

# THE PERFECT VOICE



**One crore women to benefit: Fadnavis**  
... pg 3



**Five messages in PM Modi's Independence Day speech**  
... pg 5



**Those who want medals, can buy them for Rs 15 each: Punia**  
... pg 12

## Act on crimes against women with urgency: PM

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday said state governments should act on crimes against women with "utmost urgency" and called for instilling deterrence among perpetrators, his comments coming in the backdrop of the alleged rape and murder of a trainee doctor in Kolkata.



Addressing the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort on the 78th Independence Day, Modi expressed profound concern over incidents of rape and violence against women and said he can feel the outrage of people.

"Crimes against women should be probed swiftly, and stringent punishment given to those who commit such demonic acts," Modi said, stressing the need for societal introspection and creating fear of consequences among perpetrators.

"Today, from the Red Fort, I want to express my pain. As a society, we will have to think seriously about the atrocities against our mothers, sisters, and daughters. There is anger among common people because of this. I can feel that rage," he said.

He also said such disturbing incidents continue to occur.

The fear of punishment must be instilled among the

perpetrators, he said. "Those who commit such sins should know that they will be hanged."

He also urged the country, society, and state governments to "address this matter with utmost urgency."

"There must be a swift investigation into crimes against women, and those responsible for these horrific acts should face strict punishment without delay," he said.

His comments come in the backdrop of the horrific rape and murder of an on-duty trainee doctor at a government hospital in Kolkata last week which led to widespread protests. The postgraduate trainee doctor was allegedly raped and brutally murdered on August 9. A civic volunteer was arrested in connection with the crime the next day.

Addressing the issue of advancements in women's rights, Modi discussed the extension of paid maternity

leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks.

"The extension of paid maternity leave is not just about respect for women but also about making thoughtful decisions to ensure that the child in a mother's care becomes an exemplary citizen," he said. He underscored that this change reflects a compassionate and constitutional approach to supporting working mothers and their children.

He hailed the inclusion of approximately 10 crore new women in self-help groups, highlighting their growing role in family decision-making and broader social change.

"We are proud to see that women are becoming economically self-reliant. When women become self-reliant, they participate in family decision-making processes, which will ensure significant social transformation," he said.

Modi drew a parallel between the global success of Indian CEOs and the achievements of these women. "While our CEOs gain global recognition, one crore women are becoming Lakhpati Didis".

Modi said the government has allocated between Rs 10 and 20 lakh to these groups with a total of Rs 9 lakh crore provided in support so far.

## Hospital may take weeks to restore

**Kolkata:** Rooms and spaces housing 18 departments have been vandalised by a mob in state-run R G Kar Medical College and Hospital and it may take weeks for restoration, a senior official of the health department said on Thursday.

Massive vandalism was witnessed in the emergency, staffers' room, changing room for nurses and medicine store in the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday, he said, adding almost all the CCTV cameras were also broken.

A portion of the seminar hall, where a woman doctor was allegedly raped and murdered, was also vandalised and doors were damaged, he said.

A group of around 40 people entered the hospital and vandalised the emergency department, nursing station, and medicine store, while also damaging CCTV cameras and ransacking a stage where junior doctors had been demonstrating since August 9 protesting the alleged rape and murder of the woman postgraduate trainee there and demanding security at their workplace.

The West Bengal Doctors' Forum (WBDF) strongly condemned the unprecedented violence and vandalism that took place at the hospital past midnight on Independence Day.

**Page 11 - accusations over vandalism**



Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Former President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla during the 'At Home' reception hosted by President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday. Pic: PTI

## Ajit hints at withdrawal from Baramati

By Correspondent

**Mumbai:** Anticipating possible debacle in Baramati Assembly constituency, the Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Thursday went on backfoot and announced that he is not interested to contest the forthcoming election to the state Assembly. This has virtually created flutter in the political circle.

Pawar said that till now I have contested seven to eight elections. But now I am not interested in entering the fray this time



around. If the parliamentary board of the party decides then my son Jay Pawar will contest from Baramati. Significantly, a couple

contest from Baramati.

Meanwhile, the sources have also pointed out that Pawar hasn't said that he will not contest. That means a window is still open. News is doing the rounds that he might contest from Karjat-Jamkhed constituency in Ahmednagar district. Presently Rohit Pawar Rohit Pawar, the grandnephew of Sharad Pawar is representing this constituency.

State NCP chief Sunil Tatkare later said Ajit Pawar did not say that he would not contest the coming assembly elections.

## Family gets back bag containing Rs 25 lakh worth of gold

**Mumbai:** A family managed to get back a bag containing gold worth Rs 25 lakh that was left behind in an aggregator cab in Jogeshwari in the western part of Mumbai, a police official said on Thursday.

The search for the bag started after 46-year-old businessman Nazir Ul Hasan approached Oshiwara police station on August 10 and filed a complaint about the missing ornaments, he said.

"As per Hasan's complaint, his family had travelled from Vasai in neighbouring Palghar district to Jogeshwari on August 9 in an Uber cab. After they alighted at Adarsh Nagar in Jogeshwari, the family collected the luggage but soon realised one piece was missing. A call to the driver of the cab did not elicit a proper answer and then he refused to respond," the official said.

## 15-year-old charged with rioting in UK

**London:** A 15-year-old boy on Thursday became the first person to be charged with rioting following a wave of violent unrest that swept across the UK.

Britain's Crown Prosecution Service said the teen, who cannot be identified for legal reasons, would appear at South Tyneside Youth Court later Thursday and be asked to enter a plea. He was charged following disorder in Sunderland in northern England on August 2.

"This defendant is one of a number of individuals who we expect will be charged with riot," said Gale Gilchrist, chief crown prosecutor for northeast England.

Hundreds of people have been arrested since riots erupted on July 30 after misinformation spread online that the suspect in a knife attack that killed three children was



a Muslim asylum-seeker. Protesters fuelled by far-right activists attacked a mosque in the town of Southport, where the girls were killed, and the violence soon spread to cities and towns across the country.

Many have been charged with violent disorder and sentenced, but

no one had so far been charged with rioting, a more serious offense that carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison.

Last week, a 26-year-old man who used social media to encourage people to torch hotels that house asylum-seekers was sentenced to more than three years in prison.

## 7 TTP terrorists killed in Pakistan

**Peshawar:** Seven terrorists belonging to the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan were killed by the security forces during an encounter in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the army said on Thursday.

In a statement, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) - the media wing of the army - said that an intelligence-based operation was conducted on the reported presence of terrorists in the Kurram district.

It said security forces effectively engaged terrorists of the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and seven were killed while five were injured.

"Khwarij's (terrorists) hideout was also busted and

a large quantity of weapons, ammunition & explosives was recovered," it said, adding that the slain terrorists were involved in numerous terrorist activities against the security forces as well as innocent civilians.

## Mpox case in Sweden first outside Africa

By Correspondent

**Mumbai:** A day after the World Health Organisation (WHO) mpox a global public health emergency for the second time in two years Sweden reported its first mpox case on Thursday. With this, Sweden has also become the first country outside the African continent to report the more contagious strain of mpox virus.

"A person who sought care in Stockholm has been diagnosed with mpox caused by the clade I variant. It is the first case caused by clade I to be diagnosed outside the African continent," Sweden's Public Health Agency said in a statement.



WHO Director General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the emergence of a new clade of mpox, its rapid spread in eastern DRC, and the reporting of cases in several neighbouring countries are

very worrying. "On top of outbreaks of other mpox clades in DRC and other countries in Africa, it's clear that a coordinated international response is needed to stop these outbreaks and save lives," he said.

The mpox outbreak was reported in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) that has spread to other countries.

**What is mpox?** Mpox, formerly known as monkeypox, is a viral disease primarily spread through close contact with an infected person or animal. This can include direct contact with body fluids, skin lesions, respiratory droplets, or contaminated materials like bedding. The virus can also be transmitted from animals to humans, typically through a bite, scratch, or direct contact with the animal's bodily fluids.

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# Performance Anxiety Sparks Tensions Between Shiv Sena and NCP



By Abhijit Mulye

**Mumbai:** As Maharashtra's state assembly elections loom, rising performance anxiety is fueling tensions between the Shiv Sena and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). The discord, which surfaced during a recent state cabinet meeting, reflects a broader competition between the two coalition partners that could soon permeate down to the grassroots level, with both parties eyeing similar constituencies.

At the Tuesday cabinet meeting, several significant decisions were made, including a politically charged extension of city council heads' tenures from 2.5 to 5 years. However, it was not the decisions themselves but a heated exchange between Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar that prolonged the meeting. According to sources, the delay

stemmed from a dispute over a proposal sent by the Chief Minister's office to the finance department.

The Chief Minister's office was reportedly pressing for the file's swift approval, while Finance Minister and DCM Ajit Pawar insisted on a thorough review before signing. During the meeting, when Pawar reiterated his need for time to scrutinize the file, CM Shinde retorted, reminding him of the numerous files he had cleared for Pawar without similar scrutiny. The job reportedly stung the Deputy Chief Minister, leading to a visible escalation in tempers. Shiv Sena ministers, including Tanaji Sawant, also became more aggressive following the exchange, according to a senior official from the CMO.

Such confrontations were common during the previous Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, but the Maha Yuti alliance had, until

recently, enjoyed a relatively peaceful tenure. However, the intensifying rivalry between the two parties is now tarnishing the ruling coalition's reputation, the official added.

In addition to the spat with DCM Pawar, CM Shinde expressed dissatisfaction with the sudden removal of Agriculture Secretary V. Radha. The issue arose when Minister Dhananjay Munde, rather than the department's secretary, began reading the crop survey summary. Upon inquiry, Shinde was informed that the previous secretary had been relieved of her duties. This unexpected change irked the Chief Minister, while Munde also voiced his frustration over the repeated rejection of proposals related to Nano Urea.

The meeting was further marred by a clash between two secretaries. Women and Child Development Secretary Anup Yadav, while discussing the government's new flagship scheme 'Ladki Bahin', criticized the lack of AADHAR linkage for 2.7 million eligible women. When IT Secretary Parag Jain offered suggestions, Yadav brusquely told him to focus on his own department. CM Shinde intervened, reminding Yadav that everyone present had the right to contribute ideas.

These incidents highlight the growing friction within Maharashtra's ruling alliance, as the stakes rise ahead of the elections.



Students of Anjuman-E-Islam School and College celebrate Independence Day, at CSMT, in Mumbai on Thursday  
Pic: Bhushan Koyande

# Tension in Mumbra over Tipu Sultan

By Correspondent

**Mumbai:** Tension was created for some time in Mumbra city yesterday morning when the Social Democratic Party of On one hand the entire country was celebrating Independence Day yesterday, in Mumbra near Thane witnessed some unrest over the posters of Tipu Sultan.

On the occasion of Independence Day, the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) took out a tricolour procession. The SDPI workers were seen with the tricolour and posters of Tipu Sultan in their hands. When police objected to the poster of Tipu the mob started the heated argument with them. The verbal scuffle went on for



some time.

A banner and posters of Tipu Sultan were displayed in the tricolour rally which created tension in the city. When police noticed the posters they intervened and stopped the rally. The cops asked organisers to remove the placards with the poster of Tipu Sultan.

However, the workers of the organization started arguing with police officials. They raised the query that why should they remove the poster. Heated argument went on for some time. Initially the SDPI workers refused to remove the banner. As a result tension was created for some time.

After some time the workers relented and mob was dispersed and the rally was concluded peacefully. Along with the posters of Tipu placards of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Doctor Babasaheb Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi, Rani Laxmibai and other freedom fighters were also seen in this rally.

Two days ago, the poster of Tipu Sultan, which was

put up in the same area, was later removed by the municipal administration. SDPI workers gathered at Mumbra railway station and took the march up to Kausa. A chunk of people associated with the outfit participated in this procession. The situation is under total control and totally normal, police clarified.

After this incident, BJP leader MLA Nitesh Rane said that some jihadists are staying in Mumbra and other places in Maharashtra.

It may be recalled that the celebration of Tipu Sultan's birth anniversary has caused many controversies. Two years ago, the BJP had opposed naming of the sports complex in Malad after Tipu Sultan.

# CM will be decided after elections: Patole

**Nagpur:** Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole on Wednesday said the Opposition's Maha Vikas Aghadi alliance will decide its chief minister after the assembly elections.

Maharashtra prospered due to the efforts of the first chief minister Yashwantrao Chavan and the chief ministers who followed him, but the BJP-led Mahayuti government has "mort-

gaged this prosperous state to Gujarat", he alleged, talking to reporters here.

"The Maha Vikas Aghadi (of Congress, NCP-SP and Shiv Sena-UBT) will together decide on the post of chief minister after the elections. Hence, Congress does not want to talk about it now," he said in reply to a question about who would be the alliance's CM face.



# Need all party meet for quota issue: Ajit Pawar

**Pune:** Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Thursday battled for an all-party meeting to discuss the Maratha quota issue.

Talking to PTI during his Jan Sanman Yatra, Pawar said the opposition parties cannot be neglected since they too represent the people.

"Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange wants quota under 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 Ladki Bahin Yojana, under which women get Rs 1,500 per month as aid if their annual family income is less than Rs 2.5 lakh, Pawar said it will be launched on August 17 at an event in Balewadi here with beneficiaries getting money for July and August. The event will be attended by CM



Shinde and Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis.

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.

Speaking about seat sharing for the upcoming state polls, Pawar said he had spoken to CM Shinde and Fadnavis two to three times and the talks were positive.

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

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".

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 on speaking about mistake. I am the master of my mind. I speak my mind. I am a straightforward person."

Pawar said he now has the huge responsibility of leading his party (after the split). "Till now (Sharad) Pawar saheb was our leader, our chief. When I joined politics, we were in the Congress and there were many leaders. In 1999, the NCP got formed. From 2004, I got more responsibility and I started enjoying my job. Now the final decision is mine," he said.

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 Fadnavis and some other leaders arrested during MVA rule, Pawar said he knew nothing about the matter.

"I have never heard anything about this. I do not do any negative work. Everyone knows me. I do what I feel right," the NCP chief asserted.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY



Sanjay Raut  
Shiv Sena  
(UBT) leader

**"When Uddhav Thackeray was chief minister, he hoisted the national flag at Mantralaya on Independence Day. Next year, on Independence Day, the chief minister of Thackeray-2 government, will hoist the national flag at Mantralaya."**

# Rail passengers to tone down protest

By Correspondent

**Mumbai:** Rail passengers' associations on Wednesday decided to tone down the protest planned on August 22, saying they would not enter railway station premises or influence commuters to sport black bands or participate in the stir. The decision was taken following a marathon 2.5-hour meeting

between the associations and Central Railway (CR).

"We will participate in the protest on August 22 indirectly. Although we will wear white shirts and sport black bands, as planned earlier, we will not distribute bands inside railway station premises," said Nandkumar Deshmukh, president, Thane Railway Pravasi Sangh.

The protest was initially planned over demands like ensuring timely services of suburban locals, giving priority to suburban trains over long-distance trains during peak hours, adequate utilisation of the fifth and sixth lines for separating long-distance and suburban trains, and creating a unified transport body for Mumbai and MMR.

# Shinde capitalises his struggle

By Shoumojit Banerjee

**Mumbai:** Amid much fanfare, a book on the life of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde was inaugurated last week which saw the attendance of Maharashtra's political crème de la crème.

The book titled 'Yodha Karmyogi - Eknath Shinde', detailing Shinde's hard-scrabble life projects the Chief Minister as a Stakhanovite struggler who beat the political odds to reach the top.

Besides Governor C.P. Radhakrishnan and Deputy CMs Devendra Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar, the entire Shinde family including the CM's father were also present on the occasion.

The book launch saw Ajit Pawar lavishing praise on Shinde, calling him "a real

hero" and commending the CM's boldness to exit the Maha Vikas Aghadi government and again to establish a new government (Mahayuti) with two other alliance partners (BJP and Ajit Pawar's NCP).

The book release follows close on the heels of a film 'Dharmaveer 2' - a sequel which further explores the saga of Shinde's fiery mentor, the late Anand Dighe - known as the Bal Thackeray of Thane - with the pointed tagline "Traitors of Hindutva will not be spared".

The strategic timing of both the book and the film release, on occasion of Shinde's completion of two years in office, was not lost on anyone. Ahead of the crucial State Assembly election, Shinde's Shiv

Sena is throwing everything into the kitchen sink in taking the war to the rival Shiv Sena (UBT) camp led by Uddhav Thackeray, erstwhile CM and Sena (UBT) chief.

In June 2022, the crisis triggered by Shinde's revolt, which vertically split the 57-year-old Shiv Sena founded by Uddhav's father - the late Bal Thackeray - and had toppled the tripartite Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government led by Uddhav, had dramatically altered Maharashtra's political equation.

The first part of 'Dharmaveer', touching on Anand Dighe's life and Shinde's relationship with his mentor, was released prior to Shinde's rebellion, thus projecting him as Dighe's heir and the true

legatee of the Shiv Sena's ideals as envisioned by Bal Thackeray.

In the period between his revolt and the Lok Sabha election, the ruling Shiv Sena faction have strenuously projected Shinde's image of a humble and hard-working doer, someone not born with a 'platinum spoon' like Aaditya Thackeray, Uddhav's son.

The Shinde camp have striven to show the coterie around Thackeray as arrogant, with the Sena (UBT) chief considered a faineant chief, inaccessible to his MLAs or the party cadre.

However, despite Shinde's personal qualities and strong equation with the BJP, there has long been a perception that his influence as CM has remained circumscribed only to his

stronghold Thane.

The Uddhav Thackeray led Sena (UBT) won nine of the 21 seats it contested on (within the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi) in the general election while Shinde's Shiv Sena won seven of the 15 seats it was allotted within the ruling Mahayuti coalition. It also had the best strike rate in the ruling coalition: the BJP performed dismally managing to win barely nine of the 29 seats while Ajit Pawar's NCP won just one of the four seats it fought on.

The Shinde Sena's performance belied the dire predictions of political Casandras, who, prior to the Lok Sabha had claimed the CM's party would manage to win barely a couple of Lok Sabha seats.

The Lok Sabha results



have proved that the resonance of the "Thackeray" name still endures, with a significant section of the party rank-and-file remaining aligned to Uddhav Thackeray despite the Elec-

tion Commission awarding the Shiv Sena name and iconic 'bow and arrow' symbol to Shinde's faction.

As the clock ticks ever closer to the Assembly election, it remains to be seen if

Shinde, with the release of a book and a film convince the electorate that he, and not Uddhav Thackeray, is the real legatee of political ideals of Bal Thackeray and Anand Dighe.

# One crore women to benefit: Fadnavis

By Shoumojit Banerjee

Mumbai : Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday said more than one crore eligible women in the state will start getting Rs 1,500 financial assistance per month under the government's 'Ladki Bahin' scheme after its launch on August 17.

Speaking to reporters, he said some eligible women already received Rs 3,000 as the instalment for two months on Wednesday during the scheme's trial run.

"The scheme is set to commence this Saturday. The state government expects that more than one crore eligible women will begin receiving Rs 1,500 per month," he said.

The state government initially announced the scheme's launch on August 17. However, it has now been clarified that July will be considered the starting month of the Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana. Eligible women will receive an initial instalment of Rs 3,000 (for two months), he said.

The scheme was included in the supplementary



## 'LADKI BAHIN' SCHEME

budget of the Maharashtra government and is projected to incur an annual cost of Rs 46,000 crore to the state exchequer.

This is a flagship scheme of the Eknath Shinde-led Maharashtra government on the lines of 'Ladli Behna Yojana' in Madhya Pradesh introduced by the

previous Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led dispensation.

Assembly elections in Maharashtra are likely to be held in October or November.

The government, in which Shiv Sena, BJP and NCP are sharing power, is trying to project the financial assistance being provided under the Ladki Bahin scheme as the Raksha Bandhan gift to women.

Raksha Bandhan will be celebrated on Monday.

## Australian discharges in drugs case

Mumbai: A special court discharged an Australian national booked in connection with the drugs case filed after the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput stating that there is no evidence against him.

Paul Bartels was booked with the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) claiming that he is a drug distributor, linking him to co-accused including, Agisilaos Demetriades who is the brother of actor Arjun Rampal's partner. Bartels is the first accused to be discharged in the case.

"...there is no sufficient ground for proceeding against the applicant/accused. As there is no material to prove the factum of actual involvement of the applicant/accused in the commission of the alleged offence, no charge can be framed against the applicant/accused No.25 (Bartels) on the basis of the material on record," special judge Mahesh K Jadhav said in the order passed on August 9.

## Metro-1 crosses five lakh footfalls

Mumbai: The city's first metro line has crossed the footfall of five lakh passengers. The line Versova-Andheri-Ghatkopar is also called the Blue Line. Most of the passengers boarded and alighted at Andheri, Ghatkopar, Saki Naka and Western Express Highway stations where the Blue Line meets suburban trains, Metro 7, 2A, and also connects commercial and office spaces.

The weekday ridership on the Blue Line in 2023 was in the range of 4 lakh to 4.50 lakh. From January to July, it stood at 4.50 lakh to 4.60 lakh. At the beginning of August 2024, it went up to around 4.85 lakh and reached 5,00,385 on August 13.



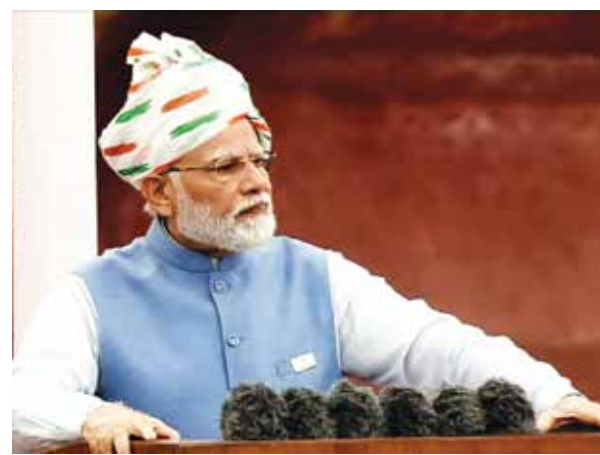
Devotees carry the idol Lord Ganapati to the pandal ahead of the Ganesh Chaturthi festival, in Mumbai on Thursday  
Pic: Bhushan Kayande

# PM's Independence Day Speech: Unwavering Resolve

By Abhijit Mulye

Mumbai: In a robust display of resolve, Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered his 11th Independence Day address from the Red Fort on Thursday, underscoring that recent electoral setbacks have not dampened his administration's spirit. Addressing the nation, Modi signalled that despite the government's reliance on coalition partners such as the Janata Dal (United) and the Telugu Desam Party—both of which may not fully align with his policy agenda—the administration remains steadfast in pursuing key reforms outlined in the party's manifesto.

In his 78th Independence Day speech, Modi reaffirmed his commitment to ambitious policy initiatives, including the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) and the 'One Nation, One Election' proposal. Reflecting on the vision of the Constitution's framers, he emphasized the



necessity of transitioning to a secular civil code, asserting that a communal civil code has prevailed for 75 years and must now be replaced to eradicate religious discrimination. "The need of the hour is a secular civil code," Modi declared. "We have lived under a communal civil code for decades; now it is time for change. Only then can we achieve true freedom from religious discrimination." He invited citizens from all walks of

life to engage in discussions to realize this vision.

Modi also praised the Ram Nath Kovind committee's report on the feasibility of One Nation, One Election, and called on political leaders to actively participate in advancing this concept. "Standing before the tricolour from the Red Fort, I urge all political parties who respect the Constitution to maximize the use of India's resources for its progress and to work towards realizing the dream

of One Nation, One Election for the common good," Modi asserted.

The Prime Minister's stance on these contentious issues may not be well received by his coalition partners. The JD(U) was the first to respond, expressing reservations about the UCC. JD(U) spokesperson Neeraj Kumar emphasized the need for extensive consultations with diverse religious and regional groups. "The UCC is a highly sensitive issue that requires broad-based discussions to build a consensus," Kumar stated.

While the TDP has yet to publicly respond, its reliance on Muslim voters suggests it may be wary of openly supporting the UCC and other controversial reforms.

Despite potential friction with coalition allies, Modi's speech has signalled a clear intent to persist with the government's core promises by focusing on its electoral pledges.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY



Sai Tamhankar actor

"Make a rule on this Independence Day. Capital punishment for the rapists. Free the women from their womanhood."

## Freedom Trail to be completed in January

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) 'Freedom Trail' project is likely to be completed in January next year. The project is meant to revamp a 2-km pathway between August Kranti Maidan and Swarajya Bhoomi. This stretch contains several landmarks integral to the Independence movement.

The pathway will highlight several landmarks crucial to India's independence movement, including the modest hall on Tejpal Road where the Indian National Congress

was founded by Allan Octavian Hume in 1885, and the August Kranti Maidan, where Mahatma Gandhi launched the Quit India movement.

The project was initiated in 2022 to mark the 80th anniversary of the Quit India Movement. It aims to enhance the footpath with basalt stones while preserving the historical significance of the area.

The BMC has made a provision of Rs 16 crore for this project. Almost 80 per cent work of the project is reportedly completed. The only work remaining is the stretch between Wilson College and Swarajya Bhoomi.

## Teen girl goes to friend's birthday celebration,

Thane: A 16-year-old girl who went for a birthday celebration on August 12 has gone missing, a Thane police official said on Thursday.

The girl, a resident of Dombivli, went to her friend's house for the birthday function and is untraceable since, the Vishnumagar police station official said.

"A kidnapping case has been registered under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita provisions on Tuesday on the complaint of the child's parents. Further probe is underway," he said.

## Akasa makes emergency landing

By Correspondent

Mumbai: A Varanasi-Mumbai flight of Akasa Air with 172 passengers on board on Thursday made an emergency landing at the Raja Bhoj Airport here after a passenger fell sick, an official said.

While the passenger was declared dead after an examination by doctors, the flight left for Mumbai at around 6pm after mandatory inspection formalities were completed, an official said.

Akasa Air flight QP1492, flying from Varanasi to Mumbai on 15 August 2024, made a diversion and landed in Bhopal on account of a medical emergency on board. Despite the best efforts of our cabin crew and



a doctor on board who provided immediate assistance, the passenger, unfortunately, passed away," the airline said in a statement.

"Our thoughts are with the relatives and loved ones of the deceased passenger. We acknowledge the efforts of our cabin crew and the assisting doctor for their swift response to this emergency," the airline added.

Later in the evening, airport director Ramji Awasthi told PTI, "The flight left for Mumbai at 6pm after the aircraft maintenance engineer of the airline arrived

from Ahmedabad and gave the mandatory green light for the onward journey after examination."

Awasthi said airport authorities asked Air India to provide refreshments to the passengers during the stop over since Akasa Air does not operate from the Raja Bhoj facility.

The pilot contacted the Air Traffic Control and made emergency landing at 11.40 am after a passenger faced a serious health issue, and he was rushed to hospital in a critical condition. Awasthi told PTI earlier.

## Elderly man booked for molesting girl

Thane: The Thane Police have registered a case against an elderly man in Thane district of Maharashtra for allegedly molesting an 11-year-old girl, an official said on Thursday.

The incident occurred in February and again on August 5 in the building where the accused and the victim live, he said.

As per the complaint, the 61-year-old accused took the minor to the terrace of the building, located in Mumbra area, and the parking area and touched her inappropriately and molested her, the official said.

Based on a complaint lodged by the victim, the

police on Wednesday registered the FIR under section 74 (assault or use of criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and also the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act against the accused at Mumbra police station.

This is the third such incident in Thane district in last couple of months. The residents have complained that the miscreants are roaming free without fear of the law. They have demanded that strict action should be taken against the culprits and the girls should be provided protection.



Chief Minister Eknath Shinde appreciated the inaugural edition of The Perfect Voice on Thursday.

## Merchant duped of Rs 21 lakh

Thane: A cloth merchant from Bhiwandi in Maharashtra's Thane district was allegedly cheated of Rs 21.43 lakh by five persons from Gujarat, an official said on Thursday.

Based on a complaint filed by the 55-year-old victim, the police have registered a case against the accused, he said. "The accused had purchased grey cloth from the complainant between April and August 2023, but did not pay the bill amount of Rs 21,43,097. Despite repeated reminders, the accused did not respond to his calls, after which the man lodged the police complaint."

## Man booked for cheating three persons of Rs 1.92 crore

Thane: Police have registered a case against a man from Navi Mumbai in Maharashtra for allegedly cheating three persons to the tune of Rs 1.92 crore on the pretext of procuring wine shop licences for them, an official said on Thursday.

The Bhiwandi police in Thane district registered the case against Amol Shahji Patil, a resident of Ulwe in Navi Mumbai for duping the trio residing in Dombivli.

"In July 2021, the accused approached the victim posing as a staffer of Mantralaya (state secretariat in Mumbai) and told them that he could obtain liquor licences for two shops. He

also showed the signed documents purported to be issued by the state excise department," he said.

He took a total of Rs 1,92,24,593 from the three victims between June 2021 and December 2023 and gave them the wine shop licence copy, which he claimed was issued by the Thane district collector and the excise department.

The victims later realised that they were duped and lodged a police complaint.

The case against Patil was registered under Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections 420 (cheating), 467, 468 and 471 (all pertaining to forgery) at Shanti Nagar police station and others.

## Play a role in achieving goal: Jaiswal

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA) celebrated India's 78th Independence Day at its headquarters in Bandra East. The flag was



hoisted by MHADA's Vice President and CEO Sanjeev Jaiswal.

The Maharashtra Security Force, and MHADA's security team saluted the flag. MHADA officers and staff attended the ceremony in large number. Jaiswal honored MHADA employees who are ex-servicemen for their service to the nation. Jaiswal said the grievances received during MHADA's Lokshahi Din programs underline the need for strategic policy decisions. He said the success of these programs depends on the resolution of citizens' complaints and urged every MHADA employee to play a role in achieving this goal.

## EDITORIAL

## Enigma of 'Secular Civil Code'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 78th Independence Day speech, delivered from the ramparts of the Red Fort, was a canny tapestry of political messaging, nationalist fervour and a rallying cry for national unity.

Among the myriad topics he touched on, the implications of his reframing of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) as a 'secular civil code' was particularly intriguing. By coupling the term 'secular' with the UCC, Modi appeared to assuage the concerns of those who fear that a UCC might erode religious autonomy.

Modi emphasized the importance of implementing a UCC, arguing that the current civil code is communal and that a secular UCC was essential to eliminate religious discrimination. He referenced the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution, which advocate a UCC, and subtly criticized the opposition for opposing the UCC while claiming to protect the Constitution.

The contentious UCC has long been a hobby horse of the ruling BJP. The PM's reframing marks a significant shift in the discourse surrounding the UCC, with the PM appearing to position the proposed code not just as a tool for uniformity, but as a mechanism for fairness and equality that transcends religious boundaries.

Given that the UCC has been a fiercely polarizing issue with minority communities viewing it as a threat to their religious freedoms, Modi's calling it a 'secular civil code' could be an effort to assuage these fears.

The reframing is significant as the BJP has not been able to form the government on its own after the Lok Sabha election, being compelled to lean on its allies - the JD(U) and the TDP - who have had reservations on the UCC issue.

In the wake of the rape and murder of a trainee doctor in Kolkata, the Prime Minister's mention of crimes against women in West Bengal without actually naming the Trinamool Congress (TMC) government was a direct and pointed reference that transcended mere concern for women's safety. It was a calculated political message aimed at the TMC government led by Mamata Banerjee, which has often found itself at odds with the central government.

West Bengal has long been a focal point of BJP's political strategy. However, the saffron party was utterly routed by the TMC in the recent Lok Sabha election.

By highlighting crimes against women, Modi not only underscored the law-and-order challenges in the state but also sought to portray the TMC government as ineffective in safeguarding the rights and dignity of women. The PM's speech, in reinforcing the BJP's narrative of "lawlessness" under the TMC rule, appeared to lay the ground for the party ahead of the 2026 West Bengal Assembly election.

While Modi acknowledged regional concerns stemming from recent events in neighbouring Bangladesh and expressed hope for a swift return to stability, he underscored the importance of safeguarding Hindu and minority communities, thereby highlighting his government's commitment to safeguarding the interests of Hindus worldwide - a narrative that resonates deeply with the BJP's core voter base.

From Independence to Exploitation:  
India's 78-Year Journey

By  
Rajan Rajee

The conclusion of the 16th Lok Sabha Election was aptly termed the Rockefeller Moment for Corporate India. The real economic power shifted towards crony capitalists or oligarchs, with influence now flowing from the Corporate Club 2.0.

Just as how Sita was kidnapped by Ravana, democracy has been hijacked by Crony Corporations replacing Corporatism with Corporate terrorism'. This fusion of corporates with governance has led to 'fascism' in India, obliterating democratic processes.

The contract-labour system, emerging from this power shift, has enriched the political apparatus with lucrative labour contracts, while fostering a harmful industrial-silence, across the industries in India. Contract labour is exploited like disposable tissue and remains silenced. This system and outsourcing have helped keep wages low and created instability and insecurity among the working class.

The contract-labour system has unleashed new forms of slavery and neontouchability pushing a large portion of the working class to the periphery of the development. This process has led to 'socio-economic exclusion which is harmful to the environment, fitting Nobel laureate Amartya Sen's description of India, as, islands of California, in a sea of Sub-Saharan Africa.'

We have succumbed to exploiting human weakness rather than building on human strength, turning civilization backward. The law of the jungle, where might is right, now prevails, with the powerful thriving while the weak are pushed aside.

Corporations compete by exploiting

employees, hiding their inefficiencies, insatiable greed, and corrupt practices. Now, it is hard to find price wars in the open-market competition, and the real-time competition is in exploitative measures and marketing gimmicks. The contract-labour system and outsourcing are the newfound tools, in the hands of corporate sharks, with widespread collusion with corporates, politicians, the judiciary, and the labour department.

Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP), which focuses on promoting and protecting the downtrodden's economic interests, have been compromised through a criminal conspiracy between the political and capitalist domains of our country. Corrosive effects of malevolent and ominous corporate influence on public policy, political processes, and especially, the environment are glaringly open to anybody's scrutiny, who is still left with some remnants of sensitivity.

Not only the working class belonging to this generation, but the future generations, are susceptible to the severest of risks, and the carcinogenic effect of this exploitative technique. The long-term potential implications are beyond blue-collar and white-collar employees in India, if not for the world.

Inequality has been sharply rising since 2014. As per the recent Oxfam report, the top 1% in India holds more than 40% of wealth, creating a Billionaire Raj.

Developed countries like Japan or Korea hardly have the kind of blood-billionaires India has solely because the inheritance ends almost after the fourth generation, owing to the progressive and coercive rates of inheritance tax!

We are now entering the 78th year of independent India, when we can ask ourselves whether the soul of a nation, long suppressed has found utterance or whether we have been able to fulfill a pledge to bring freedom and opportunity to the peasants and workers—who are the real wealth-creators of our nation?

India has been able to create unparalleled wealth within a few decades. But the distribution of this wealth has been totally lopsided and grossly uneven.



As India marks its 78th Independence Day, the shift to crony capitalism has turned democracy into corporate terrorism. The contract-labour system has replaced traditional labour rights with exploitation and instability. This systemic shift, marked by rising inequality and compromised regulations, reflects a troubling reversal from the nation's original promises of freedom and equality.

This has given rise to the inhuman income disparity or inequality across our country, spawning a fleet of blood-billionaires.

The workers and farmers of India were promised a trickle-down theory, once the enormous wealth through the LPG Policy (Liberalisation, Privatisation, and Globalisation) could have happened. A promise that was never fulfilled. Instead, workers were handed out neo-

slavery and neo-untouchability through the rampant spread of the contract-labour system.

So independence has not reached the lowermost strata of society, i.e. working class, or if at all, it had ever reached; it has been snatched away after the advent of the LPG era by the present-day Vampire-State System!

The writer is labour union leader.  
Views personal

Breaking Barriers: The Impact of  
Abrogating Article 370

By  
Prof. Dr. Kulbushan Mohtra



The abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019 marked a significant turning point in Jammu and Kashmir's journey towards development. Its removal led to its full integration into the Indian Union, paving the way for development programmes. Since then, Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed significant development and growth potential driven by new infrastructure, investment schemes, and employment programmes driven by the Central government.

**The abrogation of Article 370 has profoundly impacted Jammu and Kashmir, driving national integration, economic growth, enhanced security, and improved infrastructure. Government initiatives are crucial to the region's ongoing progress and future stability.**

aged investments and job opportunities in the region.

• **Development Schemes** Following the abrogation, the Central Government has extended National Development Schemes and welfare programmes to Jammu and Kashmir, thereby enhancing healthcare, infrastructure, and education.

• **Security and Stability:** Frequent unrest and insecurity have deterred tourists and investors. Since the abrogation of Article 370, Jammu and Kashmir has become a more peaceful, stable, and secure state, attracting tourists and investors.

• **Growth in Industries and Trade:** The government has introduced plans to establish special economic zones and industrial parks, which will lead to significant growth in trade and manufacturing sectors.

## INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT:

• **Roads and Transportation:** The government has invested in the con-

struction and improvement of roads, railways, and airports promoting economic growth and improving the overall quality of life for residents.

• **Water supply and electricity:** New power projects and water supply schemes have been introduced, enhancing the residents' living standards.

• **Education and Healthcare Services:** New schools, colleges, and universities have been opened, and existing institutions have been upgraded. New hospitals and health centres have been established, providing better medical facilities.

• **Empowerment of Women and Youth:** Special programs are being implemented to empower women and youth, providing better education, employment opportunities, and promoting entrepreneurship to enhance their economic status.

• **Cultural Preservation and Heritage Conservation:** Efforts have been made to preserve and promote tourism through the rich cultural

heritage of Jammu and Kashmir by organizing cultural festivals, exhibitions, and events.

• **Temporary Nature:** Originally intended as a temporary provision, critics believed Article 370 outlived its purpose as circumstances changed, rendering it obsolete.

• **Environmental Conservation and Sustainable Development:** The special status limited the flow of capital and hindered the implementation of central laws.

The abrogation of Article 370 is crucial for future development and a step towards greater national integration. It also paves the way for uniform, legal, and constitutional governance across all states, promoting equality and consistency. Economically, it opens the region to investments. Politically, it contributes to a more peaceful environment. In the long run, these changes are expected to bring about greater social and economic progress, ensuring a brighter future for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, and strengthening the nation.

Anyone who argues against the abrogation of Article 370 should understand that common citizens desire safety, security, food, a stable livelihood, and a better future for their children.

Jai Hind!

The writer is a politician  
from Jammu. Views personal

Can India become  
a Vishwaguru?

By  
Prof. Jagannadha Pawan  
Tamvada

While attending an academic conference and staying near the very place where Swami Vivekananda addressed the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, I was tempted to quote lines from his famous speech in 1893 that highlighted the magnificence of Hindu thought:

"I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth.

I will quote to you, brethren, a few lines from a hymn that I remember to have repeated from my earliest boyhood, which is every day repeated by millions of human beings: 'As the different streams having their sources in different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee.'"

Swamiji's clarion call in his speech to end "all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal" presents a new basis for the social, political, and economic transformation of the world. Going beyond the divisions of power, wealth, or religion, we need new thinking to create inclusive models of socio-economic progress that will see nations cooperate in the fields of education, entrepreneurship, technology, and sustainability to empower humanity to flourish collectively. In practice, this will reflect in the cessation of all wars, bringing back fairness in our collective conscience and demonstrating a willingness to share knowledge to enable all humanity to progress. But how can such a goal be achieved? India can play an instrumental role by initiating

India is poised to take on the role of Vishwaguru through global transformation by forging educational partnerships and leveraging its ancient wisdom to cultivate a new generation of responsible global citizens and leaders through value-based learning and a focus on spiritual unity.

new partnerships in the field of education around the world. Ancient Indian knowledge, with its emphasis on the oneness of spirit and value-based learning, can transform students' formative attitudes in schools and colleges leading to a new generation of responsible global citizens and leaders. It can inspire inclusive policy-making in countries around the world, as it has done in India. For instance, by banking the unbanked and aiming to provide healthcare, food, and energy security to all households, India is implementing its age-old wisdom to take everyone forward.

Through initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance, International Yoga Day, start-up support, vaccine diplomacy, and presenting the G20 with the theme "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (the world is one family), India has emphasised the principles of shared prosperity that define its global leadership.

India offers a glimmer of hope to a world torn apart by terrorism, exploitation, inequality, and racism because the spirit of love, acceptance, and tolerance, gushing through its arteries and veins, is ever reinforced by the belief in the oneness of God in its heart as Swamiji said in Chicago. The time has come for this unique message to reverberate worldwide, having within itself precious seeds of universal brotherhood, peace, and progress. And India is uniquely placed as the Vishwaguru with the moral authority to deliver it emphatically.

# Five messages in PM Modi's Independence Day speech

**New Delhi:** On Thursday, Narendra Modi became the third Prime Minister to have delivered Independence speech from the ramparts of Red Fort for 11 times. He became the first non-Congress PM to do so. He is short of Indira Gandhi (12) and Jawaharlal Nehru (17).

In his speech Modi addressed core ideological issues, underlining the need to move towards a "secular civil code" instead of the existent "communal civil code". The PM spent most of his time of the speech reeling out statistics about the work done by his government in multiple sectors over the last decade.

Here is a look at the new things he addressed.

## WOMEN'S SAFETY

The PM Modi made an indirect reference to the rape and murder of a trainee doctor at the R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata. "There are a few points of worry too. Our women are being tortured. There is anger among the people and I can feel it. There must be quick investigation and punishment against those who abuse women. There is a lot of news when there is an incident, but there is no talk of offenders being punished. This is why there is no fear. We need to instill a sense of fear amongst those abusing women."

## WAR ON CORRUPTION

The PM defended the central agencies acting against some Opposition leaders. He said citizens were tired of corruption and that he was waging a war against it. "Every citizen is tired of corruption. We have waged a war on it and I have to pay a price for it, but there is no price to pay when it comes to the nation. My fight against the corrupt will continue."



Can anyone imagine that there are some people who are supporting corruption in broad daylight? This is a major challenge," he said.

## BANGLADESH TURMOIL

Narendra Modi had raised concerns over the safety of Hindus in Bangladesh. On Thursday, he congratulated Mohammad Yunus on taking charge after Sheikh Hasina fled the country facing an uprising. In a way, Modi sent out a message for the neighbouring country expressing his willingness to maintain peace.

## 'SECULAR CIVIL CODE'

Modi reframed the BJP's demand

for a common civil code to do away with the Muslim personal law as a call for a "secular civil code". He said India has had a "communal civil code" for long. "The Supreme Court has repeatedly discussed a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in India. It is true that the civil code that we have is a communal civil code. It is based on discrimination. It is our duty to fulfil the vision of our constitution makers," said the PM. His framing of words may lead to another controversy.

## ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION

Modi has given a clear hint that he would not change his functioning and thought process because

the BJP had fallen short of a majority on its own. He once again called for simultaneous elections at the Lok Sabha and the state Assemblies. He pointed out that the Ram Nath Kovind Committee, which had been set up to study the idea's feasibility, had given a good recommendation for the same. "Frequent elections are creating a problem for the country. Policies and work are being associated with elections. There have been discussions on this. One nation, one election is important. I appeal to political parties and those who understand the Constitution that we should move towards one nation, one election," said the PM.

## Abusive childhood linked with more cognitive difficulties than estimated: Study



**New Delhi:** Experiencing abuse as a child is related to more cognitive difficulties as an adult than previously thought, a new study has suggested.

Researchers said that difficulties in cognition or intellectual activity involving thinking, reasoning and memory, linked to childhood maltreatment, especially neglect, have been "grossly underestimated in previous studies."

This is because of biases in previous studies resulting from overly relying on accounts of participants who self-reported abuse from recall, which might be prone to effects of memory and subjective appraisal, said the authors, including those from King's College, London.

"While there are some important exceptions, most research in this area

has relied on retrospective reports of childhood maltreatment from adult participants. Our study has shown that this reliance on retrospective reports has likely resulted in researchers and clinicians underestimating the extent to which individuals with documented cases of maltreatment, and particularly neglect, are experiencing cognitive deficits," said co-author Andrea Danese, a professor of child and adolescent psychiatry at King's College London.

In this study, published in the journal *Lancet Psychiatry*, the researchers compared the cognitive abilities of adults having official records of childhood abuse and those reporting abusive experiences from recall.

The authors found that on an average, the adults

having official records of childhood maltreatment showed cognitive deficits across most tests undertaken as part of the research, compared to those having no official records.

Further, the participants who self-reported abuse from memory did not demonstrate deficits in cognition, when compared with those without reports, the team found.

"Our study highlights the importance of identifying young people who have experienced neglect so that the proper support can be put in place, for example, to mitigate the negative consequences in education and employment," Danese said.

More research is needed to understand why individuals with documented histories of neglect have cognitive deficits, the authors said.

## SPOTLIGHT

# Slumcity Dharavi looks at another Independence

By  
Naresh Kamath

Can proposed transformation of Asia's largest slum cluster promise freedom for its residents?

600 acres – Area of Dharavi

1255 acres – Land for rehabilitation of Dharavi residents

8 lakh – Number of residents

Rs 5,069 crore – Value of tender for redevelopment

Rs 25,000 crore – Size of redevelopment plan

Rs 3 lakh crore – Estimated value of redeveloped land

Rs 2.50 lakh – Amount required to get a pucca house after redevelopment

With around a million residents crammed across a square mile of prime real estate in Mumbai, Dharavi, considered not just Asia's but one of the world's biggest slum clusters, has long been visual shorthand for urban poverty and overcrowding.

In spite of its infamy, Dharavi, with its endless expanse of aluminium rooftops, has been noted as a pulsating economic zone with thriving small-scale industries.

The resilience of its citizens leading hardscrabble lives has entered media folklore through films like the Oscar-winning 'Slumdog Millionaire' (2008) and 'Gully Boy' (2019). So much so that operators have run slum tours around Dharavi, which however, have been censured by some as 'poverty exploitation'.

The first serious attempt to transform Dharavi came in February 2004, with the then Congress-led coalition government helmed by then Chief Minister the late Vilasrao Deshmukh mooting the ambitious 'Dharavi Revamp Project' – a mega-urban redevelopment initiative that aims to transform this densely populated area into a modern, sustainable community.

The revamp project is seen as potential upliftment and freedom from the squalor of slum life for its citizens.

Deshmukh, with his avowed intent on "transforming Mumbai into Shanghai", had promised that the project would transform the lives of Dharavi's residents by moving them from slums to plush apartments.

However, since then, the project had been languishing on the backburner with successive State governments unsuccessfully attempting to entice private developers to take it on with the promise of rich dividends.

A breakthrough came in 2022 when India's richest man, industrialist Gautam Adani and his Adani Realty won the bid for the project by quoting Rs 5,069 crore in November that year.

Adani's company beat its closest competitor, the DLF group which had submitted a bid of Rs 2,025 crore. This was in the backdrop of previous bid being cancelled in 2020 on technical grounds in which Adani was outbid



Pics : Bhusan Koyande

by the UAE backed consortium, which had cried foul over this move.

The revamp plan includes constructing high-rise residential buildings to replace the slum dwellings, ensuring that every family has access to modern, safe, and hygienic living conditions.

S.V.R. Srinivas, the official in charge of the project, has called it "by far one of the most complex tasks ever to be undertaken in the world."

## The project plan

The project plans to create dedicated industrial zones with improved infrastructure, which will help these businesses grow and become more competitive. Formalizing these enterprises will not only enhance productivity but also provide workers with better job security and access to social benefits.

Access to quality education and healthcare is a critical component of improving living standards in the cluster. The Dharavi Revamp Project includes plans to build schools and healthcare facilities within the community in a bid to ensure that children here receive a quality education, opening up better employment opportunities in the future. Similarly, accessible healthcare services will improve overall health outcomes, reducing the burden of disease and increasing life expectancy.

"Dharavi's residents have been deprived from basic hygiene facilities,"



says BJP leader Divya Dholey. "They deserve a better life. The redevelopment will also upgrade their lives."

## The informal economy

At the same time, Dharavi's 'informal' economy has long been considered to essay a vital role in Mumbai's overall economy. The diverse range of industries, from pottery and textiles to recycling and leather goods, provides livelihoods for many residents and contributes significantly to the city's economy.

They view the cluster as not just a physical space but also a vibrant cultural and social hub. The rich tapestry of cultural practices, festivals, and social networks in Dharavi contributes to its residents' strong sense of identity and belonging, as per

some activists.

This cultural significance reinforces the community's resistance to displacement and redevelopment.

Despite living in insalubrious conditions, many citizens refuse to budge, alleging that the revamp project will only benefit the rich and powerful.

Currently, Dharavi residents as well as the opposition parties have all rallied against the project saying it was being tailor-made by the state government to suit the Adani group.

In addition, the Eknath Shinde-led Mahayuti government's decision to allot rental houses to ineligible residents (those after cut-off date of January 1, 2000) and that also outside Dharavi have ruffled more feathers.

For this the developers, Dharavi Redevelopment Project Limited (DRPL) have acquired 1255 acres of land from various government agencies.

## The eligibility issue

The activists have alleged that over 60 percent of the current slum dwellers are ineligible for revamp as the slums constructed after January 1, 2000 – the cut-off date for eligibility.

The revised rules state that only residents of slums on ground floor built prior to January 1, 2000 will get free homes at Dharavi itself. After that, residents living in slums beyond this date whether ground or upper storeys will be accommodated in rental houses outside Dharavi. Here those residents living between 2000-2011 will get houses on payment of Rs 2.50 lakh. After 2011 all will be given rental housing with the right to purchase them.

Raju Korde, coordinator, Dharavi Bachao Andolan, a residents association calls the whole rental proposal as absurd and unacceptable. "Other developers could easily rehabilitate the entire people in Dharavi itself but here despite seeking excess land, they seek to deprive us of our ownership of our houses. We will not take rental house and going out of Dharavi is out of question. It is we who built this thriving township out of swamp and after enduring unbearable hardship over decades are not allowed to decide our fate," he says.

## BRIEF

**Cognizant to give 1-5 per cent hike**  
Cognizant Technology Solutions has declared annual wage hikes as minimal as 1 percent to some employees, amidst a controversy over the company's decade-low compensation packages for new recruits. The highest increase was up to 5 percent. These increments were introduced with a four-month gap. In 2023, Cognizant increased its workers' salaries in April, with the highest increase being between 7 percent and 11 percent.

**Kalpataru files for IPO**  
A real estate firm based in Mumbai, Kalpataru, has submitted a draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) with the aim of launching its initial public offering (IPO). Company is planning to raise up to Rs 1,590 crore through this IPO. The main goal of this IPO is to reduce company's financial debt.

**Mahindra launches new SUV for Rs 12.99 lakhs**  
Mahindra & Mahindra launched its new SUV -- Thar ROXX at Rs 12.99 lakhs. Bookings for the vehicle will open online and at Mahindra dealerships from Oct 03, 2024, and test drives will start from Sept 14, 2024 while deliveries will commence this Dussehra.

**Ola Electric launches motorcycle**  
Ola Electric has launched its Roaster series in two variants-- 8kWh and 16kWh, with an introductory price of Rs 1.99-2.49 lakh, respectively called as Roadster Pro. The deliveries will start from Diwali 2025. The budget friendly variant, the Roadster X, is priced at Rs 74,999 with 2.5 kWh battery pack.

## DP World's half-year profits fall nearly 60 per cent

**Dubai:** Dubai-based port operator DP World reported on Thursday its half-year profits fell by nearly 60 per cent, in part over the ongoing attacks by Yemen's Houthis rebels over the Israel-Hamas war that have affected shipping through the Red Sea.

DP World reported profits of USD 265 million this year, down from USD 651 million the same time last year. DP World Group's chairman and CEO, Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem, acknowledged that the Red Sea disruptions affected the firm's revenues.

"The year 2024 has been marked by a deteriorating geopolitical environment and disruptions to global supply chains due to the Red Sea crisis," he said in a statement included in the results. "While the near-term trading outlook remains uncertain due to macroeconomic and geopolitical headwinds, the resilient financial performance of the first half ... positions us well to deliver stable full year adjusted" profits.

Bin Sulayem did not elaborate on what specific effects the Houthi attacks had been having on DP World, a government-owned shipper that in recent years removed itself from the Nasdaq Dubai stock exchange.

## Nearly 2,000 housing projects stalled across 42 cities

**New Delhi:** Nearly 2,000 housing projects comprising 5.08 lakh units are stalled across 42 cities in the country, mainly due to financial mismanagement by developers and lack of execution capabilities, according to data analytic firm PropEquity.

As per the PropEquity data, there are 1,981 residential projects that are stalled totalling 5.08 lakh units. Of these stalled projects, as many as 1,636 projects totalling 4,31,946 units are in 14 tier I cities, while 345 projects totalling 76,256 units are in 28 tier II cities.

It also pointed out that the number of stalled units rose to 5,08,202 from 4,65,555 units in 2018. Samir Jasuja, Founder and CEO at PropEquity said, "The problem of stalled projects and the subsequent rise is due to the lack of execution capabilities of developers, cash-flow mismanagement and diversion of funds to buy new land banks or retire other loans."



He stressed on the need to provide independent third-party audit services for homebuyers to empower them to make an informed decision about the developers' capabilities to complete the project on time.

To address the issue of stalled projects, the government had launched the Special Window for Affordable and Mid-Income Housing (SWAMIH) Fund in November 2019.

In the last five years, around 32,000 units have been completed and the SWAMIH fund aims to deliver 20,000 homes every year for the next three

years, PropEquity said.

PropEquity data showed that Greater Noida in tier I with 74,645 units and Bhiwadi in tier II with 13,393 units have maximum number of stuck units.

Gurugram has 158 stalled projects having 52,509 units; Noida (103 projects 41,438 units); Ghaziabad (50 projects 15,278 units); Faridabad (16 projects, 7,060 units); and New Delhi (1 project 900 units).

In Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Mumbai has 234 stalled projects having 37,883 units, while Navi Mumbai (125 projects 28,466 units) and Thane (186 projects 57,520 units). Pune has

172 stalled projects comprising 24,129 units.

Bengaluru has 225 stalled projects comprising 39,908 units; Kolkata (82 projects 24,174 units); Chennai (92 projects, 21,867 units); and Hyderabad (25 projects, 6,169 units).

"Real estate disputes in various courts have been rising. To add to this, the backlog of stalled projects and the addition of new ones have put the onus on homebuyers to do their due diligence through professional experts before buying a house," Jasuja said.

Among tier II cities, PropEquity data showed that Bhiwadi has 13,393 stuck units in 33 stalled projects; Lucknow (13,024 units in 48 projects); Jaipur (9,862 units in 37 projects); and Bhopal (7,500 units in 27 projects).

P E Analytics Ltd owns and operates PropEquity. PropEquity captures real estate data for RERA approved projects in 44 Indian cities including 14 tier I cities and 30 tier II cities.

## Cisco cuts thousands of jobs, 7% of workforce

**San Jose:** Cisco Systems is planning to lay off 7% of its employees, its second round of job cuts this year, as the company shifts its focus to more rapidly growing areas in technology, such as artificial intelligence and cybersecurity.

The company based in San Jose, California, did not specify the number of jobs it is cutting. It had 84,900 employees as of July 2023. Based on that figure, the number of jobs cut would be about 5,900. In February, Cisco announced it would cut about 4,000 jobs.

The networking equipment maker said in June that it would invest \$1 billion in tech startups like Cohere, Mistral and Scale to develop reliable AI products. It recently also announced a partnership with Nvidia to develop infrastructure for AI systems.

Cisco's layoffs come just two weeks after chip-



maker Intel Corp announced it would cut about 15,000 jobs as it tries to turn its business around to compete with more successful rivals like Nvidia and AMD. Intel's quarterly earnings report disappointed investors and its stock took a nosedive following the announcement. In contrast, Cisco's shares were up about 6% after-hours on Wednesday.

In a foray into cybersecurity, Cisco launched a cybersecurity readiness index back in March to help businesses measure their resiliency against attacks.

Cisco Systems Inc said Wednesday it earned \$2.16 billion, or 54 cents per share, in its fiscal fourth quarter that ended on July 27, down 45% from \$3.96 billion, or 97 cents per share, in the same period a year ago. Excluding special items, its adjusted earnings were 87 cents per share in the latest quarter.

Revenue fell 10% to \$13.64 billion from \$15.2 billion.

Analysts, on average, were expecting adjusted earnings of 85 cents per share on revenue of \$13.54 billion, according to a poll by FactSet.

## Govt to launch 'Kisan Ki Baat'

**New Delhi:** The government is set to launch 'Kisan Ki Baat', a monthly radio programme aimed at bringing scientific knowledge to farmers, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan announced on Thursday.

This initiative seeks to modernise agricultural practices and empower farmers with cutting-edge scientific information.

The programme will feature agricultural scientists, department officials, and the minister himself, providing crucial information

on best practices and scientific advancements.

"Farmers often lack information, leading to misuse of pesticides. We must address this," Chouhan said, emphasizing the need for rapid transfer of scientific benefits to farmers.

'Kisan Ki Baat' is part of a larger strategy to revitalize India's agricultural sector. Chouhan stressed the importance of integrating Krishi Vigyan Kendras with farmers' needs and promoting discussions among agriculturists.

## Gold imports dip 4.23 pc to USD 12.64 billion in Apr-July

**New Delhi:** India's gold imports, which have a bearing on the country's current account deficit (CAD), dipped by 4.23 per cent to USD 12.64 billion during April-July 2024-25 due to global economic uncertainties, according to government data.

The imports stood at USD 13.2 billion in April-July 2023. In July alone, the imports declined by 10.65 per cent to USD 3.13 billion as against USD 3.5 billion in the same month last year. The inbound shipments were also in negative during June

(-38.66 per cent) and May (-9.76 per cent).

In April, the imports jumped to USD 3.11 billion from one billion in April 2023. According to a jeweller, the high prices are discouraging the imports but it will go up from September as festive season will start in India and the import duty cut benefit is also there.

The government has slashed the customs duty on gold and silver to 6 per cent from 15 per cent.

Gold prices rose Rs 300 to Rs 73,150 per 10 grams in the

national capital on August 14 amid a jump in precious metal rates in the international markets.

Switzerland is the largest source of gold imports, with about 40 per cent share, followed by the UAE (over 16 per cent) and South Africa (about 10 per cent).

The precious metal accounts for over 5 per cent of the country's total imports.

Despite the dip in gold imports, the country's trade deficit (difference between imports and exports) widened to USD 23.5 billion in

**NUMBERS SPEAK**

- USD 13.2 billion – The gold imports stood at in April-July 2023
- USD 45.54 billion – India's gold imports surged by 30 per cent in 2023-24

July and USD 85.58 billion during the first four months of this fiscal. India is the world's sec-

ond-biggest gold consumer after China. The imports mainly take care of the demand by the jewellery industry.

The gems and jewellery exports during April-July this fiscal contracted by 7.45 per cent to USD 9.1 billion.

India recorded a current account surplus of USD 5.7 billion or 0.6 per cent of GDP in the March quarter. For FY24, the current account deficit narrowed to USD 23.2 billion or 0.7 per cent of GDP against USD 67 billion or 2 per cent of GDP in FY23.

## India needs to improve cotton yield to remain competitive

By Correspondent

**Mumbai:** India needs to work on cotton yield improvement to remain competitive in the global context as its yield is extremely low at 460 kg per hectare compared to 780 kg in China, said a report by a stock brokerage house.

India and China are world's largest cotton producers with an almost equal amount of annual cotton production of 6 million tons. While China uses around 3.2 million hectares of land, India requires more than 13 million hectares of land for similar production, the report by Phillip Capital said.

The report was released in the backdrop of the Indian government unveiling 109 high-yielding, climate-resilient, and biofortified seed varieties, including Bt cotton suitable for rain-fed



areas, to enhance agricultural productivity and farmers' income. These seeds are developed by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) including 61 seed varieties for crops including 34 field crops and 27 horticultural crops at three experimental agriculture plots at Delhi's Pusa Campus.

The Indian government in order to compensate farmers for increased culti-

vation costs, supports farmers with improved minimum support price (MSP) every year and reduces volatility in cotton prices. In 2023-24, it raised the MSP for cotton by around 9 per cent and in the current year by 7.3 per cent.

So far, till February this year, higher cotton prices prevailed in the international market, which helped Indian cotton yarn players to export yarn and improve and spread. However, the current decline in international prices are not competitive at current international prices, the report said.

However, the launch of high yield varieties may bring in a structural change that will be positive for cotton spinning players, the report said.

## Federal Bank announces special offer on FDs

By Correspondent

**Mumbai:** Federal Bank has unveiled a unique Independence Day deal with attractive interest rates on term deposits. On this festive occasion, the private sector lender has raised its fixed deposit rates to 8.05% for the senior citizens.

For fixed deposits that can be called back, the bank has set new rates for terms of 400 days, 777 days, and 50 months. Ordinary people will get 7.35%, 7.40%, and 7.40%, respectively on these FDs. Senior citizens will enjoy fixed deposit rates of 7.85%, 7.90%, and 7.90%, respectively for these terms. In callable fixed deposits, customers have the freedom to withdraw some or all of their money before the maturity date.

For fixed deposits that cannot be called back, the bank is offering interest rates of 7.5%, 7.55%, and



7.55% for terms of 400 days, 777 days, and 50 months, respectively. Senior citizens will get fixed deposit rates of 8%, 8.05%, and 8.05%, respectively for these terms. These rates are applicable to fixed deposits of more than Rs 1 crore. In non-callable FDs, customers are not permitted to terminate or break the deposit before it matures.

"As we commemorate 77 years of Indian independence, Federal Bank is delighted to present these exceptional interest rates to our valued customers," Joy P V, Senior Vice President & Country Head – Deposits, Wealth & Banca at Federal Bank, said.

## Caustic soda prices globally robust, but domestic prices mild

By Correspondent

**Mumbai:** Caustic soda prices are now at their highest level since June last year, but the domestic market, despite following some positive trends have remained in the oversupply situation, said a top official of Grasim Industries.

Addressing investors and analysts after the Apr-Jun quarter performance, Jayant Dhobley, business head, Chemicals, Fashion Yarn & Insulator Business said, "Global caustic soda prices marks fourth consecutive quarter of improvement and are now at highest level since June 2023. While domestic markets have also followed some of these positive realization trends, India's caustic soda market continues to remain in an oversupply situation."

Apart from its usage in mak-



ing soaps and detergents, caustic soda, also known by its chemical name Sodium hydroxide combined with chlorine produces chlorine bleach to unblock drains and remove built-up grease from ovens among its other usages.

In July, global caustic soda prices were prevailing at USD 465 per ton, up 1.5 per cent on year while domestic prices were below USD 400 per ton, as depicted in the chart below.

Grasim's caustic soda sales volumes were lower by 4% year-on-year partially impacted by Vilayat plant shutdown for new capacity hook up.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY



**Bhupendra Patel**  
CM, Gujarat

**"We have so far attracted an investment of Rs 1 lakh crore in the electronics and semiconductor sector and India's first semiconductor chip will be manufactured in Gujarat."**

## AC makers' profits soar in April-June amid blistering heat

**New Delhi:** Air-conditioner makers have logged a high double-digit growth in revenue and several of them had over two-fold jump in profits during April-June quarter amid increased demand due to the blistering summer.

Companies such as Voltas, Blue Star, Whirlpool of India, Johnson Hitachi, and Havells which owns Llyods brand have reported a high growth trajectory in their top-line and bottom line, led by record sales in the April-June period.

Tata group firm Voltas, a leading player in the room AC segment, reported over two-fold jump in consolidated net profit at Rs 335 crore and its revenue from operation went up 46.46 per cent to Rs 4,921 crore.

Voltas also reported achieving the "milestone" of one million units of AC sales in the first quarter of FY25 and its total income crossed the Rs 5,000 crore-mark during the period.

In the first quarter of this financial year, Voltas' revenue from "unitary cooling products for comfort and commercial use" that come under its room AC business vertical was up 51.24 per cent to Rs 3,802.17 crore. Its



overall volume grew by 67 per cent in the AC segment in the April-June period. "The unitary cooling products business continued to outperform the market and maintained its growth momentum," it said, adding, "Voltas continues to be a market leader both in split and window air-conditioners with an exit market share of 21.2 per cent as on June 2024.

Blue Star also reported a two-fold increase in consolidated net profit at Rs 168.76 crore, while its revenue from operations rose 28.72 per cent to Rs 2,865.37 crore in the June quarter.

Its revenue from unitary products business, which includes room AC sales, registered a 44.31 per cent rise to Rs 1,729.52 crore during the period.

"With most parts of the country witnessing ex-

tremely high temperatures and an overall harsh summer, the increase in demand led to an unprecedented growth in the room air-conditioners business," it said.

During the quarter demand exceeded inventory plans of the business and while the company met most of the excess requirements through an increased production, it still lost some opportunities to cater to the entire demand that the season offered, Blue Star said. Similarly, Havells reported a profit of Rs 67.39 crore for Lloyd's business, which takes care of its room AC business. It had reported a loss of Rs 61.48 crore in the year-ago period.

Revenue from Lloyd business, a brand which was acquired by Havells in 2017, was up 47.43 per cent to 1,924 crore.

BRIEF

SBI, PNB in talks with K'taka govt

Mumbai: Hit by the surprising decision by the Karnataka government to stop all transactions with them, State Bank of India and Punjab National Bank on Thursday said they are engaged with the state for an "amicable resolution" on the matter.

In the first official comments after the Karnataka government decision, the state-run lenders issued separate statements, saying the matter at the root of the problem is subjective.

"As the matter is currently subjective, we are unable to provide any specific comments at this time. However, we remain in ongoing discussions with the Government of Karnataka to resolve the issue amicably," the SBI statement said. SBI's peer Punjab National Bank, also had a similar statement and pointed out that it will not be prudent to offer a specific comment on the matter.

"The Bank is committed for an amicable resolution of the matter and is in discussion with Government of Karnataka," the PNB statement said.

Karnataka government ordered all its departments, boards, corporations, public sector units and universities to withdraw all their deposits and investments in the State Bank of India and the Punjab National Bank and stop any business with these institutions on August 12. The order was reported on August 14.

The order came after the denial to redeem Rs 12 crore deposited by the Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board (KIADB) following a scam involving bank employees.

# Judge tells Google to brace for shakeup of Android app store



San Francisco: A federal judge has indicated he will order major changes in Google's Android app store to punish the company for engineering a system that a jury declared an illegal monopoly that has hurt millions of consumers and app developers.

Over the course of a three-hour hearing in San Francisco, US District Judge James Donato on Wednesday made it clear that the forthcoming shake-up he is contemplating will probably include a mandate requiring Google's Play Store for Android phones offer consumers a choice to download alternative app stores.

Donato has been weighing how to punish the Google since last December when a jury declared the Play Store a monopoly following a four-week trial. The verdict centred on Google's nearly exclusive control over distribution of apps designed for Android phones and the billing systems for the digital commerce occur-

ring within them -- a system that generates billions of dollars in annual revenue for the company.

In protesting the judge's potential requirements, Google has raised the specter of consumers' devices being infected by malicious software downloaded from third-party app stores, triggering "security chaos".

But Donato repeatedly hammered on the need for a major overhaul of the Play Store, even if it causes Google headaches and huge bills that the company has estimated could run as high as \$600 million, depending on what the judge orders.

"We are going to tear the barriers down, that is going to happen," Donato told Google attorney Glenn Pomerantz. "When you have a mountain built out of bad conduct, you are going to have to move that mountain."

Donato said he is hoping to issue an order outlining the framework for the changes to the Play Store within the next few weeks, possibly before the Labor Day weekend.

Google's tactics in the penalty phase of the Play Store case may foreshadow its strategy in a similar round of so-called "remedy

hearings" that will be held in an even bigger antitrust case that resulted in a judge branding the dominant search engine as an illegal monopoly, too. Those hearings focused on the crown jewel of Google's empire are scheduled to start Sept 6 in Washington, D.C.

In the Play Store case, Donato still appears to be grappling with how much time he should give Google to make the changes to its Android operating system and Play Store, and also for how long the restraints he imposes should remain in effect.

Google wants 12 to 16 months to make the adjustments to ensure a smooth transition and avoid glitches that could affect the performance of Android smartphones. Epic Games, the video game maker that filed the antitrust lawsuit that resulted in the Play Store being declared a monopoly, contends Google could do everything in about three months at a cost of about \$1 million.

Without revealing a timeline he has in mind, Donato indicated he isn't going to give Google as much time as it wants to make the required changes.

"Google is telling me it will take eons for all of this to happen, but I am sceptical about it," the judge said. "I am dubious that all that brainpower can't solve these problems in less than 16 months."

Epic Games wants whatever Donato orders to remain in effect for six years, but the judge said Wednesday that he thinks that proposal is too lengthy. He wondered aloud if a five-year term for his order might be more appropriate. Google wants the order to expire after one or two years.

Donato assured Google that he isn't going to attempt to micromanage its business, even as he braced the company for a significant shake-up.

"The whole point is to grow a garden of competitive app stores," the judge said.

# China's economic recovery dragged down by property slump



Beijing: A continued property crisis and weak consumption dragged on China's economic recovery in July, according to data released Thursday by the National Bureau of Statistics.

Unemployment rose for the first time since February, clocking in at 5.2 per cent, compared to 5 per cent in June.

Industrial production also rose more slowly than the previous month, showing a 5.1 per cent year-on-year increase in July, compared to a 5.3 per cent rise in June.

Retail sales grew slightly more than analysts had expected, rising 2.7 per cent year-on-year in July, compared to 2 per cent in June.

Statistics bureau spokesperson Liu Aihua said the recovery in consumption will be further consolidated given recent government policies to boost consumer spending.

Beijing announced plans last month to use 150 billion Yuan (USD 20.9 billion) in government debt to finance trade-ins for consumer goods such as appliances and cars to stimulate spending.

Consumption contributed around 60 per cent of China's economic growth in the first half of the year and is expected to assume an even bigger role in supporting the world's second-largest economy.

Exports, traditionally China's strongest engine for economic growth, are dampened by frictions with the United States and other Western countries.

Regarding urban unemployment — a ticklish problem for the ruling Communist Party — Liu said the 0.2 percentage-point rise over the previous month was due to the impact of the graduation season.

Investment in real estate dropped 10.2 per cent year-on-year in the first seven months of the year, after decreasing 10.1 per cent in the January-June period.

A prolonged slump in China's property market after regulators cracked down on excessive borrowing by developers unleashed a chain reaction that has pulled housing sales and prices lower and hit many other parts of the economy, such as construction, building materials and home appliances.

# Swan Energy to sell FSRU

New Delhi: Billionaire Nikhil Merchant-led Swan Energy Ltd has said it plans to sell its stake in a floating LNG receipt terminal to Turkey's state-run Botas for USD 399 million.

The company plans to sell assets of subsidiary Triumph Offshore Pvt Ltd to Botas Trading IC, according to a regulatory filing.

"The definitive documents shall be signed in due course," it said, adding the deal is likely to be completed

in six months. The sale consideration of USD 399 million is to be received in multiple tranches over an unspecified period.

Triumph Offshore Private Limited (TOPL) owns a 5 million tonnes a year floating storage and regasification unit (FSRU) called Vasant-1. Swan Energy holds 51 per cent in TOPL while fertilizer maker IFFCO the remaining 49 per cent.

The filing did not say if IFFCO is also offloading its

stake.

Swan is building a liquefied natural gas (LNG) import facility at Jafrabad in Gujarat. In the initial phase, gas, which is used to make fertilizers, generate electricity and turned into CNG and cooking gas, was to be imported in its liquid form after being super-cooled (called LNG) at the floating terminal. The liquid gas was to be reconverted into its gaseous stage at the FSRU before being transported



through a under-sea pipeline to onland for further sale to users.

However, the terminal commissioning was delayed due to pandemic and cyclone in 2022, and so Swan leased

out the FSRU to Botas for an initial period of 304 days.

TOPL took delivery of FSRU 'Vasant-1' on September 29, 2020 from Hyundai Heavy Industries Shipyard. -PTI

## QUOTE OF THE DAY



Anish Shah  
President, FICCI

"The prime minister's vision for India reflects the aspirations of all sections of our society and would galvanise all Indians to work towards the goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047."

# Bank fraud: ED attaches assets of Avantha Group

New Delhi: Land assets worth more than Rs 678 crore of the Avantha Group have been attached under the anti-money laundering law as part of an alleged bank loan fraud linked probe, the Enforcement Directorate said Thursday.

A provisional order under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) has been issued to attach the properties located in Haryana, Maharashtra and Uttarakhand.

The assets belong to various group companies of Avantha Group, "owned and controlled" by businessman



Gautam Thapar.

"On 19.08.2019, CG Power and Industrial Solutions Ltd had made disclosure under Regulation 30 of the SEBI (listing obligations and disclosure requirements) Regulations, 2015 to Bombay Stock Exchange and National Stock Exchange regarding findings which had potential implications on the financial

position of the company.

"The disclosure made by CG Power and Industrial Solutions Ltd. revealed that assets and liabilities of the company have been understated considerably," the ED said in a statement.

It was found that advances to related parties and unrelated parties have been understated, certain assets have been provided as collateral, company was made a co-borrower and/or guarantor for enabling financing of loans which were immediately routed out of the company without due authorisation, it said.

This notice of the disclosure, as per the agency, was taken by the lender banks and on the basis of complaint made by the SBI, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) registered a case in June 2021 against CG Power and Industrial Solutions Ltd., Gautam Thapar, K N Neelkanth, Madhav Acharya, B Hariharan, Omkar Goswami and unknown public servant(s) and private person(s) in perpetuating a "bank fraud" on the consortium of banks to the tune of Rs 2,435 crore.

The money laundering case of ED stems from this

CBI FIR. It has earlier attached assets worth more than Rs 14 crore and filed a chargesheet under the PMLA apart from arresting a "key managerial personnel" to the company named Madhav Acharya.

It was later detected that Rs 1,307.06 crore have been "diverted" to Avantha Group companies by availing loans, the ED said.

Most of these funds have been paid "without the due authorisation" of the board and the ultimately funds paid to Avantha Group companies remained outstanding, it claimed.

# Asian shares trade higher after Wall Street rise and Japan GDP data show growth

Tokyo: Asian shares were mostly higher Thursday after the latest update on US inflation came in almost exactly as economists expected, and data on Japan's economy showed relatively healthy growth.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 jumped 1.0% in morning trading to 36,808.75. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 rose 0.3% to 7,871.90. Hong Kong's Hang Seng added 0.5% to 17,198.86, while the Shanghai Composite surged 1.0% to 2,879.03. Trading was closed in South Korea for Liberation Day, a national holiday.

Japan's Cabinet Office data showed the world's fourth largest economy grew at an annual rate of 3.1% in the April-June period, marking a rebound from the contraction in the previous quarter.

The annual rate shows how much the economy would have grown or contracted, if the quarterly rate had continued for a year.

Domestic demand grew a robust 3.5% from the previous quarter on the back of



healthy household consumption and private sector investments, as well as government investments. Exports grew a booming 5.9%.

A major element of uncertainty, which focused on currency fluctuations and interest rates lately, now turned to the political sector, as Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party picks a new leader after Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced he won't seek re-election.

Although the next prime minister is widely expected to be another Liberal Democrat, signaling continuity in Japan's basic pro-U.S. business policies, there is no clear successor waiting in line. Some analysts think a younger candidate will have a better chance wooing voter support, plummeting under Kishida.

# Investment Advisers, Research Analysts should disclose AI tool usage to clients: SEBI

New Delhi: The Security and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has proposed that registered Investment Advisers and Research Analysts who employ artificial intelligence (AI) tools in their services must disclose the extent of usage to clients, emphasizing the importance of strong security measures to avoid unintended data exposure.

This transparency is crucial for clients to understand how AI tools contribute to their investment decisions and to make informed choices about their advisory services.

"The possibility of unintended data exposure highlights the need for strong security measures and clear disclosure to clients about the extent of AI tool usage", Trivesh D, COO at Tradejini, a stock trading platform, told PTI.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi), in its consultation paper earlier this month, highlighted the growing usage of AI tools in Investment Adviser (IA) and Research Analyst (RA) services.

With technological innovations and advancements, many AI tools are currently



available in chatbot form such as OpenAI's ChatGPT, Google's Gemini, etc.

AI-based tools allow one to have human-like conversations and receive human-like responses with the chatbot. These tools assist various tasks such as summarising and analysing data and may help in improving efficiency and productivity.

"These AI tools, however, may not adequately safeguard sensitive data shared during conversations, potentially leading to unintended data exposure and concerns related to data security," Sebi said in its consultation paper issued last week.

Feroze Azeez, Deputy CEO, Anand Rathi Wealth Ltd said "while embracing

this innovation, we must be mindful of its implications and responsibilities".

IAs provide personalised services according to client-specific requirements based on risk profiling and suitability. Similarly, RAs provide recommendations based on certain parameters and methodology adopted and are required to keep records of the research report, research recommendations and rationale for arriving at research recommendations.

While AI tools can provide significant assistance in the work of IAs and RAs, they may not always give meaningful outputs that are expected to be based on the understanding of complex security-specific or client-specific scenarios/ require-

ments such as personal/ financial conditions or goals, Sebi stated.

Further, such tools may not always provide all the information based on which output/ recommendation has been generated. For example, AI tools may not bring out whether the requirements of risk profiling and suitability have been complied with by IA, it added.

"An IA/RA who uses AI tools for servicing its clients must provide complete disclosure of the extent of use of such tools to its prospective clients, to enable them to take informed decisions of continuance or otherwise with the IA/RA," Sebi suggested in the consultation paper.

Considering that the investment advice/ research services provided by IA/RA based on AI tools would affect the investment decision of clients, Sebi said, the responsibility of data security, compliance with the regulatory provisions governing investment advisory services/research services lies solely with the IA/RA, irrespective of the scale and scenario of IA/RA using AI tools.

# Iconic motorcycle brand BSA debuts in India



Mumbai: Mahindra Group-owned iconic motorcycle brand BSA made its debut in India on Thursday with the launch of 652-cc Gold Star 650 model priced at Rs 2.99 lakh (ex showroom Delhi).

One of the oldest motorcycle companies in the world, Birmingham Small Arms Company (BSA), was acquired by the Mahindra group's premium motorcycles arm Classic Legends in 2016.

Classic Legends sells Jawa and Yezdi motorcycles in the country.

The BSA Gold Star 650, which made a comeback in the UK in 2021, is currently being sold in Europe, Turkey, New Zealand, and the Philippines.

"Bringing BSA to India is about sharing a piece of world motorcycling history

with India. That indomitable spirit of BSA, a brand built in the fires of battle, is imbued in the new Gold Star," said Anand Mahindra, Chairman Mahindra Group at the launch.

The BSA brand is also set to enter the US, Australia, and Japan markets soon, the company said.

Earlier this month, Classic Legends Private Limited (CLPL) inked a joint venture (JV) pact with Tube Investments of India Ltd (TIIL) to use BSA Marks in India.

Tube Investments is a part of the Murugappa Group of companies and manufactures bicycles, components, transmission and engine parts for four-wheelers and two-wheelers, automotive and industrial chains, precision steel tubes and fitness equipment.

# The Green Thumb

By Ajita Kale

How a Mumbaikar brought together people to work towards a cleaner and greener city

"On August 15, 2014 when I heard Prime Minister Narendra Modi speak about Swachhata, it touched my heart," says Vishal Tibrewala

Every journey needs a starting point, and for Vishal Tibrewala, the starting point was a speech by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 15, 2014, exactly a decade ago. He spoke about swachhata or cleanliness. Less than a year later, Tibrewala, a resident of Andheri East in Mumbai, started his NGO 'My Green Society' with the help of his neighbours, Ashok Goel, chairman of the society and Sushil Jajoo, a director of the society.

Founded on March 10, 2015, My Green Society was set up with the objective of offsetting our carbon footprint, aligning

with the country's goal to become a carbon-neutral country by 2070. They claim to be eligible for the CSR Fund to support their projects.

My Green Society has successfully planted 29 Akira Miyawaki forests, 50,000 native saplings, created four nectar gardens and created 25,000 seed balls. They've installed solar panels and CCTV cameras in seven public toilets. "I have cleaned 42 beaches with 16,000 volunteers and collected more than 20 tons of waste," says Tibrewala.

In the past decade, they have also conducted 13 mangrove clean-ups at Carter Road, Bandra, in which 1400 volunteers participated and three tons of trash were collected. Now, the NGO has renewed its MOU with the Mangrove Foundation until March 2025 to continue the work of rejuvenating the mangroves.

Under the GO BROWN



mission, the NGO has collected more than 20 tons of e-waste and processed it in collaboration with THRECO, The Recycling Company at Khopoli. More than 5000 kg of garden waste was collected and

converted to compost.

Another flagship project is upcycling old bedsheets into cloth bags called The-lus to avoid the use of single plastics. They work with tribal women from Palghar to stitch these bags and the NGO has made more than 85,000 the-lus and distributed around 81000 until now. With this, more than 130 tribal women have got employment at Wada. Fourteen out of 34 villages have been activated, and there is still a bandwidth of 20 more villages.

My green society works closely with BMC to reduce the single-use plastic menace by supplying The-lus every month on a free-of-cost basis. For effective distribution of The-lus after creating awareness in the public about the need to use cloth bags, they work with various centers of the Mumbai Grahak Panchayat with distribution support by an NGO called Dream Marol.

My Green Society has collected 20,000 flags and managed them as per the flag code of India. More than 500 kg of fruit peels have been converted into bio-enzymes. Similarly, 44 ponds have been de-silted in Wada district, a 4.5 km long canal has been created, and three rainwater harvesting setups have been created in Mumbai city.

My Green Society has specially designed a program for students from Grade 5 to 8 aimed at sensitizing them and pro-actively preparing them to work and counter the major issues faced by all of us, like global warming, pollution, and unseasonal rain. They have conducted more than 100 seminars with 25,000 attendees.

Their work is steadily growing and various organisations are partnering with My Green Society to work for making our cities cleaner and greener.

## India only G20 nation to achieve climate targets ahead of schedule: Modi

New Delhi: India is the only country among G20 nations to have achieved its climate targets under the 2015 Paris Agreement ahead of schedule, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday.

Addressing the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort on the 78th Independence Day, he said India's efforts to tackle the global challenge of climate change have "reassured and surprised" the world.

"I want to tell the world about the strength of my country's people. My country and its people have accomplished what other G20 nations have not.

"We have met the climate targets set under the Paris Agreement ahead of schedule. India is the only nation among the G20 countries to do so, and we are proud of it," the prime minister said.

As part of its updated national climate plan, or Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, India has committed to achieving 500 gigawatts (GW) of non-fossil fuel-based electricity installed capacity by 2030.

"People in other countries look at me in amazement when they hear the word '500 GW'," Prime Minister Modi said.

He expressed confidence that India will meet this target. "This is crucial for humanity and will serve as a guarantee of a bright future for our children," Modi said.

At present, the country has a power generation capacity of 446 gigawatts (GW), including around 195 GW from non-fossil energy sources.

## Extreme heat affecting children in Africa



Dakar: Children in West and Central Africa are increasingly exposed to extreme heat, which further endangers their health, according to a new report by UNICEF.

The frequency of heatwaves in the region has more than quadrupled since the 1960s, according to the report published on Wednesday. West Africa experienced an unprecedented heat wave earlier this year that led to a surge in deaths.

One hospital in Mali reported 102 deaths in the first four days of April, compared to 130 deaths in the entire month of April last year. It's unknown how many of the fatalities were due to the extreme weather as such data cannot be made public under the regulations imposed by the country's military rulers.

The extreme heat is creating health concerns for children and pregnant women as it is linked to higher chances of stillbirths, low birth weight and preterm births, according to the report.

"Exposure to high levels of heat also leaves children

more vulnerable to developing chronic diseases and contracting infectious ones that spread in high temperatures, such as malaria and dengue," David Knaute, a regional climate specialist for the UN's children agency, told The Associated Press.

Central Africa is currently battling an outbreak of mpox, previously known as monkeypox, an infectious disease that disproportionately affects children. Officials at the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said nearly 70% of mpox cases in Congo are in children younger than 15, who also accounted for 85% of deaths. On Wednesday, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak a global emergency.

The UNICEF report called on governments to reduce carbon emissions to get rising temperatures under control and protect children.

"They are growing up in countries that have contributed almost nothing to climate change but are facing some of the toughest consequences," Knaute said.



# Wildfires growing under climate change, study says

Los Angeles: As wildfires scorched swaths of land in the wine country of Sonoma County in 2020, sending ash flying and choking the air with smoke, Maria Salinas harvested grapes.

Her saliva turned black from inhaling the toxins, until one day she had so much trouble breathing she was rushed to the emergency room. When she felt better, she went right back to work as the fires raged on.

"What forces us to work is necessity," Salinas said. "We always expose ourselves to danger out of necessity, whether by fire or disaster, when the weather changes, when it's hot or

cold." As climate change increases the frequency and intensity of wildfires around the world, a new study shows that farmworkers are paying a heavy price by being exposed to high levels of air pollution.

And in Sonoma County, the focus of the work, researchers found that a program aimed at determining when it was safe to work during wildfires did not adequately protect farmworkers.

They recommended a series of steps to safeguard the workers' health, including air quality monitors at work sites, stricter require-

ments for employers, emergency plans and trainings in various languages, post-exposure health screenings and hazard pay.

Farmworkers are "experiencing first and hardest what the rest of us are just starting to understand," Max Bell Alper, executive director of the labor coalition North Bay Jobs with Justice, said Wednesday during a webinar devoted to the research, published in July in the journal Geo-Health. "And I think in many ways that's analogous to what's happening all over the country. What we are experiencing in California is now happening

everywhere."

Farmworkers face immense pressure to work in dangerous conditions. Many are poor and don't get paid unless they work. Others who are in the country illegally are more vulnerable because of limited English proficiency, lack of benefits, discrimination and exploitation. These realities make it harder for them to advocate for better working conditions and basic rights.

Researchers examined data from the 2020 Glass and LNU Lightning Complex fires in northern California's Sonoma County, a region famous for its wine.

## Athens burned area bigger than Manhattan

Athens: A European Union satellite mapping agency says 104 square kilometres (40 square miles) of land was burned northeast of Athens this week during a deadly wildfire that gutted scores of homes and prompted multiple countries to send assistance.

The Copernicus Emergency Management Service announced the damage estimate Wednesday, a day after the wildfire was contained in a massive effort that ended on the outskirts of the capital.



A factory worker was killed in the fire that swept through mountainous areas southward, covering an area almost twice the size of Manhattan and blanketing the Greek capital with a thick cloud of smoke.

The fire damaged 22 businesses and rendered at

least 78 homes uninhabitable, with nearly half of them completely destroyed, Greek officials said Wednesday. Inspections in fire-afflicted areas will continue in coming days.

Nine countries, including neighbor Turkey, sent assistance to Greece to boost ground crews and water-dropping planes and helicopters operating outside Athens.

The wildfire follows successive heat waves across southern Europe and low levels of rainfall this year.

According to an updated estimate by the National Observatory of Athens, over the past eight years 450 sq. kilometres (174 sq. miles) of forest have been burned in the Attica region that includes Athens. That amounts to 37% of the region's total forested area.

## Probe into landslide at tunnel site



Shimla: Taking cognisance of the landslide that occurred at the site of an under-construction tunnel on the Kaithlighat-Dhalli stretch of Kalka-Shimla four-lane project here in Himachal Pradesh, Deputy Commissioner Anupam Kashyap has ordered a magisterial probe into the matter, officials said on Thursday.

A massive landslide occurred on Tuesday on the under-construction tunnel near Shimla, leading to the collapse of a portion of the tunnel, thus disrupting the construction work. No loss of life has been reported in the incident.

The landslide took place near Chalaunti in the suburbs of Shimla when a part of the mountain under which a tunnel was being constructed fell on the entry point of the tunnel, resulting in the collapse of a part of the tunnel, officials

said. The investigation carried out by Additional District Magistrate (ADM) (Law & Order) Ajit Bhardwaj will find out the cause of the landslide i.e. whether it happened due to the negligence of an official or contractor, or was it a natural occurrence. A report on the investigation is to be submitted within two weeks.

Shimla DC Anupam Kashyap said safety of construction workers is of utmost importance. An investigation has been ordered to ensure adherence to all construction standards and to safeguard public safety, he said.

According to officials, 113 people have been killed in rain-related incidents since the onset of monsoon on June 27 (counted till August 14) and the state suffered losses of about Rs 1,083 crore in the period.

## Heavy rains continue in Kerala

Thiruvananthapuram: As heavy rains continued to lash several parts of Kerala, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Thursday issued an orange alert for two districts of the state.

The IMD sounded orange alerts in Kozhikode and Wayanad districts of the state, for the day.

It said that due to a cyclonic circulation over the Southeast Arabian Sea and South Kerala coast, the state would receive heavy rainfall between August 15 to 19.

The IMD also issued yellow alerts in the remaining 12 districts of Kerala for the day.

An orange alert means very heavy rain (6 cm to 20 cm) and a yellow alert means heavy rainfall between 6 to 11 cm.

The IMD also issued an orange alert in Pathanamthitta and Idukki districts for Friday.

It warned against going fishing in the Kerala - Lakshadweep - Karnataka coastal region from August 15 to 19, citing chances of strong winds and bad weather conditions.

## Ernesto becomes a hurricane

San Juan: Ernesto strengthened into a hurricane Wednesday as it dropped torrential rain on Puerto Rico and left nearly half of all clients in the US territory without power as it threatened to become a major storm en route to Bermuda.

The storm was located about 225 miles (365 km) northwest of San Juan, Puerto Rico and was moving over open waters. It had maximum sustained winds of 75 mph (120 kph) and was moving northwest at 16 mph (26 kph).

An island-wide blackout was reported in St John and St Croix, and at least six cell phone towers were knocked offline across the US territory, said Daryl Jaschen, emergency management director.

He added that the airports in St Croix and St Thomas were expected to reopen at midday.

Schools and government agencies remained closed in the US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, where heavy flooding was reported in several areas, forcing officials to block roads, some of which were strewn with trees. More than 140 flights also were cancelled to and from Puerto Rico.



Amid the relentless rain, officials opened one of Puerto Rico's biggest dams and evacuated some residents from the north coastal town of Toa Baja as torrents of churning brown water flowed toward it.

Between 4 to 6 inches of rain is expected in the US and British Virgin Islands and between 6 to 8 inches in Puerto Rico, with up to 10 inches in isolated areas.

Puerto Rico's power grid was razed by Hurricane Maria in September 2017 as a Category 4 storm, and it remains frail as crews continue to rebuild the system.

Rooftop solar systems are scarce but keep growing in Puerto Rico, where fossil fuels generate 94% of the island's electricity. At the time Maria hit, there were 8,000 rooftop installations, compared with more than 117,000 currently, according to the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis.

Ernesto is the fifth named storm and the third hurricane of this year's Atlantic hurricane season. Since 1966, only four other years have had three or more hurricanes in the Atlantic by mid-August, according to Philip Klotz-

## Met issues orange alert for Himachal

Shimla: Rain-induced landslides and flash floods in several parts of the Himachal Pradesh since the past week have thrown life out of gear, blocking over 120 roads, uprooting trees and inundating low-lying areas, according to officials.

A total of 126 roads, including two national highways, in the state are closed for vehicular movement, officials said on Thursday.

Meanwhile, the local meteorological office issued an 'orange' alert for heavy to very heavy rains on Thursday and a 'yellow' alert for heavy rain in isolated parts of the state till August 21.

Kangra, Sirmour and Bilaspur districts received heavy rains overnight, with some streams overflowing, trees uprooting and roads being waterlogged in Kangra.

Roads are being constantly closed and reopened owing to landslides, flash floods, and cloudbursts across the state. The number of roads shut on Wednesday evening increased from 75 to 126 on Thursday morning.

**NUMBERS SPEAK**

- 140 Flights cancelled to and from Puerto Rico
- 2,35,000 People without water as a result of power outages
- 7,00,000 People without power in Puerto Rico



# Taliban deprives 1.4 million Afghan girls of schooling



**Kabul:** The Taliban have deliberately deprived 1.4 million Afghan girls of schooling through bans, a UN agency said Thursday.

Afghanistan is the only country in the world with bans on female secondary and higher education.

The Taliban, who took power in 2021, barred education for girls above sixth grade because they said it didn't comply with their interpretation of Sharia, or Islamic law. They didn't stop it for boys and show no sign of taking the steps needed to reopen classrooms and campuses for girls and women.

UNESCO said at least 1.4 million girls have been deliberately denied access to secondary education since the takeover, an increase of 3,00,000 since its previous count in April 2023, with more girls reaching the age limit of 12 every year.

"If we add the girls who were already out of school before the bans were introduced, there are now almost 2.5 million girls in the country deprived of their right to education, representing 80 per cent of Afghan school-age girls," UNESCO said.

The Taliban could not be immediately reached for comment.

Access to primary education has also fallen since the Taliban took power in August 2021, with 1.1 million fewer girls and boys attending school, according to UNESCO data.

The UN agency warned that authorities have "almost wiped out" two decades of steady progress for education in Afghanistan. "The future of an entire generation is now in jeopardy," it added.

It said Afghanistan had 5.7 million girls and boys in primary school in 2022,

compared with 6.8 million in 2019. The enrollment drop was the result of the Taliban decision to bar female teachers from teaching boys, UNESCO said, but could also be explained by a lack of parental incentive to send their children to school in an increasingly tough economic environment.

"UNESCO is alarmed by the harmful consequences of this increasingly massive drop-out rate, which could lead to a rise in child labor and early marriage," it said. The Taliban Wednesday celebrated three years of rule at Bagram Air Base, but there was no mention of the country's hardships or promises to help the struggling population.

Decades of conflict and instability have left millions of Afghans on the brink of hunger and starvation and unemployment is high.

## Record number of candidates in Sri Lankan presidential race

**Colombo:** A total of 39 candidates, including three minority Tamils and two Buddhist monks, are in the fray for next month's presidential election in Sri Lanka, the election commission announced here on Thursday.

However, there was not a single woman candidate among the 39 presidential aspirants for the September 21 election.

In the last presidential election in 2019, there were 35 candidates while there were only six candidates in the first-ever presidential election held in October 1982.

On the last day to file papers on Thursday, nominations were accepted from 9 am to 11 am local time after Wednesday's closure of paying deposits to the contest.

There were 40 deposits paid but one of them has chosen not to file nominations.

R M A L Rathnayake, the election commission chief, said there were three objections against three candidates, which were rejected by the commission.

There were more than 17 million eligible voters in the 22 electoral districts throughout the island nation. Besides incumbent President Wickremesinghe, the other prominent candidates are Namal Rajapaksa, the 38-year-old heir to the Rajapaksa dynasty, the main opposition leader Sajith Premadasa and the Marxist JVP leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake.

This will be the first election since Sri Lanka plunged into economic crisis when the island nation declared sovereign default in mid-April of 2022, its first since gaining independence.



Fans of singer Taylor Swift, called Swifties, arrive at Wembley Stadium in London on Thursday for the first of five concerts of Taylor Swift's Eras Tour. AP/PTI

# Israel-Hamas war: Mediators hold cease-fire talks as Palestinian death toll nears 40,000

**Jerusalem:** International mediators were set to hold a new round of talks Thursday aimed at halting the Israel-Hamas war and securing the release of scores of hostages, with a potential deal seen as the best hope of heading off an even larger regional conflict.

The United States, Qatar and Egypt were to meet with an Israeli delegation in Qatar as the Palestinian death toll from the 10-month-old war nears 40,000. Hamas has not said whether it will participate, accusing Israel of adding new demands to an evolving proposal that had US and international support.

A cease-fire in Gaza would likely calm tensions across the region and may persuade Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah to refrain from retaliatory strikes on Israel after the killing of a top Hezbollah commander



in an Israeli airstrike and of Hamas' top political leader in an explosion in Iran's capital. The mediators have spent months trying to hammer out a three-phase plan in which Hamas would release scores of hostages captured in the October 7 attack that triggered the war in exchange for a lasting cease-fire, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and the release of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

11 children evacuated The World Health Organi-

Kerem Shalom crossing into Israel and were headed to neighboring Jordan for treatment. Seven of the children were transferred by ambulance and the remainder on a bus. The evacuation was organized by the WHO and two US charities.

Israel allows each patient to be accompanied by a female escort vetted by security services, who can bring a small bag of clothes, one mobile phone and a charger.

The war between Israel and Hamas, now in its 11th month, has decimated Gaza's health system. Most hospitals have shut down after running out of fuel or supplies, or following raids by Israeli forces. Israel accuses Hamas and other militants of sheltering in hospitals, allegations denied by hospital staff.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY



Donald Trump former President, US

"You know why she hasn't done an interview? She's not smart. She's not intelligent. And we've gone through enough of that with this guy, crooked Joe."

## Investigation into Katy Perry music video

**Madrid:** In her new music video, Katy Perry pretends to be one of the thousands of tourists having the time of their lives on Spain's Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean. But some parts, filmed in a protected natural enclave, could bring trouble.

The regional government is investigating the video for her latest song, "Lifetimes", for the clips in which the 39-year-old American singer and songwriter appears jumping and running across dunes of the Ses Salines Natural Park, a protected area on the islands of Ibiza and Formentera, apparently without permission.

The images taken on the dunes of the private islet of S'Espalmador, "one of the most ecologically valuable sites on the islands" and in an area cordoned off from the public with sticks and ropes, sparked the contro-

versy, according to local media.

The regional authorities have opened "preliminary investigation proceedings", according to a statement released on Tuesday, after the production company failed to apply for the appropriate permits.

The filming wouldn't have been an environmental offense, because this type of production can be authorised with a permit, the department of natural environment added.

Her label, Universal Music, said the local video production company had assured it that all necessary permits for the video were secured. When it learned one permit was still being processed, "we were given verbal authority to go ahead" a day before the shoot, which took place July 27, a label spokesperson said in an email to The Associated Press.

## Probe starts against Hasina

**Dhaka:** Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal has started an investigation against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and nine others on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity that took place from July 15 to August 5 during students' mass movement against her government.

A complaint was filed on Wednesday with the investigation agency of Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal against Hasina, Awami League general secretary and former road transport and bridges minister Obaidul Quader, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, and several other prominent figures within the party.

The complainant's lawyer Gazi MH Tamim confirmed on Thursday that the Tribunal started the probe, The Dhaka Tribune newspaper reported.

He said the investigation agency started the investigation on Wednesday night.



The Hasina-led Awami League along with its affiliated organisations is also named in the petition. The petition was filed by Bulbul Kabir, the father of Arif Ahmed Siam, a Class IX student who was killed during the anti-discrimination student movement.

Kabir's application accuses Hasina and others of orchestrating a violent crackdown on student protesters, resulting in widespread casualties and hu-

man rights violations. The complaint came on a day when the interim government said that the murders conducted within the period from July 1 to August 5 would be tried by the International Crimes Tribunal.

Separately, a case of enforced disappearance was filed on Wednesday against Hasina and several others, including former ministers of her cabinet, on the charge of kidnapping a lawyer in 2015.

# Modi to visit New York

**New York:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address members of the Indian-American community at a mega diaspora event here next month when he visits the US for the high-level UN General Assembly session. The community event will be held on September

22 at the 16,000-seater Nassau Coliseum in Long Island.

Modi is scheduled to address the high-level UN General Assembly session here on September 26, according to a provisional list of speakers issued by the UN.

Sources told PTI that preparations are in full swing for the community event in Long Island, coming 10 years after Modi had addressed a massive community gathering at the famed Madison Square Garden in New York in September 2014.

# No bidders for Suu Kyi home

**Yangon:** A second attempt to auction the family home of Myanmar's imprisoned former leader Aung San Suu Kyi failed on Thursday after no bidders showed up, likely deterred by the court-ordered asking price of \$142 million.

Suu Kyi spent 15 years in the home under house arrest, hosting visiting dignitaries including U.S. President Barack Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and many see it as a historical landmark in her nonviolent struggle against military rule, for which she won the Nobel Peace Prize.

The minimum sale price of 300 billion kyats was a reduction from the initial attempt in March to get 315 billion kyats, about \$150 mil-



lion at official rates.

With black-market exchange rates, which better reflect the real value of the kyat — which has been plummeting — the March asking price was about \$90 million and the current price was closer to \$46 million — still a lot to pay in a country in the middle of a civil war where nearly half the people are living below

the national poverty line of 76 U.S. cents per day, according to the United Nations.

Proceeds from the sale of the 1.9-acre (0.78-hectare) lakeside property in Yangon were to be split between Suu Kyi and her estranged older brother. Suu Kyi's lawyers had challenged the auction order.

The attempted auction was held in front of the

closed gates of the property, which has served as an unofficial party headquarters and a political shrine for the country's pro-democracy movement.

It lasted less than one minute before a district court official announced there had been no bidders and she ended the proceedings.

According to legal procedures, the court will continue to handle the auction process, but the details are not yet known.

The two-story colonial-style building in Yangon, the country's largest city, was given decades ago by the government to Suu Kyi's mother, Khin Kyi, after her husband, independence hero Gen. Aung San, was assassinated in July 1947.

Suu Kyi, 79, remained

there after her 2010 release from house arrest until moving in 2012 to the capital, Naypyitaw, to serve in parliament. She became the nation's leader after a 2015 general election.

Her elected government was ousted in an army takeover in February 2021, and Suu Kyi is now serving a combined 27-year sentence after being convicted of a string of criminal charges.

Her supporters and independent analysts say the charges were concocted to discredit her and legitimize the military's seizure of power.

The court-ordered auction followed a bitter decades-long legal dispute between Suu Kyi and her brother, Aung San Oo, who has sought an equal division of the property.



French President Emmanuel Macron welcomes Togo's President Faure Gnassingbe during a ceremony marking the 80th anniversary of the Allied landings in Provence during World War II, at the Bouldour National Cemetery in Boulour



# Who is better in saluting the flag?



Yogi Adityanath  
Rajnath Singh  
Eknath Shinde  
Revant Reddy  
M.K. Stalin  
J.P. Nadda

Dattatreya Hosbale  
Uddhav Thackeray  
Bhupendra Patel  
N. Chandrababu Naidu  
M. Siddharamaiah  
Bhagwant Mann

## Congress attacks PM over seating, civil code and Nehru

By Correspondent

**New Delhi:** The Congress on Thursday said that making Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi sit in the fifth row at the Independence Day celebrations at the Red Fort shows the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "pettiness" and lack of respect for democratic traditions.

The opposition party's attack came after sources involved in organising of the event said all seating arrangements were done "as per the table of precedence". They said it was decided this year that "Paris Olympics medal winners" would be honoured as special guests at the Independence Day celebrations.

Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete claimed that Prime Minister Modi is

a person with a "petty mindset" and he keeps giving proof of that himself. "It is futile to expect big things from small-minded people. Narendra Modi certainly showed his frustration by making Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi sit in the fifth row during the Independence Day celebrations, but this does not make any difference to Rahul Gandhi and he will keep raising issues of the people as he has been doing," she said in a video statement on X.

Gandhi was seen sitting behind a few rows of seats, which were occupied by members of the Indian contingent that took part in the recently-held Paris Games.

**Gross insult to Ambedkar**  
The Congress also took exception to Prime Minister



Narendra Modi's "communal civil code" remark, saying it was a "gross insult" to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and alleged that the PM's capacity for "malice, mischief, and maligning" of history was on full display from the Red Fort.

In his Independence Day address Modi said, "A large section of the country be-

lieves, which is true also, that the civil code is actually in a way is a communal civil code. It discriminates (among people)."

Slamming the PM, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, "The non-biological PM's capacity for malice, mischief, and maligning of history knows

### Some trying to destroy brotherhood: Kharge

**New Delhi:** Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Thursday said "some forces" are trying to destroy "our brotherhood" by forcibly imposing their views, and urged people to be ready to make sacrifices to protect the Constitution.

In his message on the occasion of the 78th Independence Day, Kharge also said it is a matter of concern that constitutional and autonomous institutions have been turned into "puppets" by the government.

"The opposition is like oxygen for democracy. Along with stopping the unconstitutional attitude of the government, it also raises the issues of the public," he said in a video message posted on X. The dream of our freedom fighters was to maintain unity in diversity. But some forces are trying to destroy our brotherhood by forcibly imposing their views on the country," Kharge alleged.

Kharge slammed the RSS, saying that the Sangh Parivar promoted Britishers'

divide-and-rule policy for their own benefit.

"Unity in diversity is our strength and not a weakness. Some people propagate that we got independence easily but the truth is that lakhs of people made sacrifices, left their homes and even people from well-to-do families spent time in jails," he said.

Instead of walking the path shown by them, the rulers of today are giving encouragement to divisive thinking, he said.

"They mark Vibhajan Vibhishika Smriti Diwas with the intention of spreading hatred. Those who did not participate in the Independence movement give advice to the Congress party and without any contribution want to get counted among the martyrs," the Congress president said.

The Modi government has been observing August 14 as the Partition Horrors Remembrance Day since 2021 in remembrance of those who lost their lives during the country's partition.

## DK hints at bypoll contest

**Bengaluru:** Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Thursday participated in the Independence Day celebrations and hoisted the national flag in the by-poll bound Channapatna, a move that is being seen with political connotations.

Shivakumar, who is also the State Congress chief, is neither the MLA representing Channapatna nor the in-charge Minister of Ramanagara district, which was recently renamed as Bengaluru South, under which Channapatna taluk comes.

The Deputy CM, who participated in the Independence Day celebrations in Channapatna for the first time, has dropped enough hints in recent times that he may contest the by-poll from the segment.

Shivakumar currently represents the neighbouring Kanakapura segment.

Channapatna bypoll is necessitated as the seat fell vacant following the election of its representative -- JD(S) leader and now Union



Minister H D Kumaraswamy -- to Lok Sabha in the recent elections.

The byelection schedule for this Assembly seat is yet to be announced by the Election Commission.

Though there were talks earlier that Shivakumar's brother and former MP D K Suresh, who lost from Bangalore Rural Lok Sabha segment, may be fielded by Congress in Channapatna, speculations are now rife in the political circles, especially the grand old party, that the Deputy CM may himself enter the fray to avenge his brother's defeat and to re-establish his clout in the region.

According to sources, if Shivakumar contests and wins from Channapatna, he may vacate the seat that he currently represents for Suresh.

Addressing the Independence Day event, Shivakumar said he would work for the development and wellbeing of the citizens of Channapatna, as he also took a veiled dig at his political bete noire Kumaraswamy for "abandoning" them, without taking his name.

"It is an opportunity for me to come and hoist the flag here. For the last 35 years I have been participating in such events in Kanakapura, also Ramanagara and Bengaluru. Today I'm doing this pious work in Channapatna before you. As there is no representative (MLA) from Channapatna segment to hoist the flag, I have come here as the son of your house. I have not come to do politics, but to show how development can be made," he said.

Stating that Channapatna was close to his heart and he liked the place and its people, Shivakumar, later speaking to reporters, said: "It is unfortunate that the previous MLA (Kumaraswamy) did not attend

such celebrations (Independence Day) here...probably he did not value independence and freedom struggle."

"People have affection towards us (Congress) as the party got freedom for the country. They want to support the party and the government. People have decided it," he said, expressing confidence about Congress' win in the by-poll.

Both Channapatna and Kanakapura are part of the Vokkaliga dominated Ramanagara or now Bengaluru South district, which is Shivakumar's home turf and, for Kumaraswamy, it is the "place of his political birth", as he himself has declared several times.

It comes under the Bangalore Rural Lok Sabha segment from where Kumaraswamy's brother-in-law and eminent cardiologist C N Manjunath won as a BJP candidate as part of an arrangement between alliance partners BJP and JD(S), by defeating Suresh, which Shivakumar wants to avenge.

## Martyr captain cremated

**Dehradun:** Uttarakhand Governor Lt Gen (Retd) Gurmeet Singh and Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Thursday placed wreaths on the mortal remains of Captain Deepak Singh at the Jollygrant airport here.

They also met the martyr's father Mahesh Singh at the airport and commiserated with him for his loss. They assured him of all possible help from the state government.

Singh was at the airport along with other family members and relatives to receive the mortal remains of his son.

Captain Deepak Singh of 48 Rashtriya Rifles was killed in an encounter with terrorists at Doda in Jammu and Kashmir recently.

"Martyr Captain Deepak Singh is the pride of Veerbhoomi Uttarakhand. His sacrifice in the service of Mother India will continue to instil patriotism among the youth.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY



Nitish Kumar  
CM, Bihar

"You are just 69? Then why do you look so haggard? Look at me I am 74".

## Odisha announces one-day menstrual leave

**Bhubaneswar:** Odisha's Deputy Chief Minister Pravatipara on Thursday announced a day's paid menstrual leave for state government and private sector employees.

The leave, however, will be optional.

Parida, who is also in charge of the women and child development department, made the announce-

ment after attending an Independence Day programme in Cuttack.

The women employees can take the leave on the first or second day of the menstrual cycle. "It will be optional," she said.

An Odia girl had raised her voice seeking paid leave during periods at the United Nations Civil Society Conference 2024 held in

Nairobi, Kenya.

Ranjita Priyadarshini, a woman activist from Odisha, had also drawn the attention of all the delegates at the international conference regarding paid leave for women during menstruation.

She argued that women across the world suffer due to physical pain during their menstruation.

## India saw alarming rise in lightning deaths in 'deadliest' decade 2010-20: study

**New Delhi:** The decade from 2010 to 2020 has been the "deadliest" with an "alarming" spike in deaths due to lightning incidents, according to an analysis of the data shared by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

The data showed a rise in the average annual fatalities per state and union territory from 38 during 1967-2002 to 61 in the period from 2003-2020, the research showed.

Additionally, average deaths due to lightning in Indian states and union territories (UTs) almost tripled from 28 in 1986 to 81 in 2016, it noted.

A team of researchers, including those from Fakir Mohan University in Odisha, found that lightning

caused 1,01,309 deaths between 1967 and 2020, with an "alarming development" from 2010-2020, showing the highest increase.

"The data show an increase in the average annual fatalities per states and UTs from 38 in the period 1967 to 2002, to 61 from 2003 to 2020. Notably, the decade from 2010 to 2020 emerges as the deadliest in terms of lightning incidents," the authors wrote in the study published in the journal Environment, Development and Sustainability.

"This amounts to an average of 1,876 deaths annually. The long-term national annual average fatality was 46 per state and UT, ranging from 28 (in 1986) to 81 (in 2016)," they added.

Climate change, which is

driving extreme conditions, is likely to worsen this situation in the country in the coming years, they said.

Discerning trends at both state and regional levels, the researchers found that Madhya Pradesh registered the highest number of fatalities due to lightning, followed by Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Odisha.

However, deaths per 1,000 square kilometres of area were found to be the highest in the "relatively small" states of Bihar (79 deaths), followed by West Bengal (76), and Jharkhand (42), compared to those in larger states, they said.

The Central Indian region has seen a consistent increase in deaths due to lightning since records be-



gan in 1967, the authors found.

With highest death rates experienced over the years, the region is the most vulnerable to lightning fatalities, followed by northeast

India, which witnessed a pronounced escalation beginning in 2001, they said.

According to the research team, the sharp rise in lightning-related incidents in the northeast can

be due to deforestation, depletion of water bodies, global warming, along with increased vulnerability of people as they engage in more outdoor activities.

They also said that the

high rates of deaths due to lightning in developing and underdeveloped countries can be attributed to combined effects of these factors -- people engaging in labour-intensive activities such as farming during thunderstorms, a low human development index, ineffective early warning systems, among others.

While developing countries such as India may be more prepared against large-scale events such as cyclones, floods and droughts, they are the least prepared at the government level against lightning and heatwaves, the researchers said.

The study also critically evaluated how many states and union territories currently have their lightning

policies and action plans in place.

"Only seven out of 36 states and UTs have developed these plans to date. Most vulnerable states, including Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Telangana, Tamilnadu, as well as all northern and northeastern states, have not yet formulated a state lightning action plan as directed by the National Disaster Management Authority," the authors wrote.

They said that while several studies have analysed lightning in the Indian regions using data from ground and spatial sources, fewer studies have looked at deaths due to lightning at state and regional levels.

# Series of accusations after hospital vandalised

**Kolkata:** West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose on Thursday termed the vandalism at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital a "shame to civil society," while Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee blamed the "CPI(M)-BJP" for the incident, amid a week of protests by junior doctors over the alleged rape-murder of a doctor.

Around midnight, a group of around 40 people, posing as protesters, entered the hospital, vandalising the emergency department, nursing station, and medicine store, while also damaging CCTV cameras and ransacking a stage where junior doctors had been demonstrating since August 9.

Police detained nine persons for their alleged involvement in the incident.

Even as Banerjee accused the CPI(M) and BJP of carrying out the vandalism to create disturbances in the state, the saffron camp criticised the state administration for failing to protect the protesting doctors and prevent the vandalism, demanding that the army be deployed if the TMC government cannot control the situation.

The young woman doctor, whose body was found on August 9, was allegedly raped and murdered while on duty. A civic volunteer was arrested the following day in connection with the crime.

Meanwhile, the CBI, probing the case, has requested the call details of the civic volunteer, met with the victim's family members, and questioned the officer-in-charge of Tala police station, which has jurisdiction over the area where the incident took place.

Healthcare services in



the state have remained crippled for seven days in a row due to the cease-work by junior doctors demanding justice for their colleague, with emergency and outpatient departments in most state-run hospitals still closed, causing significant distress among patients.

Governor Bose visited the hospital on Thursday afternoon to assess the situation and spoke with agitating doctors.

"Yesterday's vandalism is a shame to civil society. It's a shame to all of humanity that young girls are not protected. This blood-bath cannot be allowed anymore. This must stop," Bose told reporters.

He added, "I am with you and we will work together to solve this. I assure you justice. My ears and eyes are open."

Talking to reporters outside Raj Bhavan in the evening, Banerjee said the "CPI(M)-BJP" have jointly

## Doctor rape and murder

carried out this vandalism to create disturbances in Bengal.

"Some political parties - CPI(M)-BJP - are behind the attack and it has carried out vandalism and attack to malign the state and create disturbances. I don't blame the students and the agitating doctors," she said.

Those behind the vandalism at RG Kar Hospital are outsiders, the CM said.

Banerjee said she will hit the streets on Friday evening to demand justice for the deceased lady doctor.

The vandalism took place amidst widespread protests by women across the state in response to the "Reclaim the Night" campaign, rallying against the horrific alleged killing of the doctor.

The vandalism triggered strong reactions from various quarters. Nurses at the

hospital staged protests against the violence, demanding enhanced security measures.

Meanwhile, doctors asserted that the attack was intended to demoralise their protests but only strengthened their resolve to seek justice for their colleague.

Kolkata Police Commissioner Vineet Goyal, who visited the premises last night, indicated that an investigation is underway and mentioned that a "malicious media campaign" might have exacerbated the situation.

"My men have also been injured in the attack... What have police not done to crack this case? But there has been a malicious media campaign that has been going on," he said.

The Calcutta High Court on Tuesday ordered the transfer of the probe to the CBI.

Protests erupted across the state on Independence

Day, with thousands of women taking to the streets at midnight to protest the rape-murder of the doctor, spurred by the 'Reclaim the Night' campaign, which gained momentum on social media and spread to key areas in both small towns and major cities.

The BJP demanded the resignation of Mamata Banerjee, accusing her government of failing to maintain law and order, and announced that the party's women's wing will hold a candlelight rally at her Kalighat residence on Friday to protest the vandalism.

"If the state government can't control the situation, then they should call in the army. The CM should resign," said BJP state president Sukanta Majumdar.

Senior TMC leader Kunal Ghosh countered, questioning whether CMs in BJP-ruled states have resigned for similar incidents.

"Did the Chief Ministers of BJP-ruled states resign when similar incidents took place? The answer is no. Whoever is involved in vandalism must be arrested regardless of party affiliations. The opposition is doing dirty politics over the incident," he said.

Meanwhile, TMC leader and medical practitioner Santanu Sen, who was removed from his position as party spokesperson for airing his views, demanded that the culprits involved in the vandalism be arrested by Thursday night.

The SUCI (Communist) has called for a 12-hour general strike in West Bengal on August 16 to protest the hospital vandalism but Banerjee responded by saying the state government does not support strikes and will ensure that normal life is not disrupted.

## IPS Nalin Prabhat made Special DG of J-K Police

**New Delhi:** Highly decorated IPS officer Nalin Prabhat was on Thursday appointed as Special Director General of Jammu and Kashmir Police and will head the force after the retirement of R R Swain on September 30.

An order issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs said that Prabhat, a 1992 IPS of Andhra Pradesh cadre, is sent to Jammu and Kashmir with "immediate effect".

It said that upon the retirement of Swain on September 30, "Prabhat is appointed as DGP, Jammu and Kashmir".

Prabhat, 55, is a three-time police gallantry medal winner and has headed the specialised anti-Naxal police force 'Greyhounds' of Andhra Pradesh, his former cadre state.

He has extensively served in the CRPF as he headed its Kashmir region deployment as the IG operations and ADG.

The government on Wednesday curtailed Prabhat's tenure as NSG director general and ordered his inter-cadre deputation from Andhra Pradesh to the AGMUT.

An order issued by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) said it was approving a proposal of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to "curtail" the tenure of the 1992-batch IPS as DG of the National Security Guard (NSG).

The order said it also approved the "inter-cadre deputation of Prabhat, IPS from Andhra Pradesh to AGMUT cadre initially for a period of three years from the date of joining the AGMUT cadre or until further orders, whichever is earlier, in relaxation of inter-cadre deputation guidelines."

## Hindus facing violence for no reason: Bhagwat



**Nagpur:** Amid targeted attacks on the Hindu minority community in Bangladesh, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Thursday said Hindus living there were being subjected to violence for no reason, and added that our country has the responsibility to ensure they do not face any injustice and atrocities.

He was speaking after hoisting the national flag at the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) headquarters in Mahal area here on the occasion of Independence Day.

"The coming generation has the duty to protect the 'swa' of the 'swatantrata' (freedom) because there are always people in the world who want to dominate other countries and we have to be alert and careful, and protect ourselves from them," he said.

The situation does not remain the same all the time. Sometimes it is good, while it is not so good at others. These ups and downs will continue, he said.

"We can see the situation now. A lot of violence is taking place in the neighbouring country and Hindus living there are facing the heat without any reason," he said without naming Bangladesh.

"India has the tradition of helping others. We have

seen in the last few years that India has never attacked anyone, but helped those who were in trouble irrespective of how they behave with us," the RSS chief said.

In this situation, we have to see that our country remains safe and at the same time help other countries, he said.

"Our country has the responsibility to ensure that the people facing the heat of instability and anarchy do not have to face any trouble, injustice and atrocities. In some cases, the government has to see on its own level, but it gets strength only when society fulfils its duty and shows commitment towards the country," Bhagwat added.

Bangladesh has been witnessing targeted attacks on the Hindu minority community after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government.

The Bangladesh National Hindu Grand Alliance has alleged that the minority community faced attacks and threats in 278 locations across 48 districts since Hasina's ouster.

A team of UN experts would soon visit Bangladesh to investigate the killings of the protesters ahead of and in the aftermath of Sheikh Hasina's resignation last week, it was announced on Wednesday.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY



**Himanta Biswa Sarma**  
CM, Assam

**"The future of Assam is not secure for us. The Hindu-Muslim population balance is declining fast. The Muslim population in 2021 rose to 41 per cent, while the Hindus were down to 57 per cent. The rest is shared by Christians and other communities."**

## Mother, daughter killed in CG

**Bilaspur:** A mother-daughter duo and one more woman were killed after their car rammed into a stationary truck in Chhattisgarh's Bilaspur district on Thursday, police said.

Two persons were injured in the accident, which occurred on Pendridih bypass road at around 3:30 am when the victims were returning after having dinner in a hotel, a police official said.

"Preeti Sharma (48), her daughter Shruti (19) and another member of the family Shreya Sharma (24) died. Preeti's son Ankit, who was driving the car, is among the two injured.

The two injured persons have been hospitalised and their condition is critical," he said.

Police have registered a case and launched an investigation, he added.

The incident led to anger among the residents. They have demanded strict precautions to avoid such accidents in future.

## Cong leaders object to govt school students wearing T-shirts with Savarkar photos; booked

**Surendranagar:** A group of Gujarat Congress leaders, including its state unit working president Rutvik Makwana, objected to students of a government school wearing T-shirts with Hindutva ideologue V D Savarkar's photos during a Tiranga Yatra in Surendranagar district, leading to an altercation and subsequent registration of an FIR against them, police said on Thursday.

After the altercation with the principal and teachers of the primary school over the issue of T-shirts on Wednesday, five Congress leaders, including Makwana and national convener of the party-affiliated Seva Dal Lalji Desai, were booked by police on multiple charges under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, including jeopardising India's sovereignty, unity and integrity, and promoting enmity.

As per the FIR (first information report) registered at the Chotila police station, these five Congress leaders, who were part of the party's ongoing 'Nyay Yatra' (justice march), misbehaved with the principal and teachers of the school over the issue of T-shirts, insulted freedom fighters and deterred school staff from discharging their duties.

The incident took place at Sangani village under Chotila taluka of Surendranagar when students of government-run Sangani Primary School were taking out a Tiranga Yatra (tricolour march) on the eve of Independence Day, said Deputy Superintendent of Police VM Rabari.

The village where the incident took place is situated close to the Ahmedabad-Rajkot Highway.



Makwana and Desai were part of the Congress' Nyay Yatra, a foot march from Morbi to Gandhinagar, which crossed the Tiranga Yatra at Sangani village near the highway, said Rabari.

"Since students were wearing T-shirts having photographs of Veer Savarkar on them, Makwana, Desai and three other Congress leaders misbehaved with the school staff and asked them why his (Savarkar) photos were there on the T-shirts.

"Following the altercation, school principal Kalpesh Chauhan submitted a complaint based on which an FIR has been registered against these five persons," said the police officer.

During the heated arguments, Makwana, a former Congress MLA from Chotila in Surendranagar district, asked the students to remove the T-shirts with Savarkar's photographs, as per the police.

All five were booked under BNS sections 126(2) (wrongful restraint), 197(1) (c) (promoting enmity and hatred between two communities) 197(1)(d) (false or misleading information making or publishing that endangers India's sovereignty, unity, integrity, or

security), 221 (obstructing public servant in discharge of duty) and 352 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace).

As per the FIR, Congress leaders intercepted the staff as well as students participating in the Tiranga Yatra and raised objection about Savarkar's photos on the T-shirts worn by the pupils.

Desai told principal Chauhan it was not proper to ask students to wear "T-shirts with photos of RSS leader Veer Savarkar".

The Seva Dal functionary then confronted the principal and asked "Don't you feel ashamed to make students wear T-shirts of Savarkar who was involved in the conspiracy to kill Mahatma Gandhi?"

When Chauhan replied that the T-shirts were donated by a Mumbai-based trust for this occasion, Desai raised his voice and asked the school principal if he would ask students to wear "T-shirts of Nathuram Godse or some Rangabilla or Dawood if I donate them to you?"

As per the FIR, Makwana made a video of the altercation with the school staff and then asked the students to remove the T-shirts with Savarkar's photographs.

## Hindu Mahasabha opposes India-Bangladesh cricket match in Gwalior



**Gwalior:** The Hindu Mahasabha on Wednesday said it opposed the India-Bangladesh cricket match which is to take place in Gwalior in October to protest the "massacre of Hindus" in the neighbouring country, and its activists will "damage" the venue if it was not called off. The T20 match is scheduled to be played at the Madhav Rao Scindia International Cricket Stadium in Gwalior on October 6.

Mahasabha vice president Dr Jaiveer Bharadwaj told reporters here that the right-wing outfit will oppose the match in every way.

"Hindus are being massacred in Bangladesh...temples are being destroyed. Therefore, the Hindu Mahasabha has decided that the India-Bangladesh cricket match in Gwalior will be opposed," he said, adding that the match should be cancelled to maintain peace as otherwise there would be unrest in the country.

Mahasabha activists will

try to damage the venue, he warned, adding that Prime Minister Narendra Modi should stop the match from being played.

Following the collapse of the Sheikh Hasina-led government, several incidents of targeted attacks on the minority Hindu community have been reported from Bangladesh.

Earlier in the day, vice president of the Gwalior Division Jyotiraditya Scindia, told reporters that the India-Bangladesh match will be played in Gwalior on October 6. It would be the first international match to be played in Gwalior after 14 years, Scindia added.

On Tuesday, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) shifted the venue from Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh to Gwalior as upgradation and renovation work is being carried out at the former venue.

## Drugs available everywhere, says Goa minister

**Panaji:** Goa Law Minister Aleixo Sequeira on Thursday put his own government on the spot by saying that drugs were available everywhere and no action was being taken.

While the statement prompted the Opposition to attack the BJP government, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant tried to do some damage control by claiming that the minister was not talking about Goa.

Talking to reporters after hoisting the tricolour at Margao on Independence Day, Sequeira came out in support of the Sunburn EDM (Electronic Dance Music) festival which is annually organised in the coastal state but faces opposition from some quarters for alleged drug use.

"Drugs are today available all over. You don't require Sunburn to get it," the minister said, commenting on the controversy.

It was society's responsibility to identify who is selling drugs and intimate police about it, he said, adding "Let us move forward and ensure that no drugs are available."



"You tell me drugs are not available? What are you doing? What am I doing? Nothing! The time has come that you and me work together and aggressively attack this menace," the minister went on to say.

But his admission that drugs can be obtained easily in the state provided the Opposition an opportunity to take swipes at the Pramod Sawant-led government.

"If drugs are indeed everywhere, then perhaps it's time to change the people who are supposed to be keeping them under control, starting with you!" said AAP MLA Venzy

Viegas.

"Law minister Alex Sequeira has exposed @BJP4Goa Govt by accepting the failure of @Goa Police under @Dr-PramodSawant with the fact that drugs are available everywhere in Goa. @PMOIndia is this @BJP4India style of making Goa "Swayampurna in Drugs?" asked Goa Congress vice president Sunil Kawthankar in a Twitter post.

Reacting to the row, chief minister Sawant said the minister had a "slip of tongue", and what he meant was "drugs are available all over the world."

# Those who want medals, can buy them for Rs 15 each: Punia

Following the match against Spain, PM Modi called the Indian hockey team to congratulate them on their achievement in Paris Olympics

By Correspondent

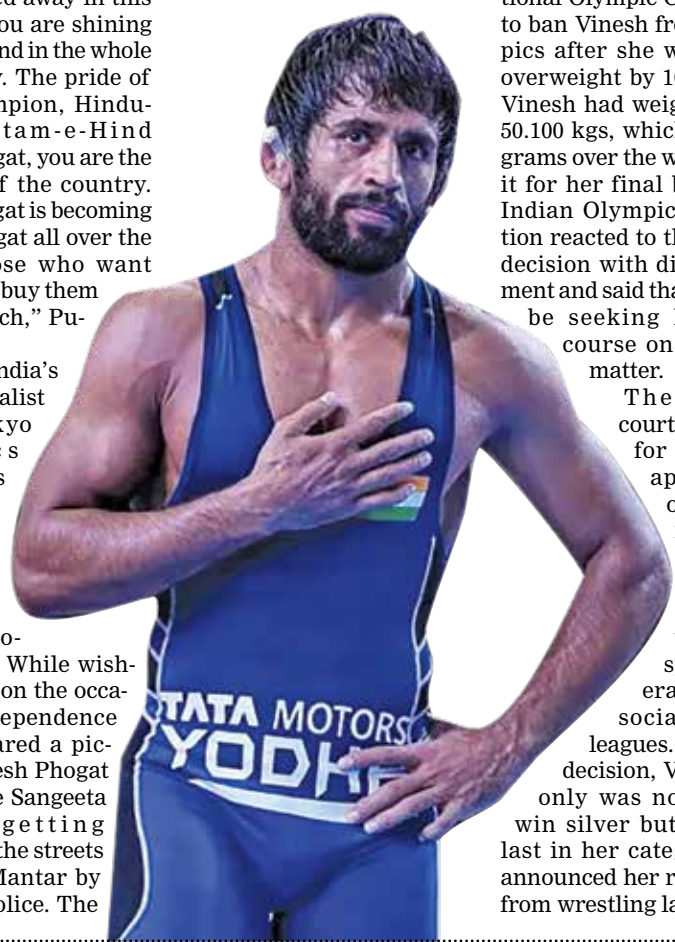
**Mumbai:** A day after the Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS) rejected wrestler Vinesh Phogat's appeal for joint silver medal in the Paris Olympics her supporter Bajrang Punia expressed his frustration on the social media. He shared a post taking a dig at the decision.

"I believe your medal was snatched away in this darkness. You are shining like a diamond in the whole world today. The pride of world champion, Hindustan Rustom-e-Hind Vinesh Phogat, you are the Kohinoor of the country. Vinesh Phogat is becoming Vinesh Phogat all over the world. Those who want medals, can buy them for Rs 15 each," Punia said.

Punia is India's bronze-medalist at the Tokyo Olympics 2020. His post had a touch of sarcasm to it as it featured a Vinesh Phogat picture. While wishing Indians on the occasion of Independence Day, he shared a picture of Vinesh Phogat and his wife Sangeeta Phogat getting dragged on the streets of Jantar Mantar by the Delhi police. The



two had India's tricolour flag in their hands when they were manhandled on the road by police.



Punia was one of the key figures alongside Sakshi Malik and Vinesh Phogat during the protests against ex-Wrestling Federation of India chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who stands accused of sexual harassment.

### Upset for Vinesh

The CAS released its operative verdict on Wednesday. It decided to uphold the decision of the International Olympic Committee to ban Vinesh from Olympics after she was found overweight by 100 grams. Vinesh had weighed in at 50.100 kgs, which was 100 grams over the weight limit for her final bout. The Indian Olympic Association reacted to the court's decision with disappointment and said that it would be seeking legal recourse on Vinesh's matter.

The sports court is known for its strict application of the rules and regulations of the relevant sports federations, associations, or leagues. After this decision, Vinesh not only was not able to win silver but finished last in her category. She announced her retirement from wrestling later.

## Root could surpass Sachin: Ponting

**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.



Army personnel perform 'Mallakhamb' during the 78th Independence Day celebration at Manekshaw Parade Ground, in Bengaluru on Thursday. (Pic: Shailendra Bhojak, PTI)

## Aman Sehrawat promoted as OSD

Second Railway employee after Swapnil Kusale to get higher rank

By Correspondent

**Mumbai:** The Northern Railways has promoted Aman Sehrawat after he won a bronze medal at the Paris Olympics 2024. The wrestler has been promoted to the post of Officer On Special Duty (OSD).

Sehrawat, 21, became the youngest to win an Olympic medal for India. He bagged the bronze medal in the 57 kg freestyle category and his efforts helped India win their sixth medal at the Paris Olympics.

In a meeting held at the Northern Railway Headquarters, General Manager Shobhan Chaudhuri presented a token of appreciation to the Olympian for winning the bronze medal. "Shri Aman Sehrawat, an Indian freestyle wrestler,



brought immense pride and glory to the nation by winning a bronze medal at the Paris Olympics. His dedication, hard work, and perseverance have been an inspiration to millions," Chief Public Relations Officer Himanshu S. Upadhyay said in a press statement.

Swapnil Kusale, another Indian athlete who bagged

an Olympic bronze medal, had also received a double promotion from being a travelling ticket examiner (TTE) for the Indian Railways to Officer on Special Duty (OSD). Kusale won a historic medal in the 50m rifle 3 positions event to bag India's 3rd one at the Paris Olympics.

Aman Sehrawat carried forward the legacy of the

Chhatrasal stadium as he secured India's first wrestling medal at the Paris Olympics 2024. The 21-year-old wrestler from the famed Chhatrasal Stadium, who lost both parents at the young age of 11, defeated Darian Toi Cruz 13-5 in the bronze play-off at Champ de Mars Arena. With his win over the Puerto Rican wrestler, Sehrawat became the youngest-ever individual Olympic medalist from India at 21 years 0 months and 24 days.

He went on to better P.V. Sindhu's record, who was 21 years 1 month and 14 days old when she won silver at the Rio Olympics 2016. Aman dedicated his bronze medal to his parents and the nation, a tribute to the dreams they had for him.

## Chennaiyin FC signs Indian left-back Vignesh

**Chennai:** Chennaiyin FC have completed the signing of 26-year-old defender Vignesh Dakshinamurthy on a four-year deal, the club said on Thursday.

Primarily a left-back, Vignesh has also played in midfield and adds versatility and experience to the Chennaiyin backline. He becomes the club's 12th signing of the summer, joining the likes of Mandar Rao Desai and PC Laldinpuia.

Welcoming Vignesh into the club, head coach Owen Coyle said: "Delighted to sign another talented young Indian player who has already shown fantastic ability in the ISL. We



faced a lot of competition from other clubs to sign him. Vignesh is a great addition to our squad and we look forward to working with him."

Vignesh began his career with Bengaluru's Ozone FC, for whom he played for six years -- three in the academy and three with the first team. He made his senior

debut at 17 and was one of Ozone's star performers en route to their 2018 I-League 2 Final Round run.

That same year, Vignesh stepped up to the Indian Super League with Mumbai City FC and went on to represent the Islanders more than 60 times combined across competitions, including four AFC Champions League appearances.

Explosive going forward and efficient tracking back, Vignesh made the left back berth his own while at Mumbai City and was part of the team that won two ISL Shields (2021 and 2023) and one ISL Cup (2021).

Ecstatic upon joining the two-time ISL champions,

Vignesh said: "Feels like being at home. Really happy and proud to represent the city and Chennaiyin FC. I'm aware of rich culture of the city and the club. So, I'll always give my best and be a part of club's success."

After spending five years at Mumbai City, Vignesh joined Hyderabad FC ahead of the 2023-24 season. He played six matches for Hyderabad before joining Odisha FC on loan earlier this year in January. He made 17 appearances across all competitions for the Juggernauts.

Vignesh was also part of the Indian squad that finished runners-up at the 2018 SAFF Championship.



Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham jumps for the ball with Atalanta's Ederson, left, during the UEFA Super Cup Final soccer match between Real Madrid and Atalanta at the Narodowy stadium in Warsaw, Poland on Wednesday.



Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis during inauguration of a Taluka Sports Complex at Koradi near Nagpur on Thursday. Pic: PTI

## US open: Naomi Osaka given wild cards

**New York:** Two-time champion Naomi Osaka and fellow past U.S. Open winners Stan Wawrinka, Dominic Thiem and Bianca Andreescu were given wild cards into this year's tournament. The U.S. Open begins August 26

Osaka won the first of her four Grand Slam titles at Flushing Meadows in 2018 and took the title again in 2020. But like the other past champions given wild cards by the U.S. Tennis Association, she has missed significant time in recent seasons and was not ranked highly enough to qualify directly for the tournament.

Osaka returned to the WTA Tour this season after giving birth last year to a daughter, but is still searching for the form that led her to No. 1 in the rankings and made her one of the most dominant players on hard courts, having also won the Australian Open twice.

Osaka, who also left the tour for mental health reasons, lost in qualifying for this week's Cincinnati Open. She wrote afterward



in an Instagram post that it was a strange feeling "missing balls that I shouldn't miss, hitting balls softer than I remember I used to."

Andreescu, a Canadian who beat Serena Williams for the 2019 U.S. Open title, missed nine months last year with a back injury before returning to tour at the French Open.

Thiem will get a chance to play a final Grand Slam tournament, having announced earlier this year he would retire following the season. The 30-year-old Austrian won his lone major title at the 2020 U.S. Open, but has battled a wrist injury for much of the last three years.

Wawrinka, 39, won the

2016 U.S. Open for one of his three Grand Slam titles. Like Thiem, he rose as high as No. 3 in the ATP rankings but has fallen outside the top 100. He will be making his 72nd appearance in the main draw of a Grand Slam tournament, fifth all-time.

Americans Amanda Anisimova, McCartney Kessler, Alexa Noel and Iva Jovic also received wild cards into the women's main draw, along with Chloe Paquet of France and Taylah Preston of Australia.

Men to receive wild cards were Americans Chris Eubanks, Learner Tien, Zachary Svajda and Matthew Forbes, along with France's Alexandre Muller and Australian Tristan Schoolkate.

## BoxingBay to take on Fight Club

**Hyderabad:** BoxingBay, backed by Spirit Media founder Rana Daggubati has inked a partnership with Anthony Pettis, founder of Anthony Pettis Fight Club (APFC), to host two major boxing events -- one in the United States and the other in India -- scheduled later this year.

This deal between Rana Daggubati and Anthony

Pettis was formalised on Thursday in the presence of Oscar Valle and Erika Contreras from the World Boxing Council (WBC) and representatives of the partners.

This partnership will feature 5 vs 5 boxing showdown between BoxingBay and former UFC champion Anthony Pettis's Fight Club.

## Win for Punjab Hockey Club

**New Delhi:** Roundglass Punjab Hockey Club Academy registered a facile 8-3 win over Odisha Naval Tata Hockey High Performance Centre to clinch the men's title in the Hockey India Junior Men Academy Championship 2024 (Zone A & B) here on Thursday.

For the Punjab side, Amandeep (11th, 36th minutes) and Gursewak Singh (17th, 26th) scored a brace while Sumit Rajbhar (6th), Inderjit Singh (38th), Arshadip Singh (43rd) and Ar-



jandeep Singh (59th) scored a goal each to complete the tally.

Pratap Toppo (10th), Bilkan Oram (28th) and Harish Singh Leitanthem (50th) found the target for the Odisha outfit.

In the third place play-off, Namdhari XI defeated SGPC Hockey Academy 5-3.

For Namdhari, captain Navraj Singh (17th, 19th, 31st, 37th, 55th) scored all the five goals.

Harshdeep Singh (12th), Prabhjot Singh (38th) and Diljeet Singh (50th) sounded the board for SGPC.