibility. To retain sovereignty, we must have wisdom, power and a strong sense of emotion that led us towards independence! For the reinforcement of democracy, trust and co-operation are essential. For the positive secularism, the country needs a common legal framework to ensure a conducive socio-political environment!

The writer is a foreign affairs expert. Views personal.

Sub-caste Reservations: Questions Before Execution



By Darshan Solanki



The word 'reservation' acts like an alert or an alarm, impacting not just specific castes and categories but the entire population. The Supreme Court of India said it was considering implementing sub-caste reservations within pre-decided caste categories. Reservation issues remain a national concern, not only for a single state but for the whole nation.

Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, and Punjab have all experienced significant reservation-based violence. Mayawati criticised the Supreme Court's decision to sub-classify Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) communities, calling it "unfair" on Twitter. She argued that the reality contradicts the official statements, with various caste groups having their own grievances. Her remarks signal a strong rejection of the SC's decision and reflect political motives, with the BSP chief also accusing Congress of supporting sub-classification. The current situation remains disconnected from the real issues at hand.

It's important to understand that the reservation system is not designed solely to alleviate poverty for specific castes or classes. Rather, it aims to create equitable opportunities for marginalized groups, including migrants and those at the lower end of the social spectrum. SC and ST classifications address specific groups, but some privileged classes perceive this as merely a quota system. Every few years, a designated team selects a prominent leader from the depressed

classes to represent them. However, the leader's effectiveness often reflects their caste's influence, and policies tend to impact the entire caste rather than benefiting individuals broadly. Ideally, a leader should address the needs of the entire category, but often, the results are confined to specific castes.

The National Congress President, Mallikarjun Kharge, announced that before finalising the party's stance on the sub-classification of SCs and STs, they will consult NGOs, lawyers, and other stakeholders. This suggests that Congress may support sub-classification. BSP leader Mayawati's tweet critiques not only Congress but also resonates with the common people who face persistent challenges. From railway tickets to highway tolls and recruitment forms, many feel stuck in a system where certain classes always seem to benefit more, highlighting a disparity between official policies and everyday realities.

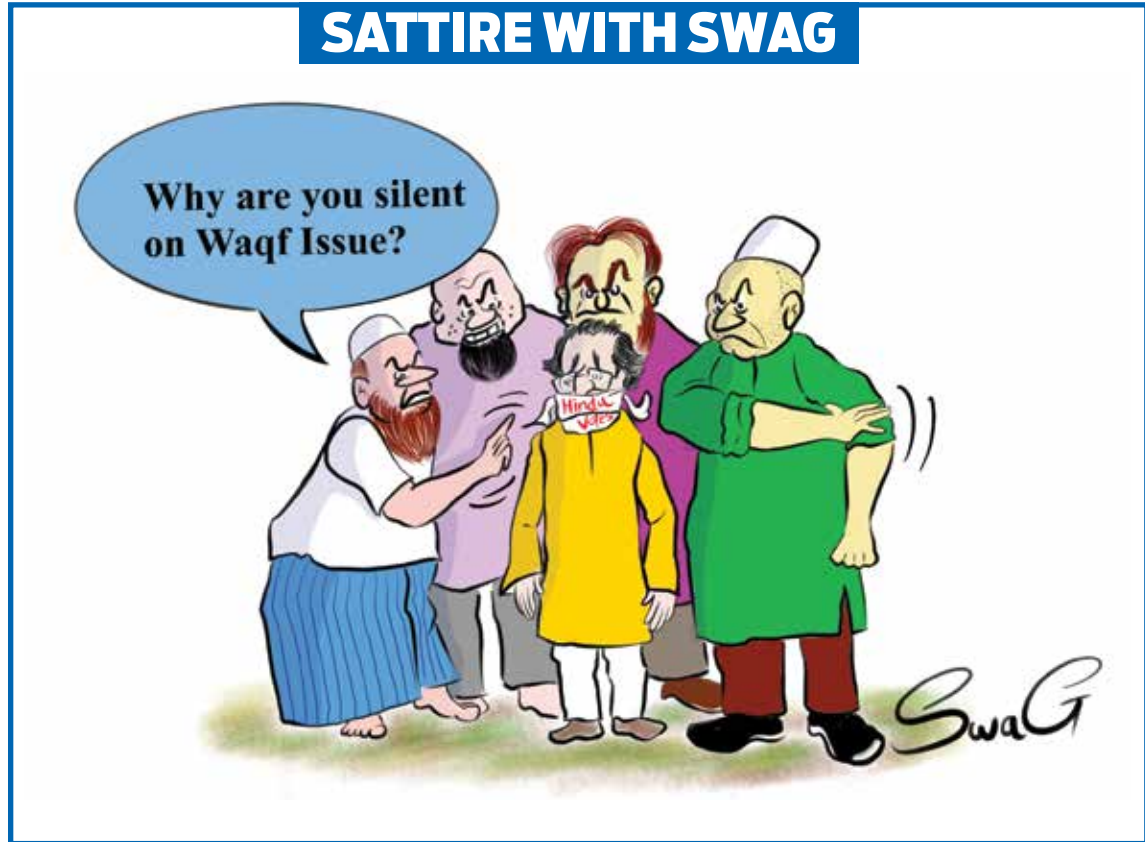
Lok Janshakti Party Chief, Ram Vilas, and Union Minister, Chirag Paswan criticised the Supreme Court's SC classification, stating it ignored the principles of untouchability, which were central to the original classification. This marks the first time during the Modi government that a leader has publicly countered a position taken by the senior leadership.

The Supreme Court's comments have had a big impact on Indians. We await the next hearing for further developments.

The writer is an engineer. Views personal.

The Supreme Court of India's potential move to implement sub-caste reservations has sparked nationwide concern. States like Maharashtra and Gujarat have seen violence over reservations. BSP leader Mayawati criticised the decision as "unfair," highlighting a disconnect between policy and ground realities. Congress and other leaders are now weighing in.

SATTIRE WITH SWAG



The Supreme Court on juvenile

The Supreme Court has said bail cannot be denied to a juvenile in a criminal case unless the court records that the minor is likely to be associated with a known criminal, be exposed to moral, physical or psychological danger, or his release would defeat the ends of justice.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih set aside the orders of the Rajasthan High Court and juvenile justice board denying bail to a juvenile, who was booked for sexually assaulting a minor.

"...the impugned orders are set aside. The appeal is accordingly allowed," the bench said while noting that the juvenile in conflict with law has been in custody for over one year, and directed that he shall be released on bail without surety.

"However, the jurisdictional Juvenile Justice Board shall issue appropriate directions to the jurisdictional Probation Officer to keep the

juvenile under supervision and to submit periodical reports to the Board about the conduct of the Juvenile," the bench said in its order of August 14.

Referring to the provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (JJ Act), the bench said that from the phraseology used in sub-section 1 of Section 12, a juvenile in conflict with law has to be "necessarily released on bail", with or without surety, or placed under supervision of a probation officer or under the care of any fit person unless proviso is applicable.

The bench referred to the proviso to sub-section 1 of section 12 which said, "Provided that such person shall not be so released if there appears reasonable grounds for believing that the release is likely to bring that person into association with any known criminal or expose the said person to moral, physical or psychological danger or the per-

son's release would defeat the ends of justice, and the Board shall record the reasons for denying the bail and circumstances that led to such a decision".

It said the court has perused all the orders passed earlier by the JJ Board, the special court and high court, and especially the order dated December 11, 2023 passed by the JJ Board.

"There is no finding recorded that the proviso to sub-Section 1 of Section 12 is applicable to the facts of the case. Without recording the said finding, bail could not have been denied to a juvenile in conflict with law," it said.

The top court said its attention is invited to the psychological assessment report of the juvenile which records that he does not belong to high risk category, and against the column "worry list of child" it is mentioned that there was "no worry". The report is signed by a qualified clinical psychologist, it noted.

POLITICS AND PROSE

The Lumumba Plot: A Cold War Tragedy in the Congo

Stuart Reid's stunning debut book unravels the gruesome assassination of Patrice Lumumba in 1961, the first democratically elected Prime Minister of Congo, and the CIA's involvement in it



By
Shoumojit Banerjee

As neighbouring Bangladesh burned, suggestions that America's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had undermined Sheikh Hasina's regime emanated from certain quarters. Other geopolitical experts have rubbished these 'conspiracy theorists' for resurrecting the CIA bogey.

Whatever the truth, the shadowy hand of the CIA in a Cold War assassination of a democratically elected leader 60 years ago in Africa's resource-rich Congo now shines in full light in form of Stuart Reid's enthralling 'The Lumumba Plot'.

An executive editor at the prestigious Foreign Affairs magazine, Reid has meticulously crafted the rise and downfall of the charismatic Patrice Lumumba, the Congo's first democratically elected prime minister who was assassinated by Congolese adversaries in September 1961 after remaining in office a mere 67 days.

More than just a tale of Congolese politics, Reid's book is haunting meditation on the global forces that conspired to seal fate of an emerging African nation.

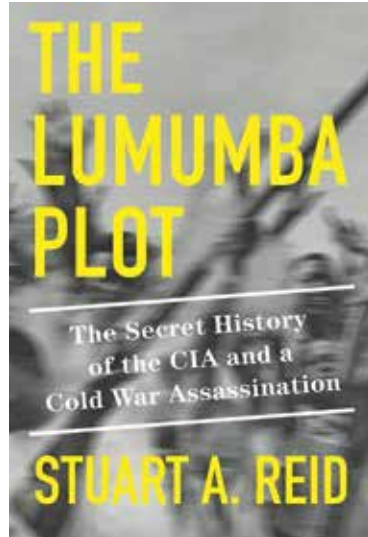
Hailed by his countrymen, Lumumba, a pan-Africanist by disposition, was regarded by the outside world - including then U.N. Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld - with suspicion and considered unpredictable and unsuited for leadership.

Worse, a paranoid U.S. thought Lumumba an alleged 'pawn' of Soviet interests in a newly decolonized Africa in the grip of the Cold War.

1960 was a turning point for Africa, as 17 countries including Congo - a Belgian fief since the 19th century - threw off the yoke of European colonialism and gained independence from European colonial powers.

Even as Belgium reluctantly prepared to relinquish control over the resource-rich region, independence was celebrated on June 30, 1960 with Lumumba, the leading advocate for a unified Congo free from external influence, being appointed prime minister. However, the hard-won independence quickly unravelled owing to internal conflicts within the Congolese leaders, triggering secessionist movements in South Kasai and Katanga which was aggravated by continued Belgian meddling.

Lumumba request for U.N. assistance received a lukewarm response, as Hammarskjöld's peacekeepers were instructed to maintain neutrality. Reid's book shines in its analysis of U.S. culpability, with the role of an aging and uninterested President Dwight D. Eisenhower in Lumumba's ousting particularly damning.



It highlights the extent of CIA skulduggery (hitherto unknown) in persuading Lumumba's one-time aide, Col. Joseph Mobutu to stage a coup and assassinate Lumumba. The CIA's clumsy attempts, which included an aborted plan to poison Lumumba's toothpaste, ultimately failed. Instead, Lumumba was killed by his Congolese adversaries, with Belgian complicity, just days before John F. Kennedy's inauguration in January 1961.

Reid's prose is deliciously cinematic, whether describing riots in Leopoldville or power struggles in the Congo, Brussels and Washington and his pace matches the best thrillers by Eric Ambler or John le Carré.

He is extremely good on the relationship between Lumumba and Mobutu, which was simultaneously marked by camaraderie and deep-

seated mistrust. Lumumba, the idealist and orator, holding Svengali-like sway over the masses, envisioned a Congo free from the shackles of colonial influence - a dream that Mobutu, the Machiavellian military tactician, ruthlessly shattered during his 32-year rule as a US-backed strongman.

Reid is equally superb in etching the character of Larry Devlin, the CIA station chief in Leopoldville, whose covert operations were instrumental in orchestrating Lumumba's downfall.

Devlin's cold pragmatism, combined with Washington's paranoid fear of communist influence in Africa, led to a colossal misjudgement that would not only seal Lumumba's fate but also plunge Congo into decades of turmoil.

Reid's work culminates with a thoughtful counterfactual: What might Congo have become if the U.S. had supported, rather than undermined, Patrice Lumumba?

His book is arguably the finest and most thrilling narrative work on the Congo since Adam Hochschild's modern classic 'King Leopold's Ghost' (1998) which detailed the rapine of this bedevilled African state.

In 1939, cinematic wunderkind Orson Welles set out to film Joseph Conrad's classic novella 'Heart of Darkness' (a standard marker for race and colonialism) set along a treacherous river voyage on the Congo as an anti-fascist allegory. The film never got made.

But Reid has written a literary equivalent of Welles' cinematic vision!

Food safety and Quality – Everyone's cup of tea

Decoding Food Labels: Protecting Your Health from Hidden Contaminants



By
Dr. Rizwan Pinjari

In our routine lives, we consume a wide variety of food products, both fresh and processed. But how often are we really concerned about food safety and quality? Even while the government monitors and regulates these aspects, it is essential for each of us to be vigilant as well. Simply observing hygiene during preparation and delivery is not sufficient. We must also consider other factors:

- Physical contaminants: Foreign materials like metal etc., which can be easily detected and removed.
 - Chemical contaminants: Adulterants like detergents, pesticide residues, permissible and non-permissible additives, veterinary residues etc.
 - Foodborne Microorganisms: Food pathogens like bacteria, viruses, moulds, etc.
- Understanding and reading food labels is key to safeguarding against these risks.

Food Labels – What to check.

The food or nutritional label visible on the backside of packaged food is a mandatory regulation enforced by the Indian Government (FSSAI – Food Standard and Safety Authority of India) and other international bodies. In addition to the standard content like carbohydrates, proteins, fats, and caloric value, the label also includes other important information like sugar, types of fats, such as cholesterol, and, most importantly, preservatives and additives.

Rather than getting swayed by the claims on the front, consumers should check and verify labels printed on the backside of the packaging. You might have come across various words in advertisements and on labels like organic, low sugar, low fats, keto, whole food, added sugar or minerals, no preserva-

While consuming food products, both fresh and processed, how much attention do we pay to the risks they may harbour? Government regulations help, but personal vigilance is equally essential.

In addition to nutritional content, other important information to be checked on labels are – FSSAI Licence number, Veg-Non-Veg-Fortified logos, manufacturing and expiry dates, serving size, net weight, and other relevant information as per the claims. Here are some logos for your reference:

One more important factor on the label is the allergen claim. It is mostly found on export materials or in foreign countries. Do you fully understand what the claim from the manufacturer's side is or what exactly it means? As responsible and health-conscious individuals, we must understand this.

Understanding and reading food labels is key to safeguarding against these risks.

Nutrition Facts				
2 servings per container		1 cup (255g)		
Serving size		1 cup (255g)		
Calories	Per serving	220	Per container	440
		% DV*		% DV*
Total Fat	5g	6%	10g	13%
Saturated Fat	2g	10%	4g	20%
Trans Fat	0g		0g	
Cholesterol	15mg	5%	30mg	10%
Sodium	240mg	10%	480mg	21%
Total Carb.	35g	13%	70g	25%
Dietary Fiber	6g	21%	12g	43%
Total Sugars	7g		14g	
Incl. Added Sugars	4g	8%	8g	16%
Protein	9g		18g	
Vitamin D	5mcg	25%	10mcg	50%
Calcium	200mg	15%	400mg	30%
Iron	1mg	6%	2mg	10%
Potassium	470mg	10%	940mg	20%

*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

The writer is a food processing expert. Views personal.

SPOTLIGHT

Opposition continues to rattle sabres with ruling coalition



By
Naresh Kamath

Dharavi sits in stark contrast to the adjacent Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC), the showpiece of the new global Mumbai since Liberalisation and Globalization gathered steam in the country after 1991.

Last month, former Maharashtra Chief Minister and Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray went on the offensive by advocating the ouster of Adani Realty from the project.

"We will scrap the Dharavi slum redevelopment project contract after coming to power and float a fresh one. We will not allow Mumbai to be turned into Adani city," said Thackeray, warning that his party workers would hit the streets against the project.

In December 2023, Thackeray led a protest rally against the Mumbai office of the Adani Group (sited at BKC) to protest against the concessions provided to the conglomerate in the Dharavi redevelopment project work.

Thackeray demanded that the citizens of Dharavi ought to be relocated there itself because of their livelihood, which mostly depends on manufacturing products.

Thackeray, who has often said that he would not permit the transformation of Mumbai city into an 'Adani city', has lashed out against the 'concessions' given by the Eknath Shinde-led Mahayuti government, dubbing it the world's biggest 'Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) scam.'

He further alleged that one of the reasons for the BJP to pull down the erstwhile Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government led by him was to award the revamp project contract to the Adani group.

Thackeray was alluding to the alleged tweaking of the TDR rule through a notification issued by the Urban Development Department (UDD) headed by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde last year.

The notification makes it mandatory for the builders in Mumbai to buy first 40% of their required TDR for their projects from the Dharavi Project before utilising other TDR.

As per the Opposition, this provision reportedly gives the Adani group a large readymade market for the TDR which will be generated from the Dharavi redevelopment project. It allows the Adani group to



Pics : Bhusan Koyande

charge up to 90% of the ready reckoner value of the receiving plot as the TDR rate.

Thackeray has alleged a potential TDR scam exceeding Rs 100 crore based on this easing of rules.

On his part, Shinde has defended his move to provide incentives. "The real estate sector is not in very good shape and needs a boost. This incentive will ensure that Dharavi residents get their rightful homes," said the CM, accusing his opponents of an 'anti-developmental' disposition.

The Opposition Congress jumped into the fray with Congress leader Varsha Gaikwad, former four-term MLA of the Dharavi Assembly con-

stituency and newly-minted MP, alleging that Adani had roped in former police officers and encounter specialists to threaten the residents to vacate their homes.

The allegations were refuted by former MP and Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena leader Rahul Shewale, who in turn accused Thackeray of trying to derail the revamp project.

The Dharavi revamp project, brainchild of architect Mukesh Mehta, commenced on February 4, 2004.

Since then, controversy has been a handmaiden of this project at every step.

During the first round of tenders in 2007, there were 101 bidders. This



dropped to a mere two in 2019. This last tender elicited much hope as a company backed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) royals became the highest bidder and were all set to undertake the project.

However, the whole tender process was scrapped on technical grounds.

In February 2019, Seclink Technology Corporation (STC) won the bid to transform India's largest slum pocket by outbidding Adani Infrastructure and Developers Private Limited. STC bagged this project as it had quoted Rs 7,200 crore, outbidding its competitor who bid at Rs 4,539 crore.

However, trouble brewed after the then BJP government led by Devendra Fadnis acquired the railway land and Rs 800 crore was paid to the Railways. As this was not mentioned in the tenders, the attorney general's views were sought on the matter with the AG, Ashutosh Kumbhakoni, stating that fresh tenders needed to be called for as the costs of the railway land and rehabilitation had not been incorporated in the original tender document.

This was accepted by the Uddhav Thackeray-led MVA government (which had replaced the Fadnis regime after the 2019 Assembly election) which in October 2020 cancelled this tender.

In November 2022, the Adani group finally won the bid to revamp Dharavi. Adani has appointed well known architect Hafeez Contractor, design firm Sasaki, and consultancy firm Buro Happold as city and infrastructure planners for the project. It plans to invest Rs 21,000 crore in the first phase of the project.

Eligibility is another major issue dogging the project. The contentious issue is that there are more than 0.2 million hutments whereas the official figure is that only 69,160 are legal entities eligible for new houses.

In fact, in the preliminary survey conducted by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) in 2009 in Sector 4, it was found that only 37% residents were eligible for new homes. This survey had sparked widespread fear that the majority of Dharavi's residents would be deprived of new houses in the revamp project.

(Tomorrow: What lies in the future)



"The Dharavi residents must get a space of 400 to 500 sq feet each. Around 80,000 to 90,000 slum dwellers are still shown as ineligible to be qualified for the space after redevelopment. I want to ask Adani what he is going to do about it. The government is helping the industrialist."

- Uddhav Thackeray
Chief,
Shiv Sena (UBT)

BRIEF

Electric shares deliver 75% returns in 1 week

On Friday, the stock of Ola Electric reached a record high of Rs. 133. The shares opened at Rs. 76 the last Friday, marking a 75% increase for investors in just one week. Currently, Ola Electric is valued at Rs. 58,664 crore (\$6.99 billion).

The international investment bank HSBC has initiated coverage on the stock with a 'buy' rating and a target price of Rs 140 per share. HSBC believes that Ola Electric is a good investment due to ongoing regulatory support. "Ola Electric has the ability to cut costs, with positive risk-reward in its battery venture," the brokerage firm reportedly said.

Meanwhile, the Indian two-wheeler sector is expected to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 11%, reaching a market value between Rs 2.8 trillion and Rs 3.6 trillion by the fiscal year (FY) 2028.

The company has also announced plans to manufacture its own batteries for electric vehicles starting in the first quarter of fiscal year (Q1) 2026, which will provide it with a competitive advantage through more efficient cost structures. The battery is currently undergoing testing at Ola's Gigafactory.

In the first quarter of fiscal year (Q1) 2024, Ola Electric achieved its highest quarterly earnings of Rs 1,718 crore, capturing 48.63% of the market share. This figure represents a 34.2% increase from the previous year's quarter (Q1FY23) earnings of Rs 1,279 crore. Buy rating from HSBC, stellar quarterly results and announcement of integration of its own cells in 2-wheelers fuelled the rally in this stock.

Paras Defence stock hits upper circuit, company wins order from L&T

Paras Defence and Space Technologies Ltd. hit the upper circuit of 5% on Friday following a major deal with Larsen & Toubro Ltd. The firm announced that its subsidiary, Controp-Paras Technologies Private Limited, has won a contract worth Rs 305 crore for the production and delivery of the 244 Sight 25HD Electro-Optics system, along with additional warranty fees and a comprehensive logistics support package for L&T's Close-In Weapon Systems (CIWS) project. This Sight - 25HD EO System is renowned for its features and dependability, playing a vital role in modern defense systems.

FDI in food processing sector down 30 pc

New Delhi: Foreign direct investment (FDI) in India's food processing sector declined 30 per cent in the last fiscal to Rs 5,037.06 crore, according to official data.

The FDI in the food processing sector stood at Rs 7,194.13 crore in 2022-23.

According to the data presented by the Food Processing Industries Ministry in Lok Sabha, the FDI in food processing sector stood at Rs 5,290.27 crore in 2021-22 and Rs 2934.12 crore in 2020-21.

FDI was Rs 6,414.67 crore in 2019-20; Rs 4430.44 crore in 2018-19; Rs 5,835.62 crore in 2017-18; Rs 4,865.85 crore in 2016-17; and Rs 3,312 crore in 2015-16 in the food processing sector.

In order to enhance foreign investment in the food processing sector, the ministry has taken various measures, including 100 per cent FDI permitted through automatic route for the food processing sec-

India's FTA with Bangladesh may be put on backburner: Rating agency

Mumbai: India's free trade agreement with Bangladesh is seen on the back foot, due to the ongoing political crisis in the South Asian nation, according to a report by rating agency.

"The current scenario may lead to deferment or slowdown of fresh investments by Indian companies in the neighbouring country pending the establishment of a stable government. The proposed FTA with Bangladesh will also be put on the backburner under the current circumstances," said Suman Chowdhury, Chief Economist and Head-Research, Acuité Ratings & Research.

Bangladesh may experience a severe shortage of foreign exchange, which hampers its ability to pay for imports while Indian exporters may face payment delays and challenges in receiving payments for their goods. This financial strain can further disrupt trade relationships and lead to a decline in exports,



the report said.

Though Bangladesh accounts for only 1.2 per cent of India's aggregate trade volumes, the latter has a healthy trade surplus with Bangladesh (USD 9.3 bn in FY24) with significant exports of cotton yarn, agricultural items, engineering goods and chemicals.

In the short term, exports to Bangladesh are likely to be adversely impacted as much as imports which might have a moderate impact on India's merchandise, said the report by Acuité Ratings & Research.

Indian manufacturing and infrastructure companies having business or project operations or supply linkages therein are likely to witness some disruption and uncertainty in the near term, Chowdhury said.

The crisis in Bangladesh may lead to rising inflation and reduced domestic demand, which may lower the overall consumption of both local and imported products. This economic downturn can further strain bilateral trade as demand for Indian exports declines, the report said.

ED attaches assets of Pearlvine

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate on Friday said assets worth more than Rs 29 crore have been attached under the anti-money laundering law as part of an investigation against a fraud investment website that ran a Ponzi scheme across the country.

The action has been taken against the portal - www.pearlvine.com - that runs under the banner of Pearlvine International, the central agency said in a statement.

The money laundering case stems from an FIR filed by the CID of Meghalaya Police on a complaint made by the RBI.

Pearlvine International was an "unrecognised" entity, which claimed itself to be US-based and provided several lucrative investment options. It collected a minimum amount of Rs 2,250 as membership fees and ran a Ponzi scheme in India between 2018 till March, 2023, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) said.

Adani Power will continue to supply power to Bangladesh

New Delhi: Adani Power on Friday said it will continue to supply power to Bangladesh from its 1,600MW Jharkhand plant, set up to supply 100 per cent electricity generated from the facility to the neighbouring nation.

Earlier this month, the power ministry amended power import/export guidelines to enable electricity supply from plants set up as an export-oriented unit to sell power within India.

The amendment provides that the government may permit connection of such generating station to the Indian grid (inter-state or intra-state grid) to facilitate the sale of power within India "in case of sustained non-scheduling of full or part capacity or default notice issued by the generator for any default, including delayed payment under the PPA (power purchase agreement)".

Adani Power's 1,600 MW Godda plant is probably the only plant in the country which has been set up with a commitment of 100 per



cent electricity supply to Bangladesh.

In a statement, Adani Power explained the amendment to India's Power Export Guidelines is an industry-enabling universal provision aimed at streamlining power export processes without altering existing arrangements.

"We have been providing uninterrupted power to Bangladesh from our Godda plant. We understand the importance of reliable power supply to Bangladesh and are committed to fulfilling contractual obligations as per BPDB's demand schedule and provisions of PPA," the company stated.

The government's decision to allow the power plant with export commitment to supply electricity within India follows the recent political crisis in Bangladesh.

Besides, India endeavour to be a zero deficit power supply nation amid rising demand though its electricity shortfall is less than a percentage point.

India's power demand touched an all-time high of nearly 250GW in May this year.

The power ministry has projected that peak power demand may hit the 260 GW mark during this summer season.

New South Wales eyes India

By Correspondent

Mumbai: With more direct air connectivity between Sydney and India and seamless visa approval through e-visa application process, New South Wales (NSW) is eyeing double digit growth in tourist arrivals from India this calendar year.

"We are witnessing a steady growth in international tourist arrivals. In the calendar year 2023, we welcomed 1,81,600 tourists from India. Looking at the current trend coupled with

more direct flights connecting India with Sydney, rise in disposable income, and easy e-visa application process, we are expecting to boost our tourism and the footfalls are likely to grow in double digit," Destination NSW Country Manager Samar Chokshi told PTI.

NSW welcomed 3.4 million international visitors, a 104 per cent increase compared to 2019, which is pre-Covid time, he noted. Quoting data from International Visitor Survey, Tourism Research Australia, Chokshi

said, in 2023 Indian visitors stayed a total of 7 million nights in NSW, contributing AUD 482.2 million to the state's economy, marking a 109 per cent increase in expenditure compared to 2019.

"On average, Indian visitors spent AUD 69 per night and AUD 2,655 per visitor, with an average length of stay of 38.3 nights. India ranked sixth in terms of the number of visitors and expenditure, and third in terms of nights stayed among all international visitors to NSW.



N Chandrasekaran, Chairperson of the TATA Group during the launch of the book "Power Within The Leadership Legacy of Narendra Modi" in the presence of Adil Zainulbhai, Ashishkumar Chauhan, MD and CEO National Stock Exchange

RBI imposes penalties on banks

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank on Friday said it has imposed a penalty of Rs 1.27 crore on Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) for violating its directions, including on Know Your Customer.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has, by an order dated August 8, 2024, imposed a monetary penalty of Rs 1.27 crore on Bank of Maharashtra for non-compliance with certain directions issued by RBI on 'Loan System for Delivery of Bank Credit', 'Cyber Se-

curity Framework in Banks' and 'Know Your Customer', the central bank said in a statement.

After considering the bank's reply to the notice, oral submissions made during the personal hearing and examination of additional submissions made by it, RBI found that the charges against the bank were sustained, warranting imposition of monetary penalty.

Besides, the RBI has imposed a monetary penalty of Rs 4.90 lakh on Hinduja

Leyland Finance Ltd for non-compliance with certain provisions of the Know Your Customer (KYC) Directions, 2016.

The action is based on a deficiency in regulatory compliance and is not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transaction or agreement entered into by the company with its customers, it said in a separate statement.

The central bank has also imposed a monetary penalty of Rs 10 lakh on

Poonawalla Fincorp Ltd for non-compliance with certain provisions of the 'Non-Banking Financial Company - Systemically Important Non-Deposit taking Company and Deposit taking Company (Reserve Bank) Directions, 2016'.

After considering the company's reply to the notice, oral submissions made during the personal hearing and examination of additional submissions made by it, RBI found that the following charge against the company was sustained.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Jateen Trivedi, VP, LKP Securities

"Stronger-than-expected US retail sales data boosted confidence in consumer spending, reducing recession fears in the US... Additionally, gains in Indian capital markets provided support, preventing the rupee from falling below the 84 mark."

GTRI suggests duty cuts

New Delhi: With the government seeking a review of certain provisions of a free trade agreement with UAE, think tank GTRI on Friday asked for the withdrawal of duty cut concessions on platinum,

silver, diamonds, gold jewelry, and tweak the rules of origin norms in the pact.

India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) signed the Free Trade Agreement (FTA), officially dubbed as

Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) on February 18, 2022, and implemented on May 1, 2022.

The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) has

earlier stated that the pact contains provisions for unlimited imports of duty-free gold, silver, platinum, and diamonds into India over the next few years and it would hurt domestic industry.

Siddaramaiah requests Foxconn to invest

Bengaluru: Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday assured Taiwanese electronics major Foxconn of his government's complete support and commitment to ensure it gets all the assistance required and requested the company to further invest in the state.

The chief minister held discussions with Young Liu, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of Hon Hai Technology Group (Foxconn) and his team, during the dinner meeting organised at a private hotel here.

"We work together to deepen and strengthen the collaborative relationship between Foxconn and our state," Siddaramaiah said.

FSSAI scales up training for vendors

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Food regulator FSSAI is scaling up training programmes for street vendors across the country to provide safe food to people, its CEO G Kamala Vardhana Rao said.

A meeting was held in Mumbai under the chairmanship of Bhusan Varsha Ashok Gagrani, Commissioner of Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM), to make a strategy for ensuring safer street food.

The meeting, attended by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) CEO and other senior officials, focused on elevating Mumbai's street food to global safety and hygiene standards by exploring the development of Healthy and Hygienic Food Streets (HHFS) in the city, according to a statement issued by the regulator on Friday.

Representatives from Thane, Nagpur, Nasik, and Pune Municipal Corporations, also attended the meeting.

In the meeting, the issue of ensuring safe, healthy and sustainable food was discussed for the food being sold by street food vendors.

"Just as the theme of Har

India initiates anti-dumping probe

New Delhi: India has initiated an anti-dumping probe into the import of hot rolled steel products from Vietnam following a complaint by a domestic manufacturer.

The commerce ministry's investigation arm Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) is probing the alleged dumping of 'hot rolled flat products of alloy or non-alloy steel'.

According to the DGTR notification, Indian Steel Association has filed an application on behalf of domestic producers - JSW Steel Ltd and ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India Ltd - seeking initiation of an anti-dumping investigation on imports from Vietnam.

The applicants have alleged that the product is being imported at dumped prices which is causing material injury to the domestic industry.

They have also alleged that there is a further threat of injury to the domestic industry due to dumped imports and have requested for imposition of anti-dumping duty.



tor subject to sectoral regulations.

It has allowed 100 per cent FDI, under the government-approval route, for trading including through e-commerce, in respect of food products manufactured or produced in India.

The government has exempted all processed food items from the purview of licensing under the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act, 1951.

There is a lower GST for raw and processed products. More than 71.7 per cent of food products under various chapter heads/sub-heads are covered in lower tax slabs of 0 per cent and 5 per cent.

The export of processed foods declined 17 per cent to USD 10,881.81 million in 2023-24 from USD 13,078.3 million in the preceding fiscal.

For the development of

this sector, the ministry is implementing the Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPAD Yojana (PMKSY) and Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry (PLISFPI) and Prime Minister Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) schemes.

All these three schemes are demand-driven and implemented across the country.

TikTok fights forced sale or ban

Washington: TikTok on Thursday pushed back against US government arguments that the popular social media platform is not shielded by the First Amendment, comparing its platform to prominent American media organizations owned by foreign entities.

Last month, the Justice Department argued in a legal brief filed in a Washington federal appeals court that neither TikTok's China-based parent company, ByteDance, nor the platform's global and U.S. arms — TikTok Ltd. and TikTok Inc. — were entitled to First Amendment protections because they are "foreign organizations operating abroad" or owned by one.

TikTok attorneys have made the First Amendment a key part of their legal challenge to the federal law requiring ByteDance to sell TikTok to an approved buyer or face a ban.

On Thursday, they argued in a court document that TikTok's U.S. arm doesn't forfeit its constitutional rights because it is owned by a foreign entity. They drew a parallel between TikTok and well-known news outlets such as Politico and Business Insider, both of which are owned by German publisher Axel Springer SE. They also cited Fortune, a business magazine owned by Thai businessman Chatchaval Jiaravanon.

"Surely the American companies that publish Politico, Fortune, and Business Insider do not lose First Amendment protection because they have foreign ownership," the TikTok attorneys wrote,



arguing that "no precedent supports what they called 'the government's dramatic rewriting of what counts as protected speech.'"

In a redacted court filing made last month, the Justice Department argued ByteDance and TikTok haven't raised valid free speech claims in their challenge against the law, saying the measure addresses national security concerns about TikTok's ownership without targeting protected speech.

The Biden administration and TikTok had held talks in recent years aimed at resolving the government's concerns. But the two sides failed to reach a deal.

TikTok said the government essentially walked away from the negotiating table after it proposed a 90-page agreement that detailed how the company planned to address concerns about the app while still maintaining ties with ByteDance.

However, the Justice Department has said TikTok's proposal "failed to create sufficient separation be-

tween the company's U.S. operations and China" and did not adequately address some of the government's concerns.

The government has pointed to some data transfers between TikTok employees and ByteDance engineers in China as why it believed the proposal, called Project Texas, was not sufficient to guard against national security concerns. Federal officials have also argued that the size and scope of TikTok would have made it impossible to meaningfully enforce compliance with the proposal.

TikTok attorneys said Thursday that some of what the government views as inadequacies of the agreement were never raised during the negotiations.

Separately the DOJ on Thursday evening asked the court to submit evidence under seal, saying in a filing that the case contained information classified at "Top Secret" levels. TikTok has been opposing those requests.

Oral arguments in the case are scheduled to begin on Sept. 16.

State govts may follow Jharkhand

Mumbai: Several state governments including Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra may follow Jharkhand in levying new cess on mining activities following the Supreme Court order, according to a report.

The Jharkhand government was first to move and levied additional cess of Rs 100 per ton on coal and iron ore, Rs 70 per ton on the bauxite Rs 50 per ton on manganese ore after the Supreme Court order allowed the state governments to levy loyalty on mining activity.

Supreme Court in its order earlier this week had allowed states to not only levy additional cess/royalty on the mining assets but it can collect the dues retrospectively as well.

Investors and mining companies feared the retrospective effect more than prospective. Though the fear came true but couple of provisions by the SC have diluted the negative effect to a large extent which is a welcome relief, said the report by investment and wealth management firm -- Phillip Capital.

While the judgement without doubt is negative for the metal and mining sector as future cost of production is seen rising by 1-3 percent for these companies, the fear of retrospective impact being

devastating on the financial of the companies was watered down to a large extent by Supreme Court order by extending the payment period to 12 years and forbidding State Governments to impose any additional interest or penalty, the report said.



Women purchase 'rakhis' ahead of Raksha Bandhan festival, in Nagpur, on Friday.

Pic: PTI

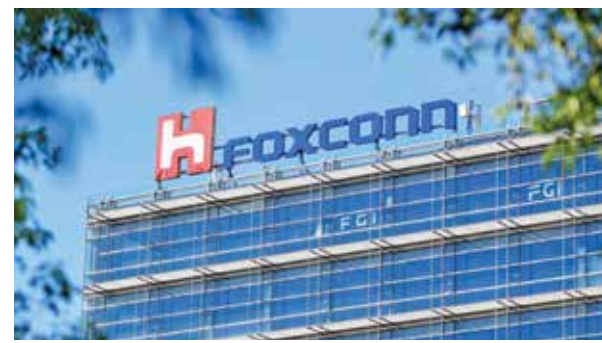
Foxconn eyes Hyderabad investment

Hyderabad: Taiwanese electronics major Foxconn has expressed interest in exploring investment opportunities in Hyderabad, Telangana government said on Friday.

Foxconn Chairman Young Liu met with Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy in New Delhi and the latter invited the company to invest in a proposed "fourth city" to be developed on the outskirts of Hyderabad.

Reddy assured Liu of full support, including necessary permits and incentives, for setting up factories in the state.

"Liu said Foxconn is eager to explore investment opportunities in Hyderabad," an official state-



ment from the Telangana government said.

The Foxconn chairman noted that Hyderabad has the potential to expand in all sectors, including industrial and service sectors.

Liu announced plans for an initial visit by a team led by Foxconn's Chief Campus Operations Officer

electrical industries, and skill development.

The city will also feature a Young India Skill Development University.

Industrialists Anand Mahindra and Srinivasa Raju have been appointed as Chairman and Vice Chairman of the university, respectively.

State IT and Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu briefed Liu on the government's pro-industrial policies, incentives, and international collaborations aimed at boosting industrial development.

Foxconn, a major supplier to Apple, has been expanding its presence in India as tech companies seek to diversify production away from China.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



S. Somanath
 Chairman, ISRO

"Today, we are working on the first mission of the Gaganyaan called G1. The first unmanned mission. The status today is the rocket, the S200 stage, the L1, C32 stage are all at Satish Dhawan Space Centre."

Bangalore Airport first in Asia in accreditation

Bengaluru: Kempegowda International Airport operated by Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) has marked a significant milestone by becoming the first airport in Asia to receive Airports Council International's (ACI) the highest Level five accreditation, officials said on Friday.

Bangalore Airport has made a remarkable 95.6 per cent reduction in Scope 1 and 2 Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, attaining the highest emission elimination by an Indian airport, achieved seven years ahead of the initial target of 2030,



they said.

The accreditation comes into effect from May 5, 2024.

"BLR Airport has made significant strides in its decarbonisation journey and set new benchmarks by

emissions, BLR Airport has procured Airports Council International (ACI) approved carbon units from verified carbon removal projects. Looking ahead towards 2030, BLR Airport has committed to offsetting residual emissions through in-house green landscape projects, further demonstrating its dedication to building a sustainable future," BIAL said in a statement.

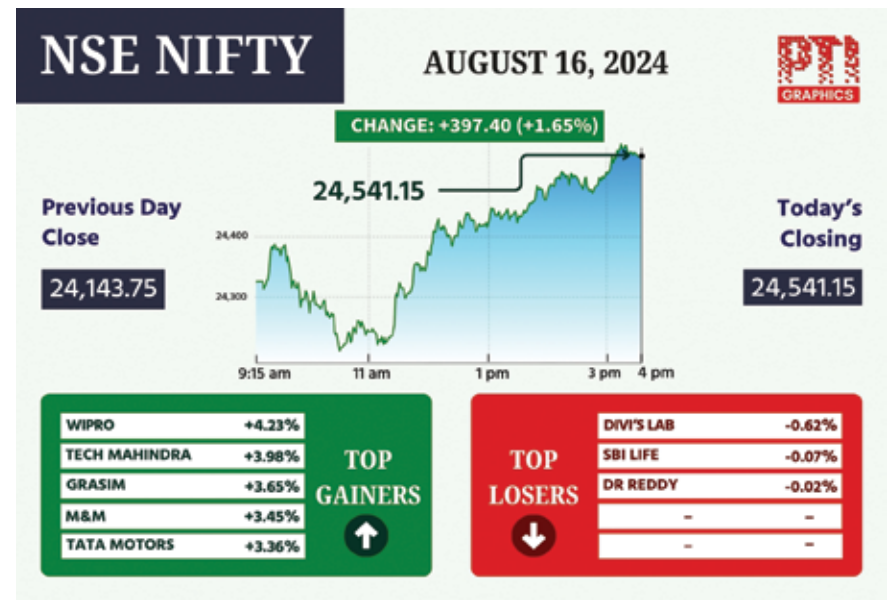
"We are delighted to be the first airport in Asia to attain ACI's Level five accreditation and to lead the way with the highest emission elimination by an Indian air-

port. Achieving Net Zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions seven years ahead of our target is a testament to BLR Airport's unwavering commitment to sustainability. This accomplishment not only sets a new benchmark for us but also reinforces our dedication to creating a greener future for all," Hari Marar, Managing Director and CEO of BIAL said.

According to BIAL, looking forward, BLR Airport's commitment transcends beyond Scope one and two emissions. Aligning with the stringent standards of the ACI.

NSE NIFTY		
TOP GAINERS August 16, 2024		
%		POINTS
+4.23	Wipro	516.10
+3.98	Tech Mahindra	1,585.00
+3.65	Grasim	2,604.00
+3.45	M&M	2,839.90
+3.36	Tata Motors	1,098.00
+2.81	UltraTech Cement	11,311.75
+2.77	TCS	4,414.20
+2.62	HCL Tech	1,668.70
+2.59	Shriram Finance	2,970.00
+2.55	BPCL	333.35

BSE SENSEX		
TOP GAINERS August 16, 2024		
%		POINTS
+4.02	Tech Mahindra	1585.10
+3.47	Tata Motors	1098.80
+3.45	M&M	2840.60
+2.91	TCS	4416.55
+2.65	HCL Tech	1669.05
+2.60	UltraTech Cement	11287.45
+2.29	Tata Steel	149.55
+2.17	ITC	502.55
+2.17	ICICI Bank	1187.45
+2.07	Adani Ports	1492.00



By Ajita Kale

A stroll to the beach became the turning point in Jay Shringarpure's life and promoted him to take to cleaning up Maharashtra's beaches

What's your Sunday plan? Most people will say it's all about breakfast-in-bed, long lunches with family and movie outings with friends. But for Jay Shringarpure, the weekly holiday from work means early mornings spent cleaning Mumbai's beaches.

On a sunny day in 2017, Shringarpure went to Dadar Chowpatty for a stroll with his daughter Zara. As a child, Jay had also played on this chowpatty many times, but this time he was disappointed to see piles of garbage and plastic such that even the sand wasn't visible. That day the former cabin crew member, who had just returned from Dubai, decided to do his bit and not just complain. The next day, he went to the same place with his little daughter and collected nearly one ton of garbage, with help from municipal employees. There on, he set up the Jay Foundation.

Jay Foundation is dedicated to creating awareness and bringing about a change in society for environmental conservation and sustainable development. This is being carried out through various initiatives and campaigns for the betterment of our environment while engaging com-



REUSE- RECYCLE- REPEAT

mon people. They are determined to make Maharashtra an ideal state by promoting and implementing environmentally friendly measures to solve the current environmental issues.

The mission is not only to clean the beaches but also to make them beautiful, safe, and secure for everyone. They have designed the campaign to drive a change in society by engaging locals and making them aware of the importance of sustainable development and eco-friendly industries and occupations.

Beach clean-ups are organized worldwide to create awareness about the ever-increasing plastic pollution. In December 2021, Jay Foundation organized 'Samudra Manthan,' a large-scale beach clean-up, in association with Maharashtra Navnirman Parvavaran Sena, on. The clean-up was carried out at 40 beaches in seven districts across Maharashtra's coastline, which won it a mention in the Limca Book of Records for the world's largest beach cleaning campaign.

More than one lakh indi-



Jay Shringarpure

viduals have joined hands with the Jay Foundation over the last five years. Since its inception, the NGO has cleared more than 9,000 tons of plastic and other waste from the beaches. Jay Foundation conducts beach clean-ups at least once a month at 40 beaches across Maharashtra's 720-km-long coastline and has collected more than 18 tons of plastic and other waste from the major beaches of Maharashtra state in the last one and a half years and sent it to the Waste Recycling Center.

Their mission is to implement programs for environmental community service in order to highlight the importance of a sustainable future. To lead the pursuit of achieving global environmental sustainability, along with beach clean-up, they carry out activities like the plastic recycling



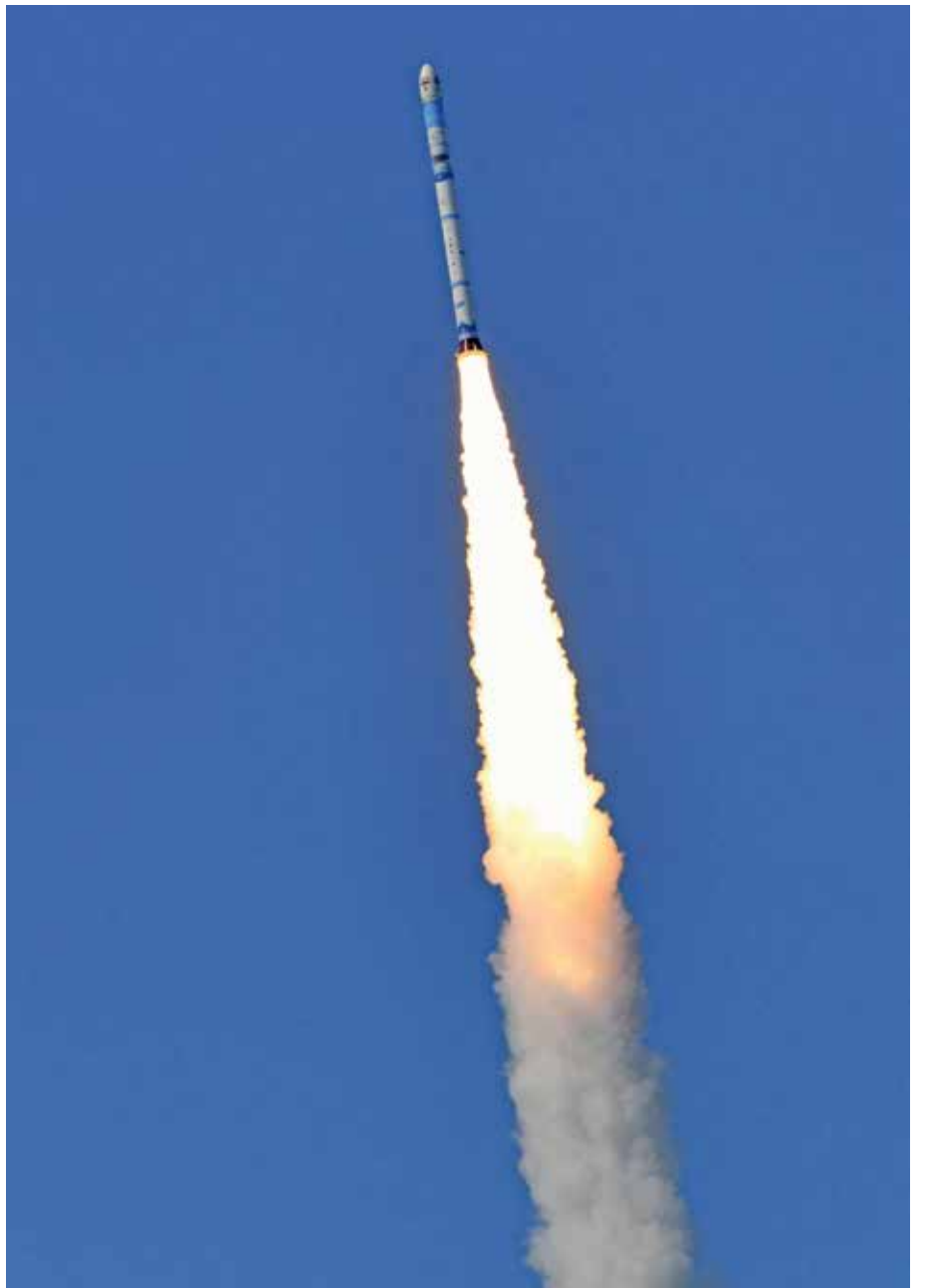
campaign and various other environmental awareness programs with the help of responsible citizens.

Another project the Foundation has taken up is 'Plastic Free Mumbai'. For this, the Directorate General of Shipping has taken the initiative by providing them with a pickup vehicle. This vehicle visits various residential and commercial premises all over Mumbai to collect plastic and other dry waste and transport it to recycling centers. Over the past few years, they have recycled more than 2000 tons of residential plastic waste.

With his consistent efforts towards cleaning up the environment, Shringarpure appeals to people to minimize the use of plastic which chokes our environment and urges people to recycle their waste.

Baby Rocket in the sky

ISRO completes third and final developmental flight of SSLV



By S Vijay Karthik

Sriharikota (Andhra Pradesh); The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched its third and final developmental flight of Small Satellite Launch Vehicle here on Friday whose payloads can be used in applications like satellite-based surveillance, disaster and environmental monitoring, fire detection, volcanic activity among others.

The flight-LV-D3- would also pave the way for the industry to collaborate with ISRO's commercial arm NewSpace India Ltd for taking up launches using the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle.

As the six-hour countdown for the mission concluded, the LV rocket carrying the primary Earth Observation Satellite EOS-08 lifted off majestically from the first launch pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre here, situated about 135 km east of Chennai at a pre-fixed time of 9.17 am and later achieved its mission.

"The third developmental flight of LV is successful. The LV-D3 placed EOS-08 precisely into the orbit. This marks the successful completion of ISRO/DOS's LV Development Project. With technology transfer, the Indian industry and @NSIL_India will now produce LV for commercial missions," ISRO said in a post on X.

While the maiden mission of LV in August 2022 did not yield the desired results for the scientists as the launch vehicle did not place the satellites into the intended orbits, the subsequent one, LV-D2-EOS-07 in February 2023 was a success.

ISRO had planned for the latest mission to be launched on August 15 at 9.17 am but it was rescheduled for 24 hours later with a 60-minute launch window.

He was also of the view that LV rockets are not only used for placing satellites in LEO but also injecting them in the Sun Synchronous Orbit (SSO), based on the demand of a customer.

After a flight of about 10-12 minutes, the primary Earth Observation Satellite got separated successfully. Within a few minutes, a SR-O DEMOSAT Satellite developed by Space Kidz India weighing 200 grams also got separated, signalling the mission's success.

Scientists at the Mission Control Centre congratulated each other on the successful mission, as according to ISRO, it completed the developmental flights of LV rockets.

Friday's successful mission enables NewSpace India Ltd to commence the dedicated commercial launch of satellites to industry players who are keen to launch satellites weighing up to 500 kg into Low Earth Orbits (LEO) or up to 500 km above Earth.

ALV rocket is shorter at 34 metres (compared to PSLV rockets which are 44 metres tall) and are used to place satellites (mini, micro or nano satellites) that weigh up to 500 kg below 500 km of LEO.

The satellites carried in the mission weigh 175.5 kg and the launch vehicle comprises three solid propulsion stages and a liquid module as a terminal stage.

The key features of LV vehicles are -- it provides low-cost access to Space, offers low turn-around time and flexibility in accommodating multiple satellites, launch on demand feasibility and demands minimal launch infrastructure.

A former ISRO scientist in a brief interaction with PTI had said the cost of LV would be around 20-30 per cent lesser than that of a PSLV mission, which uses bigger rockets capable of deep space missions.

"Another point is that if someone plans to launch a satellite in a Low Earth Orbit, it will be possible to launch an LV rocket within two days of planning," he said, indicating the flexibility of the small satellite launch vehicle missions.

He was also of the view

The primary objectives of the LV-D3 mission are - designing and developing a micro-satellite, creating payload instruments compatible with the micro satellite bus and incorporating new technologies for future operational satellites.

The LV rocket carries three payloads -- Electro Optical Infrared Payload (EOIR), which is designed for use in applications like satellite-based surveillance, disaster and environmental monitoring, fire detection, volcanic activity among others.

The second payload is the Global Navigation Satellite System-Reflectometry (GNSS-R), which would be used for ocean surface wind analysis, soil moisture assessment, cryosphere studies over the Himalayan region, flood and inland waterbody detection.

The final payload is the SiC UV Dosimeter which would monitor the UV irradiance at the viewport of the Crew Module in the Gaganyaan Mission and serve as a high-dose alarm sensor for gamma radiation.

Scientists have planned to place the satellite in a Circular Low Earth Orbit at an altitude of about 475 km with an inclination of 37.4 degree. The satellite mission life is one year.

The EOS-08 mission also marks a significant advancement in satellite mainframe systems such as an Integrated Avionics System known as the Communication, Baseband, Storage and Positioning package which combines multiple functions into a single, efficient unit.

The satellite also includes a structural panel embedded with PCB, an embedded battery, a Micro-DGA (Dual Gimbal Antenna), a Micro-Phased Array Antenna and a flexible solar panel, each serving as a key component for onboard technology demonstration.

In June, NSIL said the LV would have its first dedicated commercial launch when it puts into orbit the Optimus-a satellite built by Australia-based Space Machines Company, in 2026.

- PTI

WASTE TO BEST

Do Not Waste your Waste!!

Can Ancient Wisdom Solve Our Modern Waste Crisis?



By Sanjay Joshi

Mobro 4000 was a barge that used to carry garbage collected from New York City in the USA to a nearby Islip island in the Atlantic Ocean that was the official dumping site for city garbage in the latter half of the twentieth century. The city used to generate so much garbage that, at one point, this island was no longer willing to hold any more garbage. It was at full capacity.

One day, in 1987, this barge carrying 3186 metric tonnes of garbage started its journey through the Atlantic Ocean, hoping to dump this garbage on Islip Island as usual. But the island officials rejected it, as there was no space to accommodate this load. So this barge set out on a journey to find a suitable place for dumping the cargo it was carrying. It was systematically rejected by the authorities and people along the coastal states of North Carolina, Florida,

Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and other countries including Mexico, the Bahamas, and Belize.

Finally, after travelling for about six thousand miles, and six months through the Atlantic, the barge returned to New York. Its cargo, the garbage, was incinerated and reduced to 400 tonnes and then dumped at the initial site that had earlier rejected it! The plight of the Mobro 4000 snapped the world's attention. Its message was clear: we must handle our garbage, trash, or waste. We are running out of places to put our garbage. The message is now being

In 1987, the Mobro 4000, carrying 3,186 metric tonnes of New York's garbage, was rejected by Islip Island and various other locations before returning six months later to New York for incineration.

sounded emphatically around the globe, from the wealthiest to the poorest nations worldwide. Perhaps garbage is the most discussed pollutant among environmentalists, politicians, policymakers, and common people in general.

The collection and disposal of garbage have a long history. The first organised garbage dump is reported to have been set up along the outskirts of the city of Athens in Greece in 500 BC. India, however, has a long tradition of conservation of nature and the environment dating back to Vedic and ancient times. Through various pieces of literature from the Vedas, Upanishads, Smritis, etc., the prime motto of social life in India was to live in harmony with nature and a clean environment.

Maintaining a clean environment to safeguard the lives of all living creatures was everyone's duty. One way to do so was to maintain clean ways of managing household garbage or trash. There was no such thing as 'waste', 'garbage', or 'trash' in ancient India. People had a very simple lifestyle; they used all the available resources wisely, and they learnt from nature not to generate any kind of waste at all. In today's parlance, the words "reduce," "reuse," and "recycle" were followed by our forefathers through centuries as a part of their day-to-day routine without even uttering, preaching, or knowing these words or practices. Hence, the answers to our garbage disposal challenges may lie not in new technologies, but in revisiting the ancient principles of living harmoniously with our environment.

The writer is a professor. Views personal.

Hurricane Ernesto aims for Bermuda



San Juan: Hurricane Ernesto has barreled towards Bermuda after leaving hundreds of thousands of people in Puerto Rico without power or water as sweltering heat enveloped the US territory, raising concerns about people's health.

A hurricane warning was in effect for Bermuda, with Ernesto expected to pass near or over the island on Saturday.

The Category 1 storm was located about 450 miles (730 kilometres) southwest of Bermuda on Thursday afternoon. It had maximum sustained winds of 90 mph (150 kph) and was moving north at 13 mph (20 kph) over open waters.

"I cannot stress enough how important it is for every resident to use this time to prepare. We have seen in the past the devastating effects of complacency," said National Security Minister Michael Weeks.

Ernesto was forecast to near Category 3 hurricane status on Friday and then decrease in strength as it approaches Bermuda, where it is expected to drop between 6-12 inches of rain, with up to 15 inches in isolated areas.

"All of the guidance show this system as a large hurricane near Bermuda," said the National Hurricane Center in Miami.

Ernesto is then expected to pass near or east of Atlantic Canada on Monday. Meanwhile, the spinning storm on Thursday was generating southern winds in Puerto Rico, which have a heating effect as opposed to the typical cooling trade winds that blow from the east.

"We know a lot of people don't have power," said Ernesto Morales with the National Weather Service as he warned of extreme heat and urged people to stay hydrated.

More than 290,000 of 1.4 million customers remained in the dark Thursday evening, more than a day after Ernesto swiped past Puerto Rico late Tuesday as a tropical storm before strengthening into a hurricane. A maximum of 735,000 clients were without power on Wednesday.

Hundreds of thousands also were without water as many questioned the widespread power outage given that Ernesto was only a tropical storm when it spun past the island.



China weaponising lucrative tourism to break Taiwan ties

Palau's president says his country is paying price

Wellington: Beijing weaponised tourism to the Pacific archipelago of Palau over its allegiance to Taiwan and its accusations that China was behind a major cyberattack there, President Surangel Whipps Jr said.

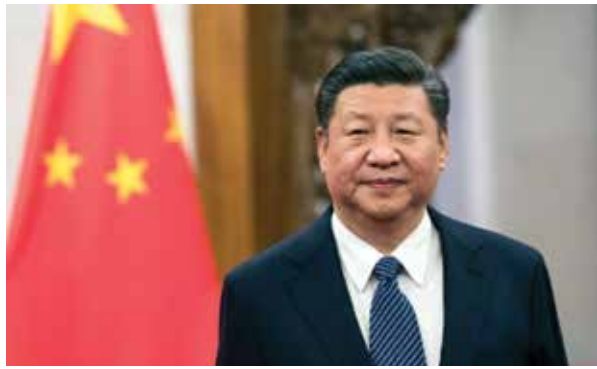
Palau, along with Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands, is one of three Pacific nations to recognise Taiwan as an independent democracy — viewed as a snub by Beijing, which asserts it is part of China. Taipei's allies in the Pacific have dwindled from six countries in 2019; Nauru abandoned its ties in January.

Whipps told the AP in an interview late Thursday that, in 2020 while he was running for his current post, the Chinese ambassador to a neighboring country pledged to flood his tourism-dependent nation of 20,000 people with a million visitors if he capitulated on the country's stance.

"That continues to be the overture," he said by phone Thursday. "They say, why are you torturing yourselves? Just join us and the sky's the limit."

Whipps refused. "We don't need a million tourists," he added. "It's not always about how much money we get."

His stance is vanishingly rare amid Pacific island nations — some struggling to sustain themselves and feeling overlooked by Western powers while their backyards are increasingly the settings for some of the world's most potent contests for influence. Amid intensifying conflict over ocean territory, resources and political sway, Beijing's pres-



sure on the three hold-out countries was increasing, analysts said.

"As the number of Taiwan's diplomatic allies in the Pacific dwindles, the obstacles to China's regional diplomacy diminish," said Mihai Sora, Director of the Pacific Islands Program at the Lowy Institute.

China's penalties for Palau's intransigence are not new, but they have escalated in the months leading up to November's election in which Whipps will seek another term as leader, he said. In May, he blamed China for a major cyberattack on Palau in which 20,000 government documents were stolen. The claim was unproven, Whipps said, but no other motive or actor had emerged.

Earlier that month, Palau tourism industry representatives were denied visas to enter Macau for a lucrative international industry conference. Then reports appeared in China's state media and on an official WeChat channel in June, warning tourists of an increase in safety issues for Chinese visitors to Palau. The remarks, seen by the AP, urged citizens to be cau-

tious when traveling there.

Whipps rejected the reports of security problems but said the claims had stuck — visitor numbers from China halved in 2024, now down to 30% of its tourists. Once, 70% of Palau's visitors came from China, but the country tried to diversify its market after Beijing unofficially blocked its citizens from visiting in 2017.

"Palau has found itself in a position where it relies on Chinese tourists for income," Sora said. "This is a tap China can quite easily turn on and off — and it does."

Support comes from other quarters, however. Unlike most Pacific nations, Palau, a republic that has been independent since 1994, holds close ties to the United States in a free association agreement. Washington provides aid and defense support to Palau and its citizens can live and work in the U.S.

But many analysts say Washington was too slow to recognize China's campaign of influence in the Pacific and took for granted relationships with the leaders of tiny island nations.

India-US partnership has huge potential for growth

By Lalit K Jha

Washington: Congratulating the people of India and Indian Americans on the occasion of their Independence Day, top US lawmakers expressed optimism about the partnership between the world's two largest democracies, noting its "huge potential" for growth in the 21st century.

"Happy Independence Day, India! I am proud to represent a vibrant and wonderful Indian American community in New York. The Indian community represents what's so great about New York — that it attracts talented and hard-working people from all over the world who come together and create a diverse society that is greater than the sum of its parts," Senate Majority Leader Senator Chuck Schumer said on Thursday.

Schumer said the partnership between the two countries has a huge potential for growth in the 21st century. "I look forward to continuing the partnership between our two countries and bolstering our shared democratic values," he said.

Schumer was joined by several Congressional colleagues and elected representatives from across the country in extending greetings to Indians and Indian Americans on the occasion of India's 78th Independence Day.

Congressman Ro Khanna, Co-Chair of the Congressional India Caucus, said India, a young country, has made remarkable economic progress and emerged as a world power and key US ally.



Participants prepare a kite during Denpasar international kite festival in Sanur, Bali, Indonesia on Friday.

Pakistan admits tinkering with internet

Islamabad: For the first time, the Pakistan government has confirmed that it was upgrading its "web management system" to cope with cyber security threats amid speculation about the installation of a so-called 'firewall' that could be leading to internet disruptions in the country, according to a media report on Friday.

Millions of people across Pakistan have been facing trouble accessing internet services for some time now due to limited connectivity, particularly while using mobile data in some regions.

So far, official stakeholders in Pakistan have either been feigning ignorance in response to public outcry and media queries, or claiming that the problems were because of telecom and internet service providers, or even Meta.

While talking to reporters



after the Senate Standing Committee on Information Technology and Telecommunication meeting on Thursday, Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja said the government had sought a report from Pakistan Telecommunication Authority and other institutions over the internet disruption.

"The internet should never be slow. We have even been talking about bringing 5G technology to Pakistan. There is no doubt about that, and conversations about higher internet speed are

underway," the Dawn newspaper quoted Khawaja as saying.

When the minister was asked about the 'firewall' — a blanket term used by the public to describe the causes of internet disruption in the absence of any official explanation — she said the issue had been "blown out of proportion".

"The government has been operating a web-management system. The system is now being upgraded."

She also called the process "a routine exercise" across the globe to enhance internet security, without giving any detail to substantiate her claims about which other countries have deployed this system.

"It is the right of the government to take measures to protect its interests given the cyber security attacks that Pakistan is facing."

This was the first time an

acknowledged the government's actions, which have been blamed for everything from slow browsing speeds, the arbitrary blocking of social media platforms and WhatsApp connectivity issues on mobile data, the paper said.

Meanwhile, on Thursday, users continued experiencing problems in accessing social media platforms, including WhatsApp.

DownDetector, a website that provides real-time information about internet outages, received an unusually high number of complaints about disruptions in WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram between 12 noon and 1 pm.

Meanwhile, a petition was filed in the Lahore High Court (LHC) on Thursday against a "nationwide internet shutdown", seeking immediate restoration of internet access.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Donald Trump
former
President, US

"As far as the personal attacks, I am very angry at her because of what she's done to the country. She would weaponise the justice system against me and other people. I think I am entitled to personal attacks."

Families of hostages hope to end nightmare

Tel Aviv: Some families of hostages held in Gaza believe the latest round of cease-fire talks between Israel and Hamas could be the last best chance to set their loved ones free after more than 300 days of captivity.

The families have advocated tirelessly to secure the release of their relatives, who were snatched on Oct. 7 during Hamas' cross-border attack that started the war.

Their hope that the latest talks could result in a breakthrough is tinged by 10 months of disappointment and the growing fear of a wider Mideast war as Israel faces rising tensions with Iran and Hezbollah, the Iran-backed militant group based in Lebanon.

Roughly 110 hostages remain in Gaza after about 100 were freed during a brief cease-fire in late November. More than 40,000 Palestinians have died in the war, according to Gaza health officials, who do not distinguish between civilians and militants.



A relative holds a cardboard cut-out of Haim Peri, 79, from Kibbutz Nir Oz, who was taken hostage by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, during a protest calling for their return in Tel Aviv, Israel on Thursday.

Throughout the war, the families of hostages have pushed on with anguish and despair, rallying Israelis to their cause, lobbying local and foreign lawmakers, pleading that someone put an end to their nightmare.

They've watched as multiple rounds of negotiations have crumbled. And they've increasingly directed their ire at Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who they

accuse of prioritizing his political survival over the fate of their loved ones.

"We need a cease-fire to get them all back," said Zahir Shahar Mor, a nephew of Avraham Munder, 78, who was kidnapped from Kibbutz Nir Oz along with his wife, his daughter and grandson - the latter three having returned during the first and only truce deal. "Had Netanyahu wanted them here, they

would have been here." Netanyahu insists he keeps the plight of the hostages top of mind.

"The pain these families have endured is beyond words," Netanyahu told a joint session of the U.S. Congress last month. "I will not rest until all their loved ones are home."

He says the best way to free them is to keep up military pressure on Hamas, a position backed by two far-right governing partners who are critical to maintaining his grip on power. They have pledged to topple the government should Netanyahu proceed with a deal that would release hostages in exchange for freeing Palestinian prisoners convicted of serious crimes or an end to the war.

Netanyahu has also enraged some of the hostage families throughout the war with comments or actions that appeared to suggest he does not sympathize with their ordeal.

He has only recently suggested remorse for his role in the policy and security failures that led to Hamas' unprecedented attack, which led to the killing of some 1,200 Israelis. He has been accused of avoiding the families of hostages, especially those whose relatives are known to have died in captivity. In comments leaked to Israeli media, he reportedly said Hamas was under more pressure than Israel to move toward a deal because the hostages were "suffering but not dying."

In fact, more than a third of the 110 hostages still held are said to have died in captivity or on Oct. 7, their bodies taken to Gaza. Three hostages were mistakenly killed by the Israeli military. Seven hostages were freed in rescue missions, as were several bodies.

The hostage families have watched as their weekly protest in central Tel Aviv has gradually dwindled in size, with Israelis growing weary of the seemingly endless struggle.

Flights cancelled in Tokyo

Tokyo: Flights and trains in the Tokyo area were cancelled Friday, and people were warned of strong winds, heavy rains and potential flooding and mudslides as a typhoon swerved near Japan on its way further north in the Pacific Ocean.

Typhoon Ampil was fore-

cast to reach the waters near Tokyo in the evening then continue north, bringing stormy conditions to the northern Kanto and Tohoku regions early Saturday. It had sustained winds of 162 kph (101 mph) with higher gusts Friday morning and was moving north at 20 kph (12 mph), the Ja-

pan Meteorological Agency said. Ampil was not expected to make landfall and would weaken to a tropical storm by Sunday.

The Shinkansen bullet trains running between Tokyo and Nagoya were halted for the entire day, according to Central Japan Railway.

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JD Vance and his 'childless cat ladies': The other side

Miami: Five summers ago, Donald Trump's running mate JD Vance — then a 34-year-old memoirist and father of a 2-year-old boy — took the stage at a conservative conference and tackled an issue that would become a core part of his political brand: the United States' declining fertility rate.

"Our people aren't having enough children to replace themselves. That should bother us," Vance told the gathering in Washington. He outlined the obvious concern that Social Security depends on younger workers' contributions and then said, "We want babies not just because they are economically useful. We want more babies because children are good. And we believe children are

good, because we are not sociopaths."

Vance repeatedly expressed alarm about declining birth rates as he launched his political career in 2021 with a bid for the U.S. Senate in Ohio. His criticism then of Vice President Kamala Harris, now the Democratic presidential nominee, and other high-profile Democrats as "childless cat ladies" who didn't have a "direct stake" in the country have drawn particular attention since Trump picked him as his running mate.

The rhetoric could threaten the Republican ticket's standing with women who could help decide the November election. But it's delighted those in the pro-natalist movement that has, until now, been limited



largely to policy wonks, tech executives and venture capitalists.

"There's no question the discussion around family life, childbearing and pro-

natalism has gotten a lot more popular and gotten media attention because of JD Vance," said Brad Wilcox, the director of the National Marriage Project at

the University of Virginia and author of "Get Married." Vance once referred to Wilcox as "one of my favorite researchers."

Vance's spokespeople did not respond to messages seeking comment.

An aspiring politician's war against anti-child ideology

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An aspiring politician's war against anti-child ideology

Vance, who wrote a best-seller about his working-class upbringing, has been clear about making family formation a policy priority. He has suggested ideas such as allowing parents to vote on behalf of their children or following the example of Hungary's Viktor Orbán of giving low-interest loans to married couples with children and tax exemptions to women who have four children or more.

In a May 2021 interview with The Federalist's podcast in which he said he was exploring a Senate run, Vance described a society without babies and kids as "pretty icky and

pretty gross."

"We owe something to our country. We owe something to our future. The best way to invest in it is to ensure the next generation actually exists," he said. "I think we have to go to war against the anti-child ideology that exists in our country."

Vance has suggested people without children should pay higher taxes than people who have children. That's the spirit of the existing child tax credit at \$2,000 per qualifying child, which Vance has said he'd love to see raised to \$5,000. He has also mentioned in interviews he wants to ban pornography for minors, citing it as one of the causes for why people are marrying less and having fewer children.

His anti-abortion views, he has said, are separate from his concerns on birth rates, arguing the procedure is not really driving the decline in fertility.

In several interviews, he's argued policymakers should make it easier for two-parent households to be able to live on a single wage so that one of the parents can stay home with their children.

"The ruling class is obsessed with their jobs. Even though they hate a lot of their jobs, they are obsessed with their credentials and they want strangers to raise their kids," he told then-Fox News host Tucker Carlson in 2021. "But middle-class Americans, whatever their station in life, they want more time with their children."

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Celebs speak up on doctor rape case



"Yes we need to evolve into a society where we ALL feel equally safe. But that is going to take decades. It's going to hopefully happen with sensitizing and empowering our sons and daughters. The next generations will be better. We will get there. Eventually. But what in the interim?"
"Right now justice would be to put a hard stop to such atrocities. And the only way to do that is a punishment so harsh that it scares the living daylights out of such perpetrators. That's what we need. Perhaps?" he wrote.

- Hrithik Roshan



"Another brutal rape. Another day of realisation that women are not safe, anywhere. Another horrific atrocity to remind us that it's been over a decade since the Nirbhaya tragedy, but still nothing much has changed."

- Alia Bhatt



"While we celebrate our 78th year of Independence and feel proud on how far we've come as a country globally... There is absolutely no fear in the people who commit these inhumane acts. And even today, its the woman being blamed for being a victim!!! Unless there is faster justice, severe punishments and more importantly better upbringing, nothing is gonna change. Are we really FREE when our basic safety is in question???"

- Kriti Sanon



"Fifty years on this planet, in this country, and I am teaching my daughter the same things I was taught as a child. Don't go alone - to the park, to school, to the beach."

- Twinkle Khanna



"Something that should send shivers down our spines doesn't even get a reaction from us cause it's become a regular occurrence. We should be ashamed. This is our collective failure. Our culture worships Shakti, remember that. Stricter laws. Make an example of those perpetrators. Let there be fear of the law."

- Bhumi Pednekar



Kolkata Socialist Unity Centre of India (Communist) (SUCI-C) activists being detained during their 12-hour general strike against the alleged rape and murder of a woman doctor at R G Kar Medical College and Hospital, in Kolk

BJP leaders fan out to slam Opposition

New Delhi: The BJP leaders fanned out across the country on Friday to target the opposition parties over the issue of safety of women following the rape and murder of a doctor in Kolkata, and alleged that core values of the Constitution were being undermined in West Bengal under Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee-led government.

Addressing a press conference in Kolkata, BJP spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi claimed that opposition parties have exhibited a "dangerous mindset of hatred and disregard" for women, and protection of criminals from Kannauj to Kolkata.

"Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi should answer whether their 'Mohabbat Ki Dukan' is run only by criminals, corrupt individuals and rapists," he said.

Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury has claimed that democracy does not exist in West Bengal and that Mamata Banerjee is a dictator, protecting criminals, asking how can his party still be in an alliance with her.

Union Minister Giriraj Singh said in the national capital that Banerjee is so consumed by power that she would not hesitate before abusing Lord Ram, an apparent reference to her aim at the BJP and the Left by blaming "Ram and Vaam" for the last night vandalism in the hospital where the spine-chilling incident had occurred.

Singh alleged that the Trinamool Congress (TMC) president has abandoned the principles of 'Maa, Maati, Maanush' and said that Lord Ram embodies peace, harmony and love,

and also eradicates evils.

BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawala said in Karnataka that the Calcutta High Court does not trust the West Bengal government and police, and handed over the investigation into the crime to the CBI.

When will Banerjee take responsibility for the incident and resign, he said, claiming that she no longer has any moral, legal or constitutional right to remain as the chief minister.

Another BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said in Rajasthan that fundamental principles of the Constitution were being violated in the eastern state but the opposition INDIA bloc was silent on cases of atrocities against women. He criticised Rahul Gandhi and other alliance leaders.

Several other BJP leaders, including former Uttar

Pradesh deputy chief minister Dinesh Sharma, and spokespersons Ajay Alok and Anil Antony spoke to the media in different states over the issue.

BJP workers 'prevented' from holding protest rally.

Kolkata: The BJP on Friday alleged that its workers were prevented from holding a rally in Kolkata to protest against the death of a woman doctor in the state-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in the city last week.

A stage that was set up at Shyambazar crossing in north Kolkata was dismantled by the police, a party leader said.

Several saffron party workers were rounded up and taken to central lock-up in Lalbazar police headquarters.

Police officers were not available for comment.

Regional cinemas dominate National Film Awards

Malayalam movie 'Aattam: The Play' best

Sooraj Barjatya best director
New Delhi: Regional cinema dominated the National Film Awards announced on Friday with best feature film going to Malayalam movie "Aattam: The Play" and Rishabh Shetty bagging best actor for the Kannada hit "Kantara". The best actress prize was shared by Nithya Menen, for the Tamil film "Thiruchitrabalam", and Manasi Parekh for the Gujarati movie "Kutch Express".



meaning of family and home, was judged best Hindi film with its director Rahul V Chittela taking home the award for best dialogue writer with Arpita Mukherjee.

Bajpayee also got a special mention along with music director Sanjoy Salil Chowdhury for Malayalam title "Kadhikan".

A.R. Rahman won the National Film Award for best music director (background music) for his work in Mani Ratnam's "Ponniyin Selvan-Part 1", which was also named the best Tamil film. Pritam got the award for best music director (songs) for "Brahmastra-Part 1". Arijit Singh was named the best male playback singer for the song "Kesariya" from Ayan Mukerji's "Brahmastra Part One: Shiva". The Ranbir Kapoor-Alia Bhatt starrer also bagged the award for best film in AVGC (animation, visual effects, gaming and comic) category.

Padma Shri awardee Bombay Jayashri won the award for best female playback singer for the track "Chaayum Veyil" for "Saudi Vellaka CC 225/2009", which also won the best Malayalam film award.

Feature Film Category

- Best Film - Aattam by Aanand Ekarshi
- Best Direction - Sooraj R Barjatya for Uunchai
- Best Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment - Kantara by Rishabh Shetty
- Best Debut Film of a Director - Pramod Kumar for Fouja
- Best Actor - Rishabh Shetty for Kantara
- Best Actress - Nithya Menen for Thiruchitrabham and Manasi Parekh for Kutch Express
- Best Supporting Actor - Pavan Raj Malhotra for Fouja
- Best Supporting Actress - Neena Gupta for Uunchai
- Best Child Artist - Sreepath for Malikappuram
- Best Cinematography - Ravi Varman for Ponniyin Selvan 1
- Best Screenplay - Anand Ekarshi for Aattam
- Best Dialogue Writer - Arpita Mukherjee and Rahul V Chittela for Gulmohar

- Best Production Design - Ananda Addhya for Aparajito
- Best Action Choreography - Anbariv for KGF Chapter 2
- Best Make-Up Artist - Somnath Kundu for Aparajito
- Best Costume Design - Niki Joshi for Kutch Express
- Best Music Direction for Songs - Pritam for Brahmastra Part 1: Shiva
- Best Editing - Mahesh Bhuvanend for Aattam
- Best Assamese Film - Emuthi Puthi by Kulanandini Mahanta
- Best Bengali Film - Kaberi Antardhan by Kaushik Gangula
- Best Hindi Film - Gulmohar by Rahul V. Chittella
- Best Kannada Film - KGF: Chapter 2 by Prashanth Neel
- Best Malayalam Film - Saudi Vellaka CC 225/2009 by Tharun Moorthy
- Best Marathi Film - Vaalvi by Paresch Mokashi
- Best Tiwa Film - Sikaisal by Dr. Bobby Sarma Baruah
- Best Odia Film - Daman by Vishal Mourya and Debi Prasad Lenka
- Best Punjabi Film - Baghi Di Dhee by Mukesh Gautam
- Best Tamil Film - Ponniyin Selvan Part 1, by Mani Ratnam
- Best Telugu Film - Karthikeya 2, Chandoo Mondeti

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Derek O'Brian, leader, TMC

"Kolkata Police has arrested one accused. Justice will happen only when CBI nabs all involved."

Mob attacks priest in Kota

Kota (Rajasthan): A group of around two dozen unidentified people attacked a priest here after he objected to some people allegedly washing utensils meant for non-vegetarian food outside a temple, police said on Friday.

The incident happened Thursday when Sohan Lal, the priest of Srinath Charan Chowki temple in

Motipura village, they said. Lal in his complaint alleged that around 20-30 people attacked him and he and his two companions had to hide behind the temple door, bolting it from inside, to save themselves.

The attackers threatened to kill him and bomb the temple, Lal added. The priest claimed that

some people from the Muslim community had cooked some non-vegetarian food at a dargah alongside the temple Thursday evening and insisted on washing the utensils at a water reservoir outside the temple.

Kaithun Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Beni Prasad said that a case has been registered against unidentified people.

Survey reveals poor mental health conditions of medical students

New Delhi: Nearly 28 per cent of UG and 15.3 per cent of PG medical students reported having been diagnosed with mental health conditions, according to an online survey conducted by a National Medical Commission (NMC) task force.

The survey, which included 25,590 undergraduate students, 5,337 postgraduate students, and 7,035 faculty members recommended that resident doctors work no more than 74 hours per week, get a weekly one-day off and seven-eight hours of daily sleep. Thoughts of self-harm or suicide in the last 12 months were reported by 16.2 per cent MBBS students while the number was recorded at 31 per cent in MD/MS students, according to the report by the National Task Force on Mental Health and Well-being of Medical Students.

According to the task force survey report that was finalised in June this year, feelings of loneliness or social isolation are common, with 8,962 (35 per cent) experiencing them always or often and 9,995 (39.1 per cent) sometimes. Social connectivity is an issue for many, as 8,265 (32.3 per cent) find it difficult to make or maintain social connections and 6,089 (23.8 per cent) find it 'somewhat difficult'. Regarding adequate knowledge and skills for managing stress, 36.4 per cent reported that they feel lack of knowledge and skills to manage stress. Faculty or mentors are seen as extremely unresponsive by 18.2 per cent.

According to the survey, the majority of students (56.6 per cent), find their academic workload manageable but heavy, while 20.7 per cent consider it too heavy, and only 1.5 per cent find it light or too light, the survey showed. "The fear of failure is a significant issue in UG students with 51.6 per cent agreeing or strongly agreeing that it negatively impacts their performance. Furthermore, 10,383 (40.6 per cent) students feel constant pressure to achieve top grades," it showed. Balancing academic work with personal life is a struggle for 56.3 per cent of UG students. Medical curriculum-in-

duced stress is a significant factor, with 11,186 (43.7 per cent) finding it extremely or significantly stressful and 9,664 (37.8 per cent) moderately stressful. The frequency of exams is extremely or significantly stressful for 35.9 per cent and moderately stressful for 37.6 per cent, the survey found. Accessibility to mental health services is rated as very or somewhat inaccessible by 18.6 per cent students and the quality of these services is perceived as very poor or poor by 18.8 per cent.

The analysis of ragging and stress-related parameters for 25,590 undergraduate medical students provides significant insights into their experiences and stress levels. A majority (76.8 per cent), reported not experiencing or witnessing any form of ragging or harassment, while 9.7 per cent reported such experiences. Regarding institutional measures, 17,932 (70.1 per cent) students believe their college has adequate meas-

ures to prevent and address ragging, while 3,618 (14.1 per cent) disagree, and 4,040 (15.8 per cent) are unsure, the survey showed. As for PG students, regarding academic stress, 20 per cent students admitted that they find the current academic workload frequently challenging, 9.5 per cent too intense, while 32 per cent reported manageable academic stress levels. Close to half the PG students (45 per cent) revealed working for more than 60 hours a week with more than 56 per cent not getting their weekly offs. A significant number of PG students -- 18 per cent -- reported that ragging was still there and hurt them, the task force said underlining "this underscores the

ongoing issue of ragging within some academic environments". It said 1425 (27 per cent) reported experiencing harassment from senior PG students in clinical settings, while 1669 (31 per cent) reported similar experiences from faculty and senior resident doctors. Awareness regarding anti-ragging regulations is relatively high (84 per cent), but there is still a significant minority (nearly 20 per cent) unaware of these regulations, which suggests the need for increased education and communication efforts, the task force said. Most PG students admitted having experiencing moderate to very high stress levels (84 per cent).

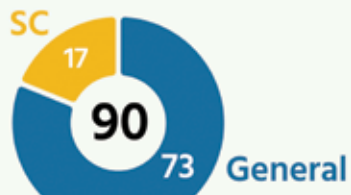


Political parties welcome EC's assembly poll schedule in J-K

ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2024

HARYANA

Assembly Constituencies 90



Total Voters: 2.03 crore
Polling Stations: 20,629



Source: ECI

Tsrinagar/Jammu: Political parties cutting across party lines on Friday welcomed the Election Commission's announcement of three-phased assembly elections beginning September 18 in Jammu and Kashmir, saying the people were eagerly waiting for the restoration of democracy in the Union Territory after six years of central rule.

Almost all the parties, including National Conference, Congress, BJP, CPI(M)

and DPAP, thanked the Election Commission and said the poll announcement maintained the supremacy of the Supreme Court which had set the September 30 deadline for the holding of the much awaited assembly elections in J-K.

The Election Commission said the assembly polls in J-K would be held in three phases on September 18, 25 and October 1. The counting of votes would be on October 4.

Reacting to the EC announcement, National Conference vice president and former chief minister Omar Abdullah said it was better late than never.

"Some time back, the ECI announced the schedule for assembly elections in J-K. People of J-K were waiting for this day for a long time. It is better late than never," Abdullah told reporters in Srinagar.

The former chief minister said it is perhaps for the first

time after the 1987-88 polls, that the assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir are being held in a short time and in just a few phases.

"It obviously will be a new experiment for the political parties. But as far as our party is concerned, the NC was prepared for this day and will soon start the electioneering," he added.

Abdullah said Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar has made a thrust on conducting free and fair polls in Jammu and Kashmir and called on the poll body to take notice of the massive transfers in the police and civil administration in the Union Territory in the last 24 hours.

"We have doubts that this government is helping the BJP and its B, C and D teams. The ECI should immediately take notice and examine them and stop those transfers which are outside their guidelines," he said.

"Better late than never", Senior Vice president of Pradesh Congress Committee Ravinder Sharma told PTL, reacting to the announcement by the chief election commissioner Rajiv Kumar. He said the people in J-K

were waiting for the assembly elections for the past six years after the fall of PDP-BJP government in June 2018.

"Though we were pressing for restoration of full statehood before the holding of assembly elections, the announcement by the Election Commission is a welcome step and we are hopeful that the commission will ensure level playing field and adequate security without any discrimination," Sharma, who is also the chief spokesperson of the Congress, said.

He also hoped that the EC would look into the massive reshuffle in police and civil administration ordered in the Union Territory on the day of the announcement of polls.

"There should be no unnecessary transfers and if such a thing had happened, the Election Commission should take appropriate action," the Congress leader said.

AICC General Secretary G A Mir thanked the EC for announcing the polls in a region where the last assembly polls were held in 2014 and said the supremacy of the apex court which had set September 30 as deadline for the assembly

ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2024

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Assembly Constituencies 90



Total Voters: 88.06 lakh
Polling Stations: 11,838



Source: ECI

elections in J-K has been maintained.

He said the central government has promised assembly elections after delimitation but the exercise was completed long back.

"People are eagerly waiting for the formation of the popular government and the announcement of the polls reflects the aspirations of the people. We have full faith that people in J&K will take part in elections in a big way and elect their representatives,"

he said. Senior CPI(M) leader M Y Tarigami also welcomed the announcement of a poll for Jammu and Kashmir.

"It is welcome that after a long time the EC has announced the schedule for elections to the assembly. We also welcome the statement of the EC that it will be a full democratic exercise by ensuring level playing field to all parties and contestants besides sufficient security for candidates and votes as well,"

Tarigami said. J-K BJP president Ravinder Raina said "we are highly grateful to ECI for the announcement of assembly elections in J-K".

However, the party media incharge Pradeep Malhotra said they are fully prepared for the elections and requested the people to take part in the upcoming elections enthusiastically.

Malhotra expressed hope that the elections would be peaceful and violence-free.

Most BJP allies keep away from supporting UCC

New Delhi: Most BJP allies have kept their cards close to chest on the issue of Uniform Civil Code, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi strongly backed in his Independence Day speech, with the party's largest partner Telugu Desam Party (TDP) saying that it will wait for details to emerge before finalising its stand.

The JD(U), the BJP's second biggest ally, said the party supports any such reform but its spokesperson K C Tyagi added that it must be pushed only after evolv-

ing a consensus by speaking to all stakeholders, including religious groups and states.

Lavu Srikrishna Devarayalu, the leader of TDP Parliamentary Party, told PTI that his party will wait for the details of any proposal related to the UCC before finalising its stand.

Another party ally Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) has also been non-committal, with its president and Union Minister Chirag Paswan recently highlighting cultural, linguistic and re-

gional diversities across the country to wonder how everyone can be brought under one umbrella.

Last month, he said that his party will wait for a draft on the UCC before taking a stand.

Tyagi cited JD(U) president and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's submission in 2017 to the Law Commission to make his point.

Kumar had said, "Any attempt to impose a UCC without obtaining through substantive consultations the

concurrence of various religious groups, especially the minorities, could lead to social friction and an erosion of faith in the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion."

However, the proposal for simultaneous elections, which was also staunchly advocated by Modi on Thursday, generally enjoys support among the BJP's allies.

Tyagi said his party is in complete agreement with the BJP on the issue. Both JD(U) and the LJP(Ram Vi-

las) had extended their support to the concept 'one nation one election' in their submission to the high-level committee headed by former president Ram Nath Kovind.

Another important BJP ally Shiv Sena, which is headed by Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, has been supportive of both UCC and simultaneous elections.

Modi had on Thursday made an unequivocal pitch for a uniform civil code in the country.

Congress appoints state presidents

New Delhi: In a significant organisational reshuffle ahead of the assembly polls, the Congress on Friday appointed Tariq Hameed Karra as president of its Jammu and Kashmir unit and Keshav Mahto Kamlesh as chief of the Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee.

While Karra replaces Vikar Rasool Wani in Jammu and Kashmir, Kamlesh takes over from Rajesh Thakur. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge also appointed two working presidents for J&K.

Reshuffle in J & K police

Srinagar: In a major shake-up in the Jammu and Kashmir Police, several senior officers were transferred by the administration on Friday while the intelligence wing got a new chief.

In three separate orders, the Jammu and Kashmir administration transferred senior police officers with immediate effect.

This came a day after senior IPS officer Nalin Prabhakar was appointed as Special DG of Jammu and Kashmir Police. He will assume the role of the force's chief following the retirement of R R Swain on September 30.

An order issued by the government said, "In the interest of administration, it is hereby ordered that Nitish Kumar, IPS (AGMUT: 1999) ADGP CID is posted as Head of CID, relieving R R Swain, IPS (AGMUT: 1991) DGP, J&K of the additional charge of the post."

In a separate document, the government ordered the transfer of 12 senior police officers including Inspectors General of Police (IGPs) and Deputy Inspectors General (DIGs).

QUOTE OF THE DAY



Rajiv Kumar
Chief Election
Commissioner

"There was heavy rainfall in Maharashtra, BLOs (booth level officers) have to complete their work. There are several festivals too that have to be factored in. Ganesh Festival, Pitru Paksha, Navratri, Diwali, all that put together this is what we thought we could handle as two elections at a time."

'Father of Agni missile', passes away

Hyderabad: R.N. Agarwal, regarded as the father of Agni missiles in the country, passed away here. He was 84.

Agarwal, a recipient of the Padma Bhushan, died on Thursday following mild old age related ailments, DRDO sources said. He had served as the Agni programme director and also as the director of ASL (Advanced Systems Laboratory) in Hyderabad.

Former President A P J Abdul Kalam and 'Missile Man' of India had started IGMDP (Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme) and Agni was a key programme in it.



The craftsmen give final touches to 'Onavillu', a ceremonial bow that is offered to the deity of the Sree Padmanabhaswamy temple as part of the annual rituals during Onam festival season, in Thiruvananthapuram.

Pic: PTI

ED arrests four in Chinese betting app fraud

New Delhi: Four persons have been arrested in connection with a Rs 400 crore "fraud" online betting and gaming app allegedly linked to some Chinese nationals, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) said on Friday.

Arun Sahu, Alok Sahu, Chetan Prakash and Joseph Stalin were taken into custody under the provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in the case related to the app named 'Fiewin',

the federal probe agency said in a statement.

The money laundering case stems from an FIR filed at the Cossipore police station in Kolkata against some unknown persons for "cheating" and "conspiracy" with a number of online gamers through the app.

"An amount of Rs 400 crore was generated from the Fiewin app fraud and thereafter was credited into eight Binance (global crypto exchange) wallets

in the name of Chinese nationals. These wallets were operated from the Chinese mainland as revealed by the access IP logs.

"The Chinese nationals communicated with and instructed the four accused persons through digital communication especially groups on Telegram (social communication app)," the ED said.

Since these four persons played an "active role" in the Fiewin app-based scam and they are found to be

involved in the offence of money laundering, they were arrested, the agency said.

The ED did not say when these persons were arrested but added that a special PMLA court in Kolkata sent them to 14 days of ED custody.

Probe found, the ED said, that Chinese nationals were operating the app with the help and support from Indian nationals, sources said.

- PTI

Former Meghalaya CM Salseng Marak no more

Shillong: Former Meghalaya chief minister Salseng C Marak died due to old age related ailments on Friday, family members said. The veteran Congress leader, 82, breathed his last at the Tura Civil Hospital where he was undergoing treatment.

Marak became the first chief minister of the state to complete a five-year term in 1993. He also held the office of the CM for the shortest time - 12 days - in 1998 when the Congress-led coalition collapsed.

No substance in Pak allegation

New Delhi: Days after Pakistan's foreign ministry spokesperson raised concerns over seizure of alleged 'radioactive' material in India, the MEA on Friday said relevant Indian authorities have investigated the matter and found "no radioactive substance".

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) asserted that those making "baseless comments" are advised to desist from their "propaganda".

In response to a question

at his weekly briefing here, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India has a "robust legal and regulatory framework" for safety and security of radioactive material and its non-proliferation track records speak for itself.

On August 9, officials said the Bihar Police has arrested three people from the state's Gopalganj district and recovered 50 gm of a "radioactive substance" worth crores of rupees from their possession.

Pakistan's foreign ministry spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch in a statement on Tuesday had raised concerns over effectiveness of the measures taken by New Delhi to ensure safety and security of nuclear and radioactive materials, following the arrest.

The MEA spokesperson was asked to comment on the statement issued by Baloch in this connection.

Relevant Indian authorities have subsequently investigated the matter.



Family members of patients wait to shift them as doctors protest against the alleged rape and murder of a woman doctor at Kolkata's R G Kar Medical College and Hospital Ranchi.

Pic: PTI

Centre didn't honour LoP post: Pawar

Mumbai: Nationalist Congress Party (SP) president Sharad Pawar on Friday hit out at the Centre over Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi not being allotted a front-row seat at the Independence Day event, accusing it of not honouring the post of LoP.

Addressing party workers of the opposition bloc Maha Vikas Aghadi, Pawar said the threat to the Constitution is still not over even if the BJP did not get majority in the Lok Sabha polls.

"The Centre did not honour the post of Leader of Opposition," Pawar said.



"The Leader of Opposition was made to sit in the back row," said the NCP (SP) chief.

The Congress on Thursday said making Gandhi "sit in the fifth row" at the Independence Day celebrations at the Red Fort showed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "pettiness" and lack of respect for democratic traditions.

CM Naidu arrives in Delhi

New Delhi: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu arrived in Delhi on Friday to meet Union ministers and discuss the state's issues, including the Polavaram irrigation project. The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief is scheduled to meet Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil on Friday, official sources said.

He is also likely to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other Union ministers, including Home Minister Amit Shah and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, on Saturday, the sources added.



AAP workers during celebrations of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's birthday outside the Tihar Jail, in New Delhi, Friday.

Pic: PTI

Mohun Bagan SG to face Al-Wakrah



Dubai: Former Australian captain Ricky Ponting reckoned that Joe Root could surpass batting legend Sachin Tendulkar's tally of runs in Test cricket, provided the England batting mainstay stays 'hungry' and keeps scoring at a consistent rate for the next four years.

Root became only the seventh batter in the history of the conventional format to cross the 12,000-run mark — a feat he achieved recently during the Edgbaston Test against the West Indies.

With 12,027 runs in 143

Tests at 50.11 with 32 centuries and 63 fifties so far, Root is also overall the seventh highest run-scorer in Tests and could overtake Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara (12,400 runs) and his former teammate Alastair Cook (12,472) soon.

Tendulkar leads the table with 15,921 runs from 200 Tests.

Ponting, who sits second behind Tendulkar in the list with 13,378 runs from 168 Tests, told The ICC Review, "He (Root) could potentially do that. He is 33 years of age...

(more than) 3000 runs behind."

"It depends how many Test matches they play, but if they're playing 10 to 14 Test matches a year and if you're scoring 800 to 1,000 runs a year, then that sort of says he's only three or four years off getting there. So that'll take him to 37 (years of age)," said the legendary Australian. Ponting said Root will need to remain hungry for runs and the England batter has got the age on his side to aim for the Test record.

Forget past and think about future

Coach Harendra's advice to women's hockey team

By Mona Parthasarathi

New Delhi: "Forget the past and think about the future," this was Indian women's hockey team chief coach Harendra Singh's advice to his wards as he chalks out his side's roadmap for 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

After reaching a new high in Tokyo, where they finished a creditable fourth, the Indian women failed to qualify for Paris Games, where the men's team won a second consecutive bronze medal.

"When I took up this team, we had discussed this topic in length. I always look into the positive side and feel that something better is there in store for them. 'Obviously girls were disheartened, the whole country was sad but I told them that there is something bigger waiting for them.' Harendra, who was appointed to the role in April this year, told PTI Bhasha.

"I told them to forget

about the past and think about the future. I have given this mission a name 'Road to LA 2028' and I think it will be a beautiful journey."

Harendra, who was earlier in charge of the women's team in 2017-18, said his target is 2028 Los Angeles Olympics and advised his players to "forget the past and think about future".

"India won the first Olympic medal in hockey in Los Angeles in 1928 when the legend Dhyan Chand ji was the part of the team and what would be a better start than winning a medal in 2028 at the same place exactly after 100 years," said Harendra, who was earlier in charge of the women's team in 2017-18.

"Whatever good has been done in the last four years, I would not like to change that. Then we will take it one by one and what went wrong. We started from there and I told them that I am not expecting great results in the Pro League. We have to make a foundation

for LA 2028," said the Dronacharya awardee.

When asked about what prompted him to leave his lucrative job as head coach of USA men's team and return to the country, Harendra said: "I am happy to be back home and serving for the vision of women empowerment in India.

"Somewhere I wanted to contribute and not a better place to serve Indian hockey, especially women.

"Professionally I have learnt many things in my stint as a coach of the US men's team. I think after Rio Olympics we have realised we are a sleeping giant and must wake up now. The kind of talent we have and the infrastructure now, that inspired me a lot," he said.

"We have a lot of potential in women's hockey and it's not impossible to climb the ladder and win medals. It's about passion and coming back to your roots," added the 55-year-old, who coached India to the men's Junior World Cup title in 2016. Harendra said fitness is

one area which is a primary concern for him.

"This team is lacking in the fitness standard which is needed for modern-day hockey. It includes speed, endurance, agility and decision making ability. They have technical skills and if they fulfil the fitness parameters that will give them an edge in big tournaments," he said.

"My prime job is to improve the strength, power and speed of this team."

He also insisted that his long-term plan revolves around a self-confined term 'SST', which is science, skills and technology.

"We have to incorporate science, skill and technology, which I call SST. We are now playing European style which was the biggest lacking earlier. We have made a blueprint. There should be one model, one coaching philosophy from the grassroots to national camp," he said. He also defended the deci-



sion to have a new captain in Salima Tete, as it allow ace-goalkeeper Savita to play more freely.

"Savita is wall of Indian women's hockey. She has served our country for many years now and is an integral part of our scheme of things but there is one technical glitch.

"If the captain is shown the green card during the match what will happen because she is the goalkeeper? So it's better to have a captain who is not a goalkeeper," Harendra said.

"For me all players are captains. In hockey a captain does not have to make many big decisions on the field like cricket. And also there is a new beginning with the new captain. And the good part is that Savita has started contributing more than earlier."

Nothing changes for Praggnanandhaa, Firouzja leads

Saint Louis (USA): Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa could not really change his fortunes for the better and remained in last spot going into the final day of the Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz chess tournament here. Before that, he won a couple of games in the blitz section.

Praggnanandhaa scored two wins at the expense of pre-event favourites Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia and Hikaru Nakamura of Russia besides a lone draw with tournament leader Alireza Firouzja of France but

lost the remaining six games in the first leg of blitz that kept him on the bottom of the tables with only nine rounds remaining in the blitz section.

Grand chess tour

Alireza Firouzja made most of his opportunities count to shoot into sole lead on 17.5 points and now enjoys 1.5 points lead over Wesley So of United States, who happened to score the most (7/9) in the blitz section, and Nepomniachtchi.

The other leader Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France slipped to fourth spot on 15.5 point, a half point clear of wild card Armenian-turned-American Levon Aronian.

Nakamura, who started off as a favourite in the blitz section, is in sixth spot on 13.5 points, ahead of tour leader and compatriot Fabiano Caruana who has 13 points.

American Lenier Dominguez on 12 points is eighth at this point ahead of Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan who has 10

points in all. Praggnanandhaa remains a distant last on 6.5 points, looking for a change in fortunes on the final day.

Wesley So was the surprising star of the day winning six, drawing two and losing just one game against Firouzja in nine rounds of blitz. The result propelled the American to joint second spot.

However, Firouzja still remains set to win the crown given his 1.5 points lead and if that happens he can even overtake Caruana.

Vollering crashes in 5th stage

Amneville (France): Demi Vollering's chances of winning consecutive women's Tour de France races was in jeopardy after the defending champion crashed at high speed in the final moments of the fifth stage from Bastogne, Belgium to Amneville in France.

Vollering was descending into Amneville and coming out of a roundabout when more than 10 riders crashed around her.

Defending champion Coco Gauff falls to Putintseva

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Delhi HC restores mandate of IOA ad hoc panel

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Friday restored the mandate of Indian Olympic



Association's (IOA) ad hoc committee constituted for running the affairs of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) on a plea by celebrated wrestlers Bajrang Punia, Vinesh Phogat, Sakshi Malik and her husband Satyawart Kadian, following the elections held in the federation in December.

The court, in an interim order, said the IOA's decision to dissolve the ad hoc committee was incompatible with Union Sports Ministry's order suspending the WFI shortly after the December elections, while adding that until the suspension order is not recalled, it is necessary for the ad hoc committee to manage the federation's affairs.

Justice Sachin Dat-

ta turned down the petitioners' prayer to appoint a retired high court or Supreme Court judge as the administrator of WFI, and said it shall be open to the IOA to re-constitute the ad hoc committee.

"Since this court has concluded that the dissolution of the ad-hoc committee was unwarranted, it restores the mandate of the ad-hoc committee appointed by the IOA vide order dated 27.12.2023.

"However, it shall be open to IOA to reconstitute the ad-hoc committee so as to ensure that the same is a multi-member body comprising of eminent sportsperson/s and/or experts who are well-versed in dealing with the International Federations, so as to allay any concerns that

the UWW (United World Wrestling-the world body for the sport) might have as regards the steps taken qua the WFI," the court held.

The wrestlers, who were at the forefront of last year's protest at Jantar Mantar demanding the arrest of outgoing WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh for alleged sexual harassment of seven women grapplers, had moved the high court earlier this year for setting aside and declaring as illegal the elections held to elect the office bearers of the federation held in December. Sanjay Singh, a Brij Bhushan loyalist, was elected the new WFI chief in the polls held on December 21, 2023.

The Centre had, however, suspended the WFI on De-

cember 24, 2023, three days after it elected the new office bearers, for allegedly not following the provisions of its own constitution while taking decisions, and requested the IOA to constitute an ad hoc committee to manage and control its affairs.

In February, UWW lifted the suspension, leading to the IOA also dissolving its ad hoc committee on March 18.

In their application for interim relief in the matter, the petitioners had sought a stay on the functioning of the WFI in its present form and to prevent it from undertaking any activity as a national federation for the sport of wrestling.

In the 31-page order, Justice Datta said the lifting of the ban by the UWW was

"unconnected" with the circumstances set out in the Centre's suspension order and the consequent formation of the ad hoc committee by the IOA, and "disapproval" by the UWW was also not a valid justification for not implementing the Centre's directives.

The IOA had submitted in court that UWW had issued a warning that if there was any interference with the autonomy of WFI, it would impose a temporary suspension on wrestling federation.

There is no reason, the court said, for the Sports Ministry to "adopt a passive approach which undermines its own orders" and that the "remote possibility of the UWW taking



umbrage" should not have prevented it from doing what it must to implement good governance practices consistent with the Sports Code and the law of the land.

Who all cursed me for lack of ACs in Paris?

Modi shares a laugh with India's Olympians

New Delhi: Lakshya Sen revealed how his phone was taken away by strict coach Prakash Padukone, hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh talked about his team's thrilling run while everyone shared a good laugh on the air conditioning woes in Paris when Prime Minister Narendra Modi hosted a reception for the Indian contingent after its fairly decent Olympic campaign.

The Prime Minister hosted the contingent after the Independence Day celebrations at Red Fort, where too the athletes were in attendance on Thursday. The video of the interaction was shared by Modi and the athletes could be seen having one-on-one chats with the PM.

In one such conversation with Lakshya, who finished fourth in the men's singles badminton competition, Modi said: "When I met Lakshya for the first time,

he was very small but now he has grown up. Do you know, this time you have become a celebrity?"

To this, Lakshya replied: "Yes sir. But during matches Prakash Sir took my phone and told me till the matches are over, you won't get your phone. But after that I got to know the support I got."

"It was a learning experience and little heart-breaking as well because I came so close," said the 22-year-old who lost from a position of strength in the bronze playoff.

A laughing Modi instantly said: "Prakash Sir was so disciplined and strict, I will send him the next time as well."

The Paris Olympics were promoted as eco-friendly Games. So, there were no air conditioners in any rooms in the Games village, forcing the sports ministry to dispatch 40 portable ACs on an urgent

basis for their comfortable stay.

A laughing Modi asked all the athletes who all cursed him for the situation, to which no one replied.

"There were no ACs and it was hot as well, so I want to know which of you cried first saying 'Modi speaks big but there are no ACs in rooms so what should we do'," Modi said.

"Who all are there who faced most difficulties. But then I learnt that within few hours that work also was done. See, how we try to provide you the best of facilities," the Prime Minister added.

Modi also had a light-hearted chat with Harmanpreet, who opened up on how the team fought back after being down to 10 men for more than 40 minutes in the quarterfinal against Great Britain.

"Just tell me when you to fight with 10-men against



Britain, you must have been demoralised from the start, Sarpanch saab, please tell, it was very difficult," Modi asked the India captain, addressing him with his nickname.

Harmanpreet replied: "Yes Sir, it was very diffi-

cult because we got the red card in the first quarter but our coaching staff helped us a lot. We visualised every situation because in Olympics anything can happen. The motivation of the team also increased because we have a rivalry

with GB (Britain)."

Modi interrupted and laughingly said: "It has been going on for the last 150 years."

Harmanpreet said: "We fought and ended the match 1-1 and won it in shoot-out. It never ever happened in

Olympics history (playing with 10 men for 42 minutes and then winning)."

Paris Olympics launchpad for Indian sports' rise Modi believes the just-concluded Paris Olympics is going to be a turning point for India. The 117-member Indian contingent returned with six medals, including one silver and five bronze. The count was one less than Tokyo and there was no gold in the tally this time.

But Modi appreciated the efforts of all athletes who represented the country and said their inputs will help in successfully getting the hosting rights of the 2036 Games.

"Those who have returned after losing, please get this out of your mind. You made the country proud and came back after learning something. Sports is one area where no one loses, everybody learns," Modi said.

"I believe Paris Olympics will be a launch-pad for the rise of Indian sports. This is going to be our turning point. After that there will only be wins. We are not going to stop," the Prime Minister added.

The Prime Minister termed the athletes as "India's soldiers of 2036 Olympics".

"India is preparing to host the 2036 Olympics. In this case many athletes who played in the Olympics, their inputs are very important. You might have observed many things there, from Olympics planning to all facilities, from sports management to event management," Modi said.

"Your experiences, your observations, we need to write them down, so in 2036 Olympics all the little things and experiences of yours will help us in preparing for the Games. In one way you are soldiers of 2036 Olympics," he added.