THE PERFECT



Cabinet expansion likely by Saturday

Elderly man fatally run over by BEST bus

> **Kabul Explosion** kills Taliban refugee minister



India lose after Mandhana's hundred, suffer 0-3 whitewash ... pg 10

Violent protests in Parbhani over damage to Constitution replica

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar: Prohibitory orders were imposed in central Maharashtra's Parbhani city on Wednesday as violent protests rocked the city for second day over the vandalising of a replica of the Indian Constitution, police said.

Amid the bandh called by Ambedkarite activists, a mob indulged in arson and the district collector's office was vandalised, officials said

Prohibitory orders were imposed in the city, banning the gathering of five or more persons in public places, and a company of the State Reserve Police Force has been called in to help maintain law and order, said a senior official.

A glass-encased cement replica of the Constitution outside Parbhani railway station, close to a statue of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, was found to have been damaged on Tuesday, sparking protests.

Police arrested a man in connection with the incident, but protests resumed on Wednesday morning.

"PVC pipes outside a shop were set ablaze



around 1 pm today. As the mob became violent, police fired tear gas shells and dispersed them," said acting Superintendent of Police Yeshwant Kale.

The protesters were demanding that police should find who was behind Tuesday's incident of vandalising, he told PTI.

Hundreds of protesters gathered outside the collector's office, and some of them including women activists rushed inside and damaged furniture and window panes before police brought the situation under control, said Inspector General of Police Shahji Umap.

Protesters were supposed to hand over a memorandum to the collector in the morning and return peacefully, but some of them attacked signboards of shops and CCTVs along the way and tyres were also burnt on the road, he said.

Bandh was also observed in Vasmat area of the district, local officials

Protesters had blocked

the railway tracks at Parbhani station on Tuesday evening and roughed up the loco-pilot of the Nandigram Express. IG Umap who reviewed

the law and order situation appealed people not to target public property and resort to violence.

Varsha Gaikwad, Ambedkarite leader and Lok Sabha MP from MumIslamabad: A suicide bombing in the Afghan capital on Wednesday killed the Taliban refugee minister and two others, officials said, in the most brazen attack on a member of the Taliban inner circle since they returned to power three years ago.

The explosion struck inside the ministry, killing Khalil Haqqani, officials said. His last official photo showed him at a meeting chaired by the deputy prime minister, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, earlier Wednesday.

Khalil Haqqani is the uncle of Sirajuddin Haqqani, the acting interior minister who leads a powerful network within the Taliban.

Haqqani was the most high-profile casualty of a bombing in Afghanistan since the Taliban returned to power and the first Cabinet member to be killed since the takeover. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the blast.

The government's chief spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said in a post on X that Haqqani's death was a great loss and described him as a tireless holy

Haqqani's killing may be the biggest blow to the Taliban since their return to power given his stature and influence, according to Michael Kugelman, director of the Wilson Centre's South Asia Institute.



A dance troupe performs during the closing ceremony of the '30th Kolkata International Film Festival' in Kolkata on Wednesday.

Judge in Satara among four booked in bribe case

Pune: The Maharashtra Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Wednesday registered a case against a district and sessions judge in Satara district and three others for allegedly demanding Rs 5 lakh bribe for a favourable decision on the

bail plea of an accused. Two private individuals, Kishor Kharat and Anand Kharat, allegedly demanded the bribe amount at the behest of district and sessions judge/additional sessions judge Dhananjay Nikam, the ACB said.

'The woman complainant's father was arrested in a cheating case in October this year and is currently in judicial custody with his bail application pending before judge Nikam," it said.

The anti-graft agency alleged that on judge Nikam's directions, Anand and Kishor Kharat allegedly sought Rs 5 lakh from the complainant to grant her father's bail application.

The woman then approached the ACB and filed a complaint.

"During the verification of the complaint, it came to light that judge Nikam, through the Kharats and an unidentified person, allegedly sought Rs 5 lakh from the complainant and attempted to accept it through the two accused," it said.

The four persons were booked under relevant sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), it added.

Technical snag disrupts Harbour line

Mumbai: A technical snag on Wednesday disrupted local train services on the Harbour line for nearly two hours between Panvel and Khandeswar stations in Navi Mumbai, officials

The services were restored after around two hours at 4 pm. The effects of disruption lingered on till late evening as some trains on the CSMT-Panvel section were cancelled.

Earlier in the day, several passengers remained stranded at various stations between CSMT and Panvel, as well as on trains. Local train services ran late by around 30 minutes on the Harbour line.

Central Railway chief PRO Swapnil Nila said the disruption in services was caused by the problem in track circuits between Panvel and Khandeshwar stations in Navi Mumbai

Passengers said the crowd on local trains swelled as trains ran behind the schedule.

Around 10 lakh commuters use the local train services to travel between CSMT and Panvel and Goregaon stations.

Focus would be trust, growth, stability: Malhotra

Mumbai: Sanjay Malhotra took charge as the 26th Governor of Reserve Bank of India on Wednesday, and promised to focus on deep ening trust, growth and ensuring stability.

Malhotra, 56, takes over as the central bank governor at a critical time where inflation has shot above the comfort level, growth has declined to a 7-quarter low and rupee is at all-time low level against US dollar.

"I can assure that we will put in the best foot forward in public interest to deliver what the public of India looks forward to, which is trust, which is growth and which is a stable and certain policy," he told reporters at his maiden interaction as a RBI Governor.

Malhotra said, "We are in a very dynamic world right now fraught with geopolitical tensions, climate change risks and political uncertainties", and affirmed that the RBI will remain "alert and agile" to meet the challenges.

RBI is a prestigious institution which has done commendable work over its history courtesy the diligence



and hard work of its staff members and senior officials, said Malhotra, specifically mentioning his predecessor Shaktikanta Das' name.

"I will continue to uphold the legacy (of the RBI) and take it forward," he affirmed, outlining his thoughts on the key focus

On growth, he said it is a "huge responsibility" to ensure that the expansion in economic activity continues

Although there was no explicit mention of inflation in his remarks, Malhotra stressed that the focus will be on "stability" and "trust".

Policy certainty can be among the factors which can ensure stability, Mal-

hotra said, adding that in his earlier assignment as the Revenue Secretary he focus was on stability in

bai, demanded a thorough

investigation. "How can

anyone insult the Constitu-

tion....those arrested

should be thoroughly ques-

tioned to find who is the

Congress leader Vijay Wadettiwar blamed the ini-

tial "lax approach" of the

government and local ad-

ministration after the inci-

dent came to light. Had

necessary action been

taken promptly, the vio-

lence could have been

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader

Aaditya Thackeray said

desecration of the Consti-

tution's replica was con-

demnable. He also ap-

pealed to the protesters to

conduct their agitation

avoided, he said.

mastermind," she said.

As an institution, he said, the RBI is what it is because of the "trust" it has earned for working with the public's interest in mind, and added that it would be his endeavour to strengthen it.

Whatever decisions are taken will be done with public interest in mind, Malhotra said. He. however, declined to take any specific questions from the media.

Resorting to cricket analogies a favourite with his predecessor Das, Malhotra said he cannot start playing his shots on day one itself.

The new Governor said that he would respond to media questions after understanding various issues from RBI's officers.

The next monetary policy review is scheduled for the first week of February, offering Malhotra nearly two months of time before he makes his maiden decision on interest rate and other important issues.



Another draw in 13th game

Singapore: Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh tried his best but could not overcome a resilient Ding Liren of China and had to settle for a draw after 68 moves in the 13th and penultimate game of the World Chess Championship here on Wednesday.

With the scores tied at 6.5-6.5 and only one game of classical chess to go, it is likely that the match will be extended to the tie-break stage where games of shorter duration will decide the winner.

As was expected, the 18-year-old Gukesh went for the King pawn on his opening move and yet again faced defending champion Liren's first-choice opening

in French defense.

The Chinese spent a lot of time in the opening phase of the game when Gukesh came out with a novel idea early, but it was clear right from the beginning that there was little for the white.

The middle game saw the exchange of a couple of minor pieces that gave Gukesh's white only a small advantage optically. And as the game progressed, it was clear that the exchange of pawns on the queen side will only lead to an equal endgame.

Gukesh, knowing fully well that this could be his last chance with the favourable colour, left no stone

for more but Liren kept his cool and traded pieces when necessary to reach a queenplus-rook endgame that

was just level.

The players, nevertheless, fought on for a long time. The pieces changed hands, and eventually, it was a queen and rook plus pawns on the board.

Gukesh tried everything in the book to keep pushing for more, even in the theoretical drawn endgame, but Liren was up to the task.

The game was eventually drawn to a two versus three rook-and-pawns endgame, and Gukesh played on till there was no life left in the position.

Breath analyser test must for **BEST drivers** Mumbai: Mumbai's civic

transport body BEST will make breath analyser test mandatory for drivers in the wake of the Kurla crash as officials on Wednesday met private operators who supply buses to government agencies, and affirmed to focus on driver training and take extra safety steps.

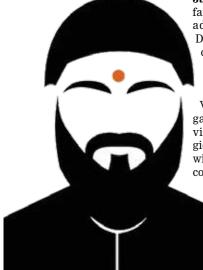
Officials held meetings with private operators who supply buses under the wet lease model.

At the meetings, the private operators were asked to provide details of training given to drivers, their appointment criteria, training infrastructure and modules, officials said.

Top officials of BEST and the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) presided over these meetings.

Under the wet lease model, responsibility of providing drivers and carrying out maintenance of hired buses remain with private contractors. Staterun transport bodies, on their part, pay them a specific amount for the buses.

Muslims adopt Hindu surnames, cite Hindu ancestry



Jaunpur (UP): Several Muslim families in a village here have adopted surnames such as Dubey, Pandey, and Tiwari, claiming their ancestors were

This transformation stems from a campaign led by the Vishal Bharat Sansthan, an organisation encouraging individuals in the Purvanchal region of the state "to reconnect with their roots" to end religious

Naushad Ahmed, now known as Naushad Ahmed Dubey, said, "I discovered my ancestors were Brahmins. My father, Lal Bahadur Dubey, was later known as Lal Bahadur Sheikh.'

A resident of Dehri village in Kerakat tehsil, he asserted that he follows Islamic practices such as namaz and fasting, but has started caring for cows and now owns nine of them

"I haven't changed my religion, just my surname, to honour my ancestors," he said. However, none of the family members have changed their surname.

The campaign has inspired others in the village which has a sizeable Muslim population.

Sheikh Abdullah, now Sheikh Abdullah Dubey, said he has adopted the Dubey surname but continues to practice Islam. He declined to engage in Hindu rituals like reciting the Hanuman Chalisa or idol worship.

Ehtesham Ahmed, another resident, acknowledged his Brahmin lineage but refrained from using a Hindu surname, saying, "Adopting a surname doesn't mean practising Hindu

Naushad, who faced backlash after getting his full name printed on his daughter's wedding invitation, revealed, "Some people spread rumours that I have converted my religion, causing the marriage to be called off. However, I didn't justify myself to anyone."

The local Kerakat police station in-charge Avneesh Kumar Rai on Tuesday held a meeting in the village following threats to

Naushad's family. "We will identify and act against mischief-makers," he as-

sured them. Meanwhile, Jaunpur Superintendent of Police Ajaypal Sharma told PTI that extra police personnel have deployed in the area as a preventive measure even though, there have been no official complaints in the cases. "We are maintaining communi-

cation with all locals. Rajeev 'Guruji', the national president of Vishal Bharat Sansthan, said the organisation's work aims to help people rediscover their ancestry.

"Through our 'Reconnect with Roots' initiative, many have come forward to explore their family histories," he said.

He added that the campaign has extended beyond Jaunpur, with families in Azamgarh, Ghazipur, and Varanasi also adopting Hindu surnames.

He claimed that Kunwar Naseem Raza Sikarwar of Ghazipur and others like Irshad Ahmed Pandey and Rehan Dubey have played pivotal roles

in this movement. When asked about the motivation for the initiative, Rajeev said. "The aim of this campaign is to end religious conflicts. If people know their roots, they can forget their mutual

animosity. "Any religion can be changed

but caste cannot be changed. There are as many castes in Muslims as there are in Hindus. Muslims also have Brahmins. Thakurs, and Vaishyas. In such a situation, if we find out their roots and prove that a particular person is also a Brahmin, then people can forget their mutual animosity," he told PTL He further said, "To find this,

we investigate the gazetteer, old land papers and also examine other relevant old documents, we get the name given according to them and prove that a particular person belongs to which caste.

He said the campaign was launched five years ago but has started bearing results in the districts of Purvanchal only two

Cabinet expansion likely by Saturday

Devendra Fadnavis-led Maharashtra government is likely to take place by December 14, a senior BJP leader said on Wednesday.

Fadnavis left for Delhi on Wednesday, his office said, adding it was a courtesy visit, the first after becoming the chief minister, as he would be meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President Droupadi Murmu and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar.

Talking to PTI, a BJP leader said the Shiv Sena would not get the home department and was also unlikely to be allo-



Talks are getting delayed because three parties (Mahayuti allies BJP, Shiv Sena and NCP) are involved, the politician said.

"The cabinet expansion is likely by December 14. The allocation of home department to Shiv Sena is ruled out. The Shiv Sena may get urban development, but is unlikely to get revenue," said the leader, who did not wish to be named.

The BJP is expected to keep 21 to 22 ministerial berths, including the CM's post, the leader said, adding that four to five ministerial berths may be kept vacant. Shiv Sena leader and Deputy CM Eknath Shinde was not travelling to the national capital, as per his office.

On December 5, Fadnavis took oath as CM along with Shinde and NCP leader Ajit Pawar as his deputies, after the Mahayuti alliance won 230 of the 288 seats in the state assembly polls.

The cabinet can have a maximum of 43 ministers, including the CM.

All eyes on three MLAs

From Shiv Sena, all eyes will be on three MLAs - Dr. Tanaji Sawant, Sanjay Rathod and Sanjay Shirsat - to be inducted in the Cabinet. While Sanjay Rathod's supporters have alleged that there has been a conspiracy to keep him out the chances of Sawant and Shirsat have improved.

A supporter of Sawant said the heavyweight from Dharashiv is hopeful of his inclusion in the Cabinet. "As Health Minister, Dr. Sawant has spearheaded transformative initiatives, many of which are unprecedented in the state's history. His tenure reflected a commitment to healthcare accessibility, transparency, and community welfare," the supporter said.

On the other hand, Shirsat's supporters call him a challenger of Sanjay Raut, the fiery spokesperson of rival Shiv Sena (UBT). "Sanjay ji has successfully countered the agenda Raut has tried to set. As a spokesperson he has been effective," the supporter said.

Sawant's supporter pointed to his health initiatives for men, women and children. "Free health check-up directly benefited 50 lakh men. Since health is a matter close to (Eknath) Shinde saheb's heart Sawant has little advantage," the supporter said. "His health check-up initiative also helped 4.39 crore women. This is a record," he said.



Former cricketer Sachin Tendulkar speaks during the unveiling of the Indian Street Premier League (ISPL) Season 2 trophy at its auction ceremony in Mumbai on Wednesday.

NCP lobbying for Cabinet berths

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The NCP chief Ajit Pawar is reaching Delhi on Wednesday night to meet the senior BJP leaders to take a call on portfolio distribution as the cabinet expansion of the Devendra Fadnavisled Maharashtra government is likely to take place by December

Fadnavis landed in Delhi Wednesday evening. Ajit Pawar didn't accompany him but will join him in the national capital. Significantly, the deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde distanced himself from this Delhi visit. According to sources, Shinde is busy in pacifying some of his MLAs who have become furious as the uncertainty over their inclusion in the cabinet is looming

The CM office has stated that Fadnavis's Delhi visit is a courtesy visit, the first after becoming the chief minister. During his visit he would be meeting President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar.

The sources further said that both Shiv Sena and NCP are demanding certain key portfolios. The Sena is insisting for Home and Revenue which BJP is not ready to leave. Against this backdrop Fadnavis and Pawar are likely to meet Home Minister Amit Shah to take final call on this contentious issue. Talks are

getting delayed because all the three parties, BJP, Shiv Sena and NCP are in no mood to relent from their stance. The cabinet expansion is likely by December 14 and prior to this the BJP leadership wants to clear all the doubts of alliance partners.

The BJP is expected to keep 21 to 22 ministerial berths. At the same time the party has decided to keep four to five ministerial berths vacant. On December 5, Fadnavis took oath as CM along with Shindee and NCP leader Ajit Pawar as his deputies. Nevertheless, since then the discussion on cabinet expansion is continuing as a result both the deputy chief minister's are without any portfolios even after a week's time.

Rs 1.39 cr penalty collected from traffic violators

Alibag: Police in Raigad district have collected Rs 1.39 crore penalty from those allegedly indulging in traffic violations, an official said.

The penalty was collected during the election code of conduct.

Rs 1,39,29,650 were collected in the form of penalty for various traffic violations like not wearing a seat belt while driving a car, not using a helmet while riding a two-wheeler, riding triple seat and driving under the influence of liquor, Traffic branch's police inspector Somnath Lande said.

In Alibag constituency, 3,351 challans were issued and Rs 30,37,950 fine was collected, while in Karjat assembly segment 1,967 challans were issued and Rs 18.00.250 penalty was collected from the traffic violations

One more held in sarpanch murder case; motive unclear lodged a police complaint panch Santosh Deshmukh,'

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar: Police investigating the abduction and murder case of a village head in Beed district have arrested one more individual, an officer said on Wednesday.

Massajog village sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh was abducted from a toll plaza located near Dongaon Phata village around 3 pm on Monday from his car, police said

Deshmukh's body was found in Daithana area of

Kej tehsil. Deshmukh's cousin Shivraj Deshmukh later

alleging that the sarpanch was abducted over a previous enmity with some persons Police later arrested two

protests by angry villagers. Protesters torched a state transport bus during a road blockade demonstra-

tion and clashed with police on Tuesday, an official said. "Beed Police arrested a third accused in connection

with the murder of sar-

is progressing, and appersons-Jayram Chate and pealed to people not to pay Mahesh Kedar- in the abattention to rumours. The third accused is duction-murder case amid

identified as Pratik Ghule, another official said. Meanwhile, local MLA

and NCP leader Prakash Solanke demanded the formation of a Special Investigation Team. "We cannot trust local police. An SIT can unravel the truth behind the murder," he said.

Superintendent of Police

Avinash Bargal told report-

ers in Beed on Wednesday.

He said the investigation

Ex-cop kills lover, buries body

Nagpur: A dismissed policeman killed a married woman, with whom he was in a relationship, after a heated argument and then buried the body behind an under-construction build ing in Nagpur.

The accused, Naresh alias Narendra Pandurang Dahule (40), has been arrested in neighbouring Chandranur district and charged with murder and destruction of evidence.

The accused once worked in the police force, but was dismissed from service. The victim, also aged 40 and a resident of Chimur in Chandrapur district, was married and had a son.

Dahule and the woman, who were classmates during their school years, rekindled their relationship through Facebook in August, the police said.

They soon got into a romantic relationship and decided to elope. However, on November 26, while attempting to carry out their plan, the couple had a heated argument over their future together.

In a fit of rage, Dahule allegedly strangled his lover to death, the police said.

To conceal his crime, the man drove around for hours in a stolen car with the body before disposing it of in a septic tank behind an under-construction building in Vela Hari area under Beltarodi station.



People take part in a protest against the atrocities on religious minorities in Bangladesh in Thane on Wednesday.

Two history-sheeters held; stolen valuables seized

Palghar: With the arrest of two history-sheeters, police in Maharashtra's Palghar district claimed to have cracked at least three criminal cases, and seized from them stolen items worth over Rs 1.90 lakh, an official said on Wednesday.

The arrest was made by the Mira Bhayandar-Vasai Virar police.

In a press conference held at Vasai, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone-II) Poornima Chougule-Shringi said that a woman had lodged a complaint at the Valiv police station stating that two unidentified persons came on a motorcycle and snatched her mangalsutra (necklace) worth Rs 45,000 under the pretext of asking her an address in Vasai on November 28.

A similar incident was reported from the Manickpur police station, she said.

"The police finally tracked down one of the accused, Kannubhai alias Kanhaya Ramabai Solanki (45) in Gujarat's Himmatnagar where he was chased on a motorcycle. The second accused, Mohammad Sharif Farid Khan (55), was arrested from Bhandup in Mumbai," Shringi said.

During their interrogation, it came to light that Solanki was involved in seven incidents of crime registered at Khadia, Bayad, Paldi, Himmatnagar, Ghatlodia and Umra police stations in Gujarat, while cases were filed in Bandra and Surat against the second ac-

cused, the official said

Use of phrases like 'vote jihad' under ECI's scanner

By Nikhil Deshmukh

Mumbai: Controversial used by some political parties during the election campaign in the recentlyheld Maharashtra assembly polls are under the Election Commission of India (ECI)'s scanner, an official said on Wednesday.

In an exclusive interview to PTI, Maharashtra Additional Chief Electoral Officer Dr Kiran Kulkarni also said that more than 650 cases of poll code violation were registered during the state elections, and the enforcement agencies will make sure that these cases are taken to a logical conclusion.

When asked about 'vote jihad', he said, "The ECI is carefully analysing its implications across legal, linguistic and social domains before taking further action...We should be very cautious with terms like 'vote jihad' because they serious have repercussions."

"This is a new phrase requiring thorough study. There are legal, linguistic, social and religious aspects to consider. ECI officials, including the Chief Electoral Officer and I, are analysing this and we will take an appropriate deci-

sion once all these aspects are reviewed comprehensively," he said.

When asked if such controversial phrases affected the election discourse, Kulkarni cautioned against drawing hasty conclusions

"It's a long-term process. Words and their references need to be defined and analysed thoroughly. There is no airtight legal framework for new terminology, so we must handle such matters carefully, keeping in mind their consequences," he said.

Elections to the 288-member Maharashtra legislative assembly were held on November 20 and the votes were counted three days later. The election code of conduct came into force in the state on October 15

Kulkarni said, a total of 659 cases were filed in the state for violation of election code of conduct, significantly higher than the 366 cases registered during the Lok Sabha elections held earlier this year.

"Our investigating agencies did excellent work in the Lok Sabha cases with 300 chargesheets already filed in courts," he said.

On the assembly election cases, he said, "We are following up diligently. Our enforcement agencies

are investigating, and all chargesheets will be filed in courts to make sure these cases reach a logical conclusion.

The timeline for action depends on the judiciary, he said.

"These are criminal cases, so they follow the due process Courts are serious about election-related offences, and we are requesting expedited resolution," he said.

On hate speech complaints. Kulkarni said these cases are dealt with under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)

"Some complaints were verified as genuine, and cases were filed under relevant legal provisions. However, the model code of conduct is not a law but a consensual guideline supported by various laws," he said.

Kulkarni dismissed allegations of booth capturing during the polls, citing Maharashtra's robust electoral systems.

"Booth capturing has never happened in Maharashtra. With EVMs, it is meaningless because the machines are robust and data is retrievable. There were six reported instances of disruption (during voting), but the polling process was restored within an hour," he said.

Air Force jawan ends life while on duty

Nagpur: An Air Force sergeant allegedly took his own life by shooting himself while on duty here in the early hours

of Wednesday, police said. Javeer Singh (36), who hailed from Bhiwani in Haryana, shot himself in the head with his service weapon around 2 am, said an official of Gittikhadan police station

The gunshot alerted fellow jawans at the Maintenance Command Center in Vavusena Nagar who discovered him lying in a pool of blood. The body was sent to a government hospital for post-mortem and investigation was underway.

जाहीर नोटीस

तमाम लोकांना माझे अशिल राकेश यादव, प्रियंक यादव, रमेश यादव हयांच्या कडन कळविण्यात येत की गांव मौजे- नारींगी, ता - वसई, जि - पालघर येथील सर्व्हे नं. २१९, हिस्सा नं. ३ हया जिमन मिळकतीवर बांधण्यात आलेली ''साई दीप अपार्टमेंट", ''साई दीप कॉ. ऑप. हौ. सोसायर्ट लि", पोस्ट ऑफीस समोर, वीर सावरकर मार्ग विरार (पू), ता-वसई, जि - पालघर - ४०१२०५ हया बिल्डिंग मधील रूम नं . २०८, दुसरा मजला क्षेत्र ३२.५३ चौ मिटर, बिल्टिअप ही मालमत्त माझ्या अशिलाच्या मालकीची आहे. पूर्वीच मुख्य सदर फ्लॅटचे करार अर्थात विक्री करारे दि . ७७ / ११ / २०२४ च्या अन्वये माझ्या अशिलाल नोंदणीकृत विकत घेतलेली आहे तसेच पूर्व मालक सुरेश भालचंद्र आंबेरकर हयांनी दिनाँव ०१/०८/२०१८ रोजी मे . साई राम डेव्हलपर्स यांच्या दरम्यान केले होते ते अनोंदणीकृत होते. तरी सदर मिळकतीवर कोणाचाही कोणाताई हक्क, हितसंबंध असेल तर तो त्यांनी ही नोटीस प्रसिध्द झाल्यापास्**न ७ दिवसांच्या आत** आम्हांस ऑफीस नं. १०२, पहिलामाळा, कुंती सदन, र्श्र मंगल कार्यालय हॉलच्या खाली, विर सावरक मार्ग, विरार- (पू), ता- वसई, जि - पालघर, य ाल्ल्यावर लेखी पुराव्यासह कळवावा.

ॲड. रंजन हाशा पाटील

Name of the Holder(S) Applicant(s

Illegal Rohingya bought land, built house

Pune: A Rohingya man from Myanmar arrested earlier this year for allegedly living in India illegally had bought land in Pune area and built a house for himself and his family, investigation has found.

In July, Pimpri-Chinchwad Police arrested two Rohingya couples for illegal entry and stay in the country.

Probe revealed that one of them, Muzammil Khan (45), had purchased a small plot of land



in a Dehu Road locality for Rs 80,000, and built a house using earnings from his supari-selling business, a police official said on

He and his wife had acquired Aadhaar and PAN cards besides Indian passports.

They had been living in the area since 2013, police found.

Khan told police he fled Myanmar in 2012 with his family, seeking shelter in a refugee camp in Bangladesh before crossing the border illegally and entering West Bengal.

After arriving in Pune, he worked in a company and later got into supari trade.

The couple acquired Aadhaar and PAN cards from Bhiwandi in Maharashtra.

The land was purchased without legal documentation from a woman named Kamble and there is no record of the transaction in official land records, the police official said.

"Khan had obtained Indian passports for himself, his wife, and two children, and was planning to visit Mecca," the officer

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform to the general public that original Share Certificate bearing No.26 of shares of distinctive nos. 126 to 130 held by Mr. Suresh Sakharam Halde having address at Flat No. 305, 3rd floor, Arvind Apartment, Raj Park – II CHS Ltd, Kalwa, Thane, Maharashtra - 400606 is lost/misplaced and hence the application is received by the hence the application is received by the society for the issue of duplicate share society for the issue of duplicate share certificate. The society hereby invites claims and objections, if any, for the issue of duplicate share certificate within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice along with relevant proofs and documents supporting the claim in the society office of Raj Park – II CHS Ltd, Kalwa, Thane, Maharashtra – 400606. If no objections are received within above mentioned time, society will be free to issue duplicate share certificate in the manner prescribed in the bye-laws. prescribed in the bye-laws.

Date: 12/12/2024 Place: Kalwa Thane For and on behalf of Raj Park - II CHS Ltd.

Company Name: ACC LIMITED, Regd. Office: Cement House 121, Maharshi Karve Road Mumbai - 400 020, Maharashtra, India

NOTICE is hereby given that the certificates(s) for the undermentioned securities of the Company has/have been lost/misplaced and the holder(s) of the said securites/applicant(s nas/have applied to the Company to issue duplicate certificate(s).

Any person who has a claim in respect of the said securities should lodge such claim with the Company at its Registered office within 15 days from this date, else the Company will proceed to issue duplicate certificate(s) without further intimation.

Name(s) of	Folio No.		No. of	Company's		Certificate
the Holder(s)	B0000	Securities	Securities:	Name:	Number(s):	Number(s):
and it Holder(s),	19616	and Face	400	ACC	From	From
if any:		value:		Limited	6176231	189518
Bhairavi Keshav		Equity			to 6176550	to 189525
Nairi Jointly with		Shares			& From	& From
Leena Keshav		of			60232611	01042314
Nairi		Rs. 10/-			to 60232690	to 01042317

Bhairavi Keshav Nairi (Name After Marriage - Bhairavi Rajdeep Samudrala

Elderly man fatally run over by BEST bus

Mumbai: An elderly man died after being run over by a bus operated by the BEST, Mumbai's civic transport body, when a motorcycle hit him near the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) in south Mumbai on Wednesday, officials

The driver of the bus was taken into custody for inquiry, they said.

The incident occurred within 48 hours of the horrific bus tragedy in Kurla area of the metropolis in which another bus of the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) undertaking fatally knocked down seven persons and injured 42 others on Monday night.

"Around 4.30 pm on Wednesday, a biker hit the senior citizen, aged more than 60 years, in front of Hotel Shivala near the CSMT, due to which the victim fell on the road. Just then, a speeding BEST bus going towards the Electric House in south Mumbai from Anushakti Nagar, ran over him," a police official said



The elderly pedestrian came under the rear wheel of the BEST bus and died on the spot, he said. Dnyandeo Jagdale, the

driver of the BEST bus

was taken into custody for inquiry by the officials of the Mata Ramabai Ambedkar Marg police station, he said, adding that a case is being registered in this

The police have launched a search for the motorcyclist, who hit the deceased, the official said.

A spokesperson of the BEST said they have received information about the accident.

A senior BEST said that the bus belongs to a wet lease operator, but its driver Jagdale is an emplovee t h e undertaking.

Complaint claims BEST drivers overworked

Mumbai: Two lawyers have approached Maharashtra's State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) for an "impartial" inquiry into the BEST bus accident, which left seven dead and 42 injured, claiming that drivers of the civic-run transport body are overworked. They said the tragedy in Mumbai's Kurla area occurred as senior officials of the Brihanmumbai

Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) ignored their drivers' working conditions. Due to pressure from senior officials and lack of seriousness towards prescribed working hours, BEST bus drivers are not getting proper rest which is a violation of their rights, said lawyers Ashish Rai and Pankaj Mishra in their complaint.

The schedule of all existing BEST bus drivers should be checked to ascertain if they are being made to put in longer hours than legally permissible, the complaint said. An out-of-control electric bus operated by the civic-run BEST undertaking rammed into

pedestrians and vehicles at around 9.30 pm on Monday on the SG Barve Marg in Kurla West. Besides killing seven persons and injuring 42 others, including four policemen on 'bandobast' duty, the accident also wrecked 22 vehicles. Basic facilities are not available to BEST drivers and they are not trained properly, the complaint said, adding that "gross negligence" on the part of the bus operator and the management is

evident in this accident. The complaint urged SHRC to issue directions for an impartial enquiry into the accident and help the victims get justice. Meanwhile, bus driver Sanjay More has been booked for culpable homicide not amounting to

murder. He has been remanded in police custody till December 21. According to details that have emerged so far, More had no experience in driving electric vehicles and had undergone only a ten-day training for steering EVs.

Fadnavis meets Prez, V-P, Union ministers



Devendra Fadnavis, who recently took over as the chief minister of Maharashtra, called on President Draupadi Murmu here on Wednesday.

He also called on Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin

About his meeting with President Murmu, the chief minister said, "Presented her a 'murti' (idol) of Maharashtra's daivat 'Lord Vitthal-Rukmini'."

The vice president's secretariat posted a picture of Fadnavis meeting Dhankhar here.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, in a post on X, said, "Met with the dynamic Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. I'm confident his tenure as the third-time CM will add new momentum to Maharashtra's development journey. Wishing him a very successful tenure ahead."

Fadnavis met Gadkari along with BJP state president Chandrashekhar Bawankule

Newbies in the House

Uddhav's Lone Green Warrior

By Ruddhi Phadke

or the first time in 25 years a Muslim leader won an election on a Shiv Sena, and that too a debutant contestant. Shiv Sena (UBT) chose to field Haroon Khan to fight it out for the crucial Versova Assembly seat of Mumbai and, to much of everyone's surprise successfully struck the chord with the voters. In the recently concluded Maharashtra Assembly Elections, Haroon Khan of the Shiv Sena (UBT) emerged victorious defeating Dr. Bharti Lavekar of the BJP with a margin of just 1,600 votes. Giving credit of victory to Chief Uddhav Thackeray Khan said, "All thanks to Uddhavji and Aditya Thackeray that I got this opportunity to serve the people. I believe in secularism and I vow to continue to serve the people of Maharashtra beyond caste and religion."

It's a historic win because after 1999 Haroon Khan is the first Muslim MLA who one on a Shiv Sena ticket. Remember in 1999 Sabbir Shaikh who was close to Balasaheb Thackeray had won the election from the Ambarnath Assembly seat on an undivided Shiy Sena ticket He was also the Labour Minister during Manohar Joshi's tenure as Chief Minister. He died in 2014 after a prolonged illness and after that election, no Muslim candidate ever contested on a Shiv Sena

The 62-year-old Khan who has been actively working with Shiv Sena, more so completely loyal to chief Uddhav Thackeray for over 30 years, plunged into an election battle for the first time in his life and emerged successful. What makes us more curious about his profile is that being an SSC pass out, Haroon Khan did not have a strong educational background.

However, he connected well with the Muslim voters of the high-profile seat of Versova that is home to nearly 1,10,000 voters. Although sources pointed out that All-India-Ulema Board had demanded the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi give tickets to candidates from minority community in the Maharashtra Assem-



bly Elections, speaking to 'The Perfect Voice', Haroon Khan expressed that all religions were equal for him and the fact that he is the head of a Sarvajanik Ganeshotsav Madal was a proof of his secular

No doubt Khan tried his best to strike a chord with the Hindu voters for his participation in Ganesh festival and installation of mandirs and Ganesh Mandals in Mumbai. Recently before the Assembly elections, amid preparations, Haroon Khan had visited a temple on November 17 and offered prayers and water to the Shivling.

Reports said that the priest had also applied tilak on his forehead. After the visit, he had interacted with the temple visitors. It is believed that Haroon Khan performs aarti every year for Lord Ganesha during the festivities and also recites various sanskrit shlokas. While pleasing the non-Muslim voters, at the same time sources point out that Uddhav Thackeray, whose fate largely depended on Muslim voters, viewed Khan as the most ideal contender in a bid to strongly resist the election strategy of AIMIM and BJP.

Uddhav's trust on Haroon Khan is justified for another reason which is his loyalty which made him stand strong in support of Uddhav Thackeray for decades, even after Eknath Shinde blew the bugle of rebellion. Yes, Khan has made it to the Assembly, however, it remains to be seen if he manages to sail through the hard road ahead.

DRI recovers 12.5 kg gold; six held

of Revenue Intelligence on Wednesday arrested six persons, including three individuals working at the food court inside the Mumbai airport, and recovered gold worth nearly Rs 10 crore from them, an official

The food court staffers would collect gold from international flyers linked to a syndicate, take it out of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport here and hand over the precious metal to others, the DRI official said.

Acting on inputs, DRI officials intercepted two such consignments of smuggled gold when they were being delivered outside the airport and apprehended three food court employees and as many receivers, he said.

The DRI officials seized 24 oval-shaped balls of gold dust in wax form packed in eight pouches. Altogether, 12.5 kg of gold valued at Rs 9.95 crore was recovered, he

After interrogation, all six persons were arrested under the Customs Act, he

In a statement, DRI said it busted a "big gold smuggling syndicate" with the arrest of the six persons and the recovery of the yel-

Over the past two days, the DRI Mumbai has seized nearly 36 kg of smuggled gold, it added.

rickshaws seized for traffic violation

In a special drive, city police has taken action against 2 099 auto rickshaw drivers for violation of traffic rules and seized 426 rickshaws, an official said on Wednesday. The drive was launched on November 29 after receiving repeated complaints about auto rickshaw drivers refusing fare or driving rashly, he said.

Penalty was also imposed for driving without a permit or fitness certificate, parking in no-parking space, and the action would continue, the official said.

People can call helpline numbers 100, 103 and 112 if they have any grievance about auto rickshaw driv-

Sena likely to drop few ministers

Mumbai: The ruling Shiv Sena in Maharashtra may not give another chance to three leaders in the new state cabinet even as they were ministers in the previous government in view of complaints about their performance and inaccessibility, a party leader said.

The party is likely to induct fresh faces in their

An aide of Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and party MLA said several legislators raised concern regarding certain ministers. They said the three former ministers - one each from Konkan, western Maharashtra and Marathwada - were inaccessible even to the party MLAs.

"We have raised this issue with the deputy CM (Shinde) and demanded that they should not be inducted in the new cabinet. These ministers did not even meet their own party MLAs," the aide said.

This development reflects the churn within the Shiv Sena which has 57 MLAs.

In a related development, Shinde's office said he has not gone to Delhi to hold talks on cabinet expansion.



Modi asks Kareena why children not brought

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who interacted with the Kapoor's family ahead of Raj Kapoor's birth centenary, has said he was looking forward to meeting Kareena Kapoor Khan and Saif Ali Khan's two children Taimur and

The Kapoor family, including actors Ranbir Kapoor, Riddhima Kapoor Sahni, and Neetu Kapoor, met the prime minister on Tuesday and invited the prime minister for the Raj

Kapoor Film Festival. December 14, 2024 marks the 100th birth anniversary of Raj Kapoor, an actor, editor, a director, and a producer, known for classics such as "Aag", "Awara", "Barsaat", "Shree 420", and

During the interaction, Saif told Modi that he is the first prime minister he has met in his life.

'You are the first Prime Minister that I have met... Your energy is so good and you work so hard. I want to congratulate you in whatever you do. Thank you for opening your doors and for being accessible to us," he

PM Modi then told the actor that he had met Saif's father, Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi, and was now hoping to meet the next generation.

"I have met your father and I thought today I will get to meet the third generation as well. But you didn't bring them (par aap laye

After the meeting with the PM, Saif said it was a warm feeling to interact with the "head of our nation".

"He said something good about Raj Kapoor and his soft power globally and how proud people are in Eastern Europe and Russia and Central Europe. He suggested that we should make a documentary on that to keep his memory alive," he said.

Kareena Kapoor Khan said it was her dream to interact with the Prime Minister. "I'm so happy that on the occasion of my grandfather's 100th birthday, we got that chance. He has so much positive energy and he is truly a global leader," she

Rs 10 lakh in task completion cyber fraud Mumbai: A 27-vear-old electrician lost Rs 10 lakh

Electrician loses

tion" fraud as he was lured into sending money under the pretext of getting higher returns, Mumbai Police said on Wednesday.

The victim, employed with the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority, received a call from a woman in October who offered him a parttime job, a police official said.

The woman forwarded a WhatsApp link to the victim and asked him to complete online tasks like assigning ratings to reviews and liking videos on social media.

"To gain the victim's trust, the fraudsters initially sent him Rs 200 on successful completion of a given task. He was subsequently added to a Telegram group," the official said.

The victim was promised that he would receive higher returns after he sent small amounts as "fees" for completing the tasks, he said.

Convinced by the offer, he started sending money



to bank account numbers provided in the WhatsApp group, the official said.

"He ended up sending Rs 10 lakh since October but failed to get promised returns. Whenever he used to call the phone number of the woman, he failed to get any reply," he said.

The victim realised that he was conned and approached the BKC police station, leading to the registration of a case against unidentified persons under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS) and the Information Technology Act.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"If development is their (MVA) priority, with both the central and state governments controlled by the BJP-led alliance, they

carefully.'



Pravin Darekar, Leader, BJP

Pandey records statement in extortion case Thane: Former DGP San-

jay Pandey recorded his statement on Wednesday in connection with an extortion case registered against him and six others in Thane, a crime branch official said.

Pandey visited the crime branch office in Wagle Estate area in the morning, the official said, adding that the former top cop left after three hours.

"Pandey was in the Crime Branch office for three hours during which his statement was recorded," a crime branch official said.

The case was registered at the Thane Nagar police station on August 26, 2024, on a complaint lodged by Mumbai-based businessman Sanjay Punamiya, against whom two FIRs had been registered during the MVA government's tenure when Pandey was first the DGP and then the police Mumbai

commissioner. In the complaint, Punamiya claimed to have faced "significant trou-



and June 30, 2024.

bles" at the hands of the Besides the retired DGP. accused between May 2021 the FIR has named ex-ACP Sardar Patil, Inspector



crime case registered with the Thane Nagar police.

They also threatened the complainant and other businessmen with false cases, extorted money and prepared fabricated documents, while (one of them) Prosecutor to mislead courts, it said. The FIR lists charges un-

posing as a Special Public

der multiple sections of the old IPC, including extortion, criminal conspiracy and false evidence, criminal intimidation, personating a public servant, giving false statements and obstruction of justice, assault, forgery and using forged documents, among

The Crime Branch has not arrested any person so

Techie suicide: Victim's family demands justice

Bengaluru: The family of the 34-year-old techie who allegedly died by suicide, has demanded justice for him and strict action against his harassers.

Atul Subhash, who worked for a private firm in the city, had left behind a 24-page purported death note, giving extensive details of what he alleged was years-long emotional distress of marital issues; multiple cases filed against him and harassment by his wife, her relatives, and a judge based in Uttar Pradesh, police said.

Speaking to PTI videos here, Subhash's brother Bikas said, "I want my brother to get justice. I want this country to have a legal process through which even men can get justice. I want strict action against those who are sitting on a legal chair and doing corruption because if this continues then how will people expect

Alleging corruption in the system, he said justice can be expected only when it is corruption-free, when every party is heard equally and arguments are done based on facts.

'....can expect justice only when decisions are made on the basis of facts and if it does not happen, then people will slowly start losing faith in judicial system. It may lead to a situation where people may get afraid to get married. Men may start feeling that



if they get married, they will just end up being an ATM machine for vending money," he alleged.

Subhash's body was found hanging at his residence in the Manjunath Layout area, which falls under the Marathahalli police station limits, on Monday. A placard reading "Justice is due" was found in the room where he allegedly ended his life.

Before taking to the extreme step, he recorded an over 80-minute video on Rumble, explaining the circumstances behind his

In the video, which has now gone viral on social media platforms, Subhash can be heard saying, "I feel that I should kill myself because the money I earn is making my enemies stronger. That same money will be used to destroy me, and this cycle will keep going.'

Subhash's uncle Pawan Kumar alleged his nephew

was being harassed and tortured for money and that he was also humiliated

by his wife and the judge.

"What has happened is very unfortunate. He was losing the case (filed by his wife). He was being tortured. They (wife and family) were constantly demanding money from him. To the best of his capacity, he was giving her money for child maintenance."

Initially the family demanded Rs 40,000 per month, doubled it later and then wanted the deceased to provide Rs 1 lakh. Kumar charged Sub-

hash's wife and her family of 'minting' money from his nephew under the pretext of child maintenance, for the couple's four year-old

He wondered how much money would be required to raise a child of this age.

"His wife even said that he should commit suicide if he cannot pay the amount

to which the judge also laughed. This really hurt him," he alleged.

Suicidal thoughts had been lingering in Subhash's mind for the last six months "and till the last moment, he didn't let us know anything.

Kumar said the family had no idea Subhash may do something like this. "He had made a time table for everything.

Following Subhash's death, a case of abetment of suicide has been registered against his wife and her family members.

"We will be sending a police team led by the inspector in-charge to Uttar Pradesh. The team will question the deceased's wife and her family members as part of the probe. We are looking into all the allegations and the matter is being investigated from all angles", a senior police officer said.

According to police, preliminary investigations revealed Subhash had been facing marital discord with his wife, who had also registered a case against him in Uttar Pradesh. He also sent his death note via email to several people and shared it with a WhatsApp group of an NGO he was associated with, the officer

In his purported death note, Subhash mentioned getting married in 2019. The couple had their son the following year.



the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 in Prayagraj on Wednesday.

Men too have 'pride, dignity': HC

Kochi: The Kerala High Court on Wednesday granted anticipatory bail to veteran actor-cum-director Balachandra Menon in a case accusing him of outraging the modesty of a female actor in 2007 during a film shoot, saying that men too have "pride and dignity" and not just women.

The order and observation by Justice P V Kunhikrishnan came while allowing the anticipatory bail plea moved by the actor against whom the case was lodged in September this vear after the release of the Justice Hema Committee report. Menon had contended that the complaint was made after a gap of 17 years from the date of the alleged incident and intention was to malign image.

Cyber police station at Maha Kumbh to prevent online frauds

Mahakumbh Nagar (UP): Ahead of Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj in January, the Uttar Pradesh Police has established a cyber police station in the mela area to safeguard devotees from potential online scams, officials said on Wednesday.

Detailed plans have been made to protect devotees from cyber fraud, including threats from fake or dark websites and malicious activities on social media, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Rajesh Dwivedi said.

As part of the security measures, a cyber police station has been established in the mela area. A dedicated team of top cyber experts and officers from across Uttar Pradesh has been formed to manage online security of the anticipated 45 crore devotees visiting Maha Kumbh, the officials said. These specialists will

provide round-the-clock

vigilance, ensuring a secure and seamless experience for pilgrims from India and abroad, they said. Maha Kumbh will begin

on January 13 and conclude on February 26 on the occasion of Mahashivatri. Experienced officers

from the state have already taken charge, and cyber experts are now in position, SSP Dwivedi said. Measures are in place to

prevent any misuse of AI and social media platforms. Suspicious activities, such as fake links used by fraudsters are being closely monitored and neutralized, he

In a proactive move, the

cyber security team has identified 44 suspicious websites and initiated action against them, the officials said.

A dedicated helpline number, 1920, has been launched to provide information related to the event. Additionally, official government websites (with ".gov.in" in their domain) are being promoted for authentic information, they

Devotees are encouraged to report fake websites to local police stations, where the cyber police will take immediate action, they

The team is active both at their stations as well as with mobile units handling cases of fake websites and fraudulent social media accounts, they said.

Pakistan blocks 80k SIM cards for spreading fake news

By Sajjad Hussain

Islamabad: Pakistan authorities have blocked approximately 80,000 SIM cards for spreading fake news amid concerns regarding the social media propelled misinformation, the government said on Wednesday.

Parliamentary Secretary for the Cabinet Division Sajid Mehdi told the National Assembly, in response to a calling attention notice regarding the spread of false news on digital platforms, also pointed out the need for reforms in the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act. 2016 to better tackle the issue of fake news.

The amendments to this law would expedite the trial of cases related to the dissemination of false information he added

The issue of fake news has already grabbed international attention as a major threat to domestic and global peace and stability and authorities claimed that Pakistan has faced the challenge in the wake of protests by the jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party.

Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party extensively uses social media to drive home its messages, which the government claims is fake news. Meanwhile, Pakistani

authorities have booked 150 suspects and arrested 22 of them, mostly belonging to Khan's party, for allegedly propagating messages against the army on social media about the killings of the party workers in Islamabad on November 26, an official said on Wednesday.

Mehdi said the government's proactive steps, including blocking SIM cards, revising laws, and establishment of a joint task force, are aimed at mitigating the harmful effects of fake news.

The joint task force has already submitted its report to the Prime Minister and highlighted the seriousness of the issue, Mehdi said, adding, the task force's ongoing work would continue to address the issue.

The government was also registering Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) to improve monitoring and control of online activities,



tracks during an agitation demanding a separate state of Cooch Behar at Jorai railway station in Cooch Behar district of West Bengal.

Blockage leads to train cancellations, diversions

Kolkata: A rail blockade by agitators at West Bengal's Jorai railway station demanding a separate state of Cooch Behar led to the cancellation of two trains and diversion of several others on Wednesday, an official

The New Jalpaiguri-Guwahati Vande Bharat Express was among the trains cancelled due to the

agitation by the Greater Coochbehar People's Association (GCPA), he said.

The blockade at Jorai railway station in Alipurduar division of Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) started at 6.45 am, affecting train movement on the route that connects the northeastern states with the rest of the country.

The agitators said they

were holding the "indefinite" rail blockade to press for their demand for the creation of Coochbehar'.

Thousands of protesters assembled at the station in the morning and blocked tracks, prompting the deployment of a large number of RPF, GRP and local police personnel to prevent any untoward incident.

No advance hearing on monk's bail plea

Dhaka: A Bangladesh court Wednesday rejected a plea to advance the hearing of arrested Hindu monk Chinmoy Krishna Das' bail petition in a sedition case, ruling that it would be heard as previously fixed on January 2.

Chattogram Metropolitan Session Judge Saiful Islam rejected the plea as the lawyer who filed the petition seeking the advanced hearing did not have the power of attorney.

"Advocate Rabindra Ghose sought the advanced hearing when another lawyer informed the judge that he (Ghose) did not have any power of attorney to represent the monk. The judge then rejected the plea," a court official said

In his plea, Goshe said Das was arrested in a "false and fabricated case" while he had been suffering from diabetes, asthma and other issues.

The lawyer, however, admitted that he did not go to the prison to obtain a signed power of attorney from Das. "I will visit Chinmoy in the prison now and obtain the Vakalatnama (power of attorney).'

Indian-origin student suspended over pro-Palestinian activism

By Yoshita Singh

New York: An Indian-origin student pursuing PhD at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has been suspended until January 2026 following his pro-Palestinian activism and is currently appealing the university's decision.

Prahlad Iyengar, also a National Science Foundation fellow, has been "suspended until January 2026," according to a post on X by a group called 'MIT Coalition Against Apartheid'.

This suspension effectively terminates Iyengar's five-year NSF fellowship and severely disrupts his academic career, the organisation said in the post.

It added that Ivengar, a PhD student in the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, is "now appealing the decision" to the Chancellor at MIT Wednesday, the "last opportunity to end this persecution and restore academic dignity.

"This decision is the harshest among several sanctions resulting from speech-related activities, including an article" that



Prahlad Ivengar

Ivengar wrote for a studentrun zine 'Written Revolution, "which engaged in debate about the role of pacifism in the pro-Palestine movement.'

"This suspension is, in practice, an expulsion, as his readmission is entirely contingent upon approval from the same Committee on Discipline that handed down this harsh sanction," the body said.

Ivengar is appealing his case with the Chancellor to "revoke or reduce" the "unjust sanctions" against him.

MIT Coalition Against Apartheid said it has launched a campaign to "put pressure on MIT's administration to "stop criminalising students who stand on the right side of history.' The organisation called

on other institutions to sup-

Rahane powers Mumbai to semifinals

Alur: Out-of-favour India batter Ajinkya Rahane's explosive fifty capped Mumbai's stunning six-wicket victory over Vidarbha and their entry into the semifinals of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy here on Wednesday.

Once Vidarbha posted a massive 221 for six, Mumbai needed a strong chase and Rahane led from the front with an 84 off 45 balls (10x4, 3x6).

Mumbai made 224 for four in 19.2 overs and they will face Baroda in the semifinals on Friday here.

Under-fire Prithvi Shaw (49, 26b, 5x4, 4x6) reminded of the immense talent beneath his callous exterior with a powerful knock as Mumbai marched to 83 in just 7

Shaw fell to left-arm pacer Dipesh Par-

wani and that brought in a period of instability in the Mumbai innings. Skipper Shreyas Iyer (5) and India

T20I captain Suryakumar Yadav (9) fell in quick succession as Mumbai were reduced to 118 for three in the

They still needed 104 runs from the remaining eight overs. Rahane, who played a few sublime shots, fell when his side was at 157 in 15.1

But India middle-order batter Shivam Dube (37 not out, 22b, 1x4, 2x6), who was dropped early in his innings by Karun Nair, and Suyansh Shedge (36, 12b, 1x4, 4x6) clobbered 67 runs in a little over four overs to take their side home. The frenetic run collection included a 22-run over by Shedge off off-spinner Mandar Mahale through a sequence of 6, 6, 6, 4 in the

Earlier, Atharva Taide (66, 41b, 10x4, 1x6), Apoorva Wankhade (51, 33b, 2x4, 3x6) and Shubham Dubey (43, 19b, 3x4, 3x6) led Vidarbha's run

Delhi in last four Anuj Rawat made a brutal unbeaten 73 off 33 balls (7x4, 5x6) as Delhi defeated Uttar Pradesh by

19 runs in their quarterfinal match at the Chinnaswamy Stadium.

They will face Madhya Pradesh in the semifinal here on Friday.

Rawat's innings powered Delhi to a healthy 193 for three after being asked to bat first. UP were bowled out for 174.

There was a minor altercation between Delhi skipper Ayush Badoni and UP allrounder Nitish Rana after the former pulled away from strike a couple of times. It required the intervention of the on-

field umpires to separate the players. Uttar Pradesh were never really in contention as India batter Rinku Singh (10, 7b)

failed to take off. Priyam Garg made a well-timed fifty (54. 34b, 6x4, 3x6) but none was there to back

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"We want protection for minorities in Bangladesh. The **Union government** must act. It should also bring back those who want to return to India. Not a single India-Bangladesh border has been closed."



Mamata Banerjee,

Chief Minister, West Bengal

UN team meets Rohingya Muslims amid protest over their settlement

AROUND 13,700 ROHINGYAS ILLEGALLY SETTLED IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR ARE PROVIDED WATER AND ELECTRICITY CONNECTIONS

Jammu: A two-member team of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) met Rohingya Muslims at a slum here amid a heated debate whether the illegally settled immigrants be provided water and electricity.

Senior Protection Officer Tomoko Fukumura along with Protection Associate Ragini Trakroo Zutushi on Monday met the Rohingya Muslims and some local residents in the Kiryani Talab area of Narwal, an official said on Wednesday.

He said the head of the team would return to Delhi on Wednesday evening as their attempt to meet some police officials failed.

On December 7, Jammu and Kashmir Jal Shakti Minister Javed Ahmed Rana said the water supply would not be snapped to the slums housing the immigrants, pending a call from the Centre on their deportation.

Rana's statement came after Rohingyas living on three plots of land in the Narwal area of Jammu claimed that their power and water supply were snapped recently despite being registered with the

Two days later, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah



"They have been brought

and settled here. If there is

a change in policy at the Centre, take them back. As

long as they are here, we

cannot treat them like ani-

mals. They are humans and

they should be treated as

the settlement of Rohing-

yas and Bangladeshi na-

tionals in Jammu a major

"political conspiracy" and

demanded a CBI probe to

identify those involved in

bringing and settling them

al Conference government

over granting water and

power connections to the

settlers, the BJP alleged it

was being done to protect

them as they belonged to a

According to govern-

"particular community".

ment data, more than 13,700

foreigners, most of them

Hitting out at the Nation-

The BJP, however, called

such," he said.

in the city.

said the Centre should decide the fate of the Rohingya population settled in Jammu, asserting that they could not be allowed to die of starvation or cold.

"It is a humanitarian issue. The central government should decide about them (Rohingyas). If they are to be sent back, do that. If you can, send them back. If you cannot send them back, we cannot starve them to death. They cannot be allowed to die of cold," Abdullah had told

"The Government of India should tell us what we have to do with them. As long as they are here, we need to take care of them,"

Abdullah, the National Conference vice president, also asserted that they did not bring the Rohingyas to Jammu.

Rohingyas and Bangladeshi nationals, are settled in Jammu and other districts of Jammu and Kashmir, where their population increased by over 6,000 between 2008 and 2016.

In March 2021, police found more than 270 Rohingyas, including women and children, living illegally in Jammu city during a verification drive and lodged them at a holding centre inside the Kathua sub-jail.

On November 25, Senior Superintendent of Police, city south Jammu, Ajay Sharma said 18 FIRs were registered in a major drive against the landlords renting out their properties to Rohingyas and others without providing information to police as per the order of the district magistrate.

"The civil administration has also launched a drive to identify the people who facilitated electricity and water connections to the plots housing Rohingyas," Sharma had said.

India, not being a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention, views Rohingyas as "illegal immigrants". The convention outlines refugee rights and the legal obligations of countries to protect them.

Actor's son found dead, his two friends held

Bareilly (UP): Actor Sapna Singh staged a protest in Bareilly after her 14-yearold son was found dead under suspicious circumstances, with police arresting his two friends over the case, officials said on Wednesday.

She ended the protest on Tuesday after more than 90 minutes following police's assurance that action will be taken.

Her son Sagar Gangwar's two adult friends -- identified as Anuj and Sunny -were arrested and sent to jail on Wednesday on charges of murder, the officials said.

"The postmortem report could not confirm the exact cause of death but indications of poisoning or drug overdose have been found. Viscera samples have been preserved for further examination," Circle Officer (Faridpur) Ashutosh Shivam said.

Bhuta Police Station Inspector Sunil Kumar added, "Anuj and Sunny confessed during questioning that they had consumed drugs and alcohol with Sagar. The overdose caused Sagar to collapse. Panicking, they dragged his body to a field and left him there."

Sagar, a Class 8 student. was staying with his maternal uncle Om Prakash in Anand Vihar Colony, Bareilly, according to police.

His body was discovered Sunday morning near Adalakhia village in the Izzatnagar police station area.

Initially, a postmortem was conducted, treating it as an unidentified case. However, the Baradari police had registered a missing persons complaint filed by Om Prakash on Decem-**-PTI**: ber 7, an official said.



should clear their doubt. The high court has said investigate the case after registering the FIR. It may take

some time but the truth will

come out. I have full faith in

the high court and the Pun-

jab Police," the Sikh preach-

after the victim's brother

alleged that his sister was

raped and murdered. He

further alleged that no ac-

tion was taken by police at

The petition of the wom-

an's brother was taken up

in November and during

the previous hearing, the

bench presided over by

Chief Justice Sheel Nagu

had asked the DGP to ex-

plain as to what action has

been taken against officials

the time of the incident.

The DGP's affidavit came

er said.

The FIR was lodged on a complaint filed by the victim's brother, a Patiala resident.

Chandigarh: Punjab Po-

lice has registered a case

against Sikh preacher Ran-

jit Singh Dhadrianwale in a

2012 case of alleged rape

and murder of a woman in

Patiala, the Punjab and

Haryana High Court was

The FIR has been regis-

tered at Passiana Police sta-

tion in Patiala on December

7, according to an affidavit

filed by Punjab Police Di-

rector General of Police

Gaurav Yadav before the

high court on Tuesday.

informed.

Sikh preacher Dhandrianwale, who heads Parmeshwar Dwar gurdwara, a dera in Shekhupura village in Patiala, has a large following in Punjab and among the Punjabi diaspora abroad.

Dhadrianwale, in a video message, said he would cooperate with the police investigation.

"They (the family) have moved the high court. They have a doubt and they who handled the case in

The woman was found in an unconscious condition outside the gate of gurdwara Parmeshwar Dwar on April 22, 2012. She later died at a hospital before she could make any statement, according to the affidavit of the DGP.

The mother of the victim then had not raised suspicion against any person for the death of the woman.

A postmortem report revealed that the death was caused due to poisoning by aluminum phosphate insecticide.

The victim's family later testified before the executive magistrate that they do not suspect any foul play in the death of the woman. She had died on account of consumption of some poisonous substance, the affidavit stated.

The police then forwarded the inquest report in June 2013, which was approved by the sub-divisional magistrate, Patiala in February 2014.

AAP seeks judicial inquiry into Goa scam

Panaji: The Aam Aadmi Party on Wednesday demanded a judicial probe into the cash-for-jobs scam in Goa while claiming that an inquiry by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) will not yield any result.

The Goa police have arrested several persons in connection with the fraud wherein many people have been duped under the pretext of being provided government jobs.

Talking to reporters here, AAP Goa president Amit Palekar said media reports have claimed the ED has initiated an inquiry into the scam.

"I feel that the ED's inquiry will fetch no results as it is yet another agency of the BJP," he alleged.

Palekar alleged some BJP functionaries were involved in the scam, hence his party has demanded a judicial inquiry into it.

Several complaints have been filed across Goa, with many government job aspirants alleging they were forced to pay lakhs of rupees to some persons under the pretext of facilitating employment.

-PTI



Members of VHP and Bajrang Dal take part in a bike rally as part of the annual 'Dattamala Abhiyan', in Chikkamagaluru district, Karnataka

Clubs to seek hard copies of age proof

New Delhi: The Delhi government has directed operators of the city's hotels, clubs and restaurants serving liquor to verify the age of their clients through hard copies of governmentissued identity proofs after violations of the legal drinking age norm were detected.

In Delhi, liquor is served only to persons aged 25 years and above.

The excise department of the Delhi government, during routine inspections by its teams in recent days, found customers younger than 25 years having alcohol at bars, clubs and

The inspections also revealed that some customers were consuming liquor pretending to have completed 25 years. Complaints were also received by the department that some excise licensees were serving liquor to underage persons.

Under the Delhi Excise Act, 2009, no person or licensed vendor or his employee or agent will sell or deliver liquor to any person apparently under the age of 25 years for personal or others' consumption.

The violations of the age restriction norms were reviewed by the department.

"All the licence holders of hotels, clubs, restaurants (HCR) are hereby directed to be more careful and to not serve liquor to any person under the age of 25 years without verifying the age through government-issued IDs," stated a circular issued by the

department. Further, the department has advised the HCR licensees to verify customers' age only with physical IDs instead of virtual ones saved by people on their mobile phones (excluding those in Digilocker portal) to minimise the use of fake or edited digital IDs.

'RS Chairman's partisan behaviour led to notice'

New Delhi: Several opposition parconduct of Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar prompted them to move a notice for his removal as vice president and alleged that politics has taken precedence over rules in the Upper House of Parliament.

Addressing a press conference at the Constitution Club here, Congress pres-



ident Mallikarjun Kharge alleged that Dhankhar is working as a government spokesperson and acting like a school headmaster, often sermonising experienced opposition leaders and preventing them from speaking in the House.

himself is responsible for the disruptions in the House. "The Rajya Sabha chairman's con-

Kharge also claimed that Dhankhar

duct has been contrary to the dignity of the post he holds. He targets opposition leaders and often praises the government," Kharge said.

"Politics has taken precedence over rules in the Rajya Sabha and the chairman has indulged in partisan behaviour," he alleged.

Soon after the Lok Sabha met at 4.40 pm on Wednesday, the House was adjourned again following uproar over TMC member Kalyan Banerjee's remarks against Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia.

Trouble arose when Banerjee was speaking during a discussion on the amendments to the Disaster Management Act.

The All India Trinamool Congress member alleged non-cooperation by the central government during the COVID-19 pandemic, but Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai countered it, saying it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi who helped all the states and successfully handled the crisis by taking everyone along.

Rai also alleged that the West Bengal government tried to put hurdles in the transportation of Covid vaccines through its territory. Scindia stood up and supported Rai, saying that India had emerged

as a "Vishwa Bandhu" during the pandemic and helped all the needy countries across the world.

Following this, Banerjee attacked Scindia and made certain remarks against the minister which were expunged by Speaker Om Birla. Earlier, after the House resumed at 4.40 pm, Banerjee apologised for his remarks, but it was not accepted by Scindia.

The Congress chief said since 1952, no resolution has been brought against the vice president under Article 67 of the Constitution as those who held the post previously never indulged in politics and remained unbiased.

"The notice for the Rajya Sabha chairman's removal is not about personal grievances or political battles.

On November 21, Khan managed

to escape and made his way back

unidentified indi-

viduals under

Section 364A

(kidnapping

for ransom)

We are fed up with his behaviour and partiality. That is why we have given the notice for his removal," he said.

"This is not just a breach of protocol but a betrayal of the Constitution and the people of India," Kharge

"The Rajya Sabha chairman's conduct in the House has harmed the country's dignity," he alleged.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"This government, in order to hide its failure in Manipur, is using George Soros as a shield. Unfortunately, there has been a rise in the illegal

been devastating."



the lives of ordinary people has

Gaurav Gogoi, MP, Congress

Bijnor (UP): Actor Mushtaq Khan, best

known for his roles in films like "Welcome" and "Stree 2," was allegedly kidnapped on the pretext of being invited to an event in Meerut, police said on Wednesday. The actor managed to escape after being held cap-

A complaint regarding the incident was filed by the actor's event manager, Shivam Yadav, at the Bijnor Kotwali police station on Tuesday, Bijnor Superintendent of Police Abhishek Kumar Jha said

According to the complaint, one Rahul Saini contacted Khan on October 15 inviting him to be the chief guest at an event in Meerut and even paid him in advance. Saini also sent Khan a flight ticket for November

20, from Mumbai to Delhi. Upon arriving at the Delhi airport, Khan

'Welcome' actor kidnapped, manages to escape was picked up by a car with a driver and two passengers. However, midway through the journey, he was transferred to a Scorpio vehicle, where two additional men joined, Yadav said in the complaint. When Khan protested, he was threatened and informed that he had been kidnapped. According to the com-

lakh were trans-

ferred from

to Mumbai. Details of the case are not known yet. The kidnappers made several purchases in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar and withdrew cash, amounting to approximately Rs 2 lakh, using Khan's phone, police said. The Bijnor Police have plaint, the kidnappers held registered a case against Khan captive in the Chahsheeri locality of Bijnor and during this time Rs 2

tiya Nayaya Sanhita and formed multiple teams to locate the kidnappers and trace the Scorpio vehicle involved. The full details of the incident will be revealed soon, police added.

Just last week, actor-comedian Sunil Pal filed a similar complaint alleging that he was abducted en route to Uttarakhand for a show. The case is being probed by Uttar Pradesh police.

During the ordeal, the kidnappers demanded a ransom of Rs 20 lakh, Pal said, adding that he was released after managing to pay Rs 8 lakh.

He further claimed that he was abandoned by the side of a road in Meerut, from where he made his way to the Delhi airport and boarded a flight to Mumbai.

-PTI

Adani says 'no' to US funds for Colombo Port

New Delhi: Billionaire Gautam Adani's group has pulled out of a loan deal with a US agency to fund a port terminal in Sri Lanka, saying it will use its own resources for the project.

In an exchange filing late on Tuesday, Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ) said the project "is on track for commissioning by early next

"The project will be financed through the company's internal accruals and capital management plan," the firm said. "We have withdrawn our request for financing from the International Development Finance Corporation

The US IDF had in November last year agreed to provide a USD 553 million loan to support the development, construction, and operation of a deep-water container terminal called the Colombo West International Terminal (CWIT) at the Port of Colombo in Sri

The CWIT is being developed by a consortium of Adani Ports, Sri Lankan conglomerate John Keells Holdings Plc, and the Sri Lanka Ports Authority

DFC financing was part of the US government's broader efforts to counter China's growing influence in the region and was seen as an endorsement of Adani's ability to develop world-class infrastructure.

cess stalled after the DFC asked that the agreement between Adani and the SLPA be amended to align with their conditions, which then went under review by Sri Lanka's Attoradditional capacity.

nation.

The geopolitically sensi-

tive port project in Sri Lan-

ka is as much of a move by

the US to counter Chinese

influence in the island

Phase 1 of the project is

The new terminal will

cater to growing economies

in the Bay of Bengal, taking

advantage of Sri Lanka's

prime position on major

shipping routes and its

proximity to these expand-

initiated in September 2021,

when Adani Ports signed

an agreement with the Sri

Lanka Ports Authority and

Sri Lankan conglomerate

John Keells Holdings,

pledging over USD 700 mil-

lion to expand the capabili-

Lanka's largest and deepest

container terminal, with a

quay length of 1,400 metres

and an alongside depth of

20 metres. When complete,

the terminal will be able to

handle Ultra Large Con-

tainer Vessels (ULCVs) with

capacities of 24,000 TEUs

and is expected to have an

annual handling capacity

Adani Ports had approxi-

mately USD 1.1 billion (Rs

8.893 crore) in cash reserves

and generated an operating

profit of USD 2.3 billion (Rs

18,846 crore) in the past 12

As of September 30, 2024,

of over 3.2 million TEUs.

The CWIT will be Sri

ties of Colombo Port.

The CWIT project was

ing markets.

scheduled to become com-

mercially operational by Q1

ney General. As the project is nearing completion, Adani Ports, which holds 51 per cent of the venture, chose to proceed with the project without funding from the DFC, officials privy to the process explained.

The US agency had recently stated that it was "actively assessing the ramifications" of the bribery allegations against the Adani group executives. It had so far not disbursed any money to the ports-toenergy conglomerate.

Last month, the US Department of Justice charged the Adani group's founder chairman Gautam Adani, and seven others over allegedly conspiring to pay USD 265 million in bribes to Indian officials to secure lucrative solar power supply contracts that were expected to yield USD 2 billion in profits over 20

Adani Group has denied all charges as baseless and vowed to pursue all possible legal recourse.

The Port of Colombo is the largest and busiest transhipment port in the Indian Ocean. It has been operating at more than 90 per cent utilisation since 2021, signalling its need for

Nepal, India hold tourism meet

Kathmandu: The first Nepal-India Tourism Meet was held here to promote Maha Kumbh 2025 and strengthen tourism connections between the two neighbours, with officials underscoring the need to fully leverage the sector's potential.

The event was jointly organised on Tuesday by the Nepal Tourism Board and the Indian Embassy.

It focused on promoting Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh and creating business-to-business (B2B) connections to foster the implementation of circuit tourism between Nepal and India, according to a press release issued by the Indian Embassy.

Organised every 12 years, the Maha Kumbh will be held next year from January 13 to February 26.

Speaking at the event as the Chief Guest, Minister of State for Tourism Arun Kumar Chaudhary said cross-border tourism, especially through land routes, is a big contributor to tourism in Nepal, even though it is not captured in formal statistics

He advised both sides to focus on cross-border connectivity, particularly in remote areas like the Sudurpashchim province.

Prasanna Shriyastaya. Deputy Chief of Mission in the Indian Embassy stressed joint efforts by both sides to fully leverage the India-Nepal tourism potential, including religious and cultural circuits involving places in the Himalayan nation and the neighbouring states of India.

CEO of NTB Deepak Joshi appreciated India as the biggest source of foreign tourists visiting Nepal and highlighted the board's various initiatives



Women stitch to manufacture pilot parachutes for airplanes in India at the Ordnance Parachute Factory in Kanpur.

Reliance biggest wealth creator, Adani fastest: Report

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Motilal Oswal Annual Wealth Creation Study has concluded that the wealth creation was the highest during 2019-24. Adani Enterprises is the top All-round wealth creator during this period.

This report was released on Wednesday. The report comprises of two segments, findings on wealth creation during 2019-2024 and creating wealth through bruised blue chips.

According to this report Reliance Industries, Adani Green and Linde India are the biggest, fastest, and most consistent wealth creators respectively. Financial sector is the largest wealth creating sector followed by the Technology and Utilities sector.

lated as change in the market cap of companies between 2019-24 duly adjusted for corporate actions such as mergers, de-mergers, fresh issuance of capital, buyback, dividends, etc.

"PSUs are regaining prominence in wealth creation," the report states. "Blue chips are aspirational investments, but mostly richly valued. Bruised blue chips bought at close to lows offer handsome returns. Probability of permanent loss of capital is

low for bruised blue chips." The report states that during 2019-24, the top 100 wealth creators of India Inc created wealth of INR 138 trillion. Pace of wealth creation is at 26 per cent CAGR, well higher than the BSE Sensex return of 14



per cent.

For the sixth time in succession, Reliance Industries has emerged the largest wealth creator over 2019-24. This takes Reliance's overall No.1 tally to 11 in the last 17 five-year study periods. Adani Green has emerged the fastest wealth creator with 2019-24 price CAGR of 118 per cent. INR 1 million invested in 2019 in the top 10 fastest wealth creators million in 2024.

"We define consistent wealth creators based on the number of years the stock has out-performed in each of the last five years. Where the number of years is the same, the stock price CAGR decides the rank,' the report states. "Based on this, over 2019-24, the relatively low-profile Linde India has emerged as the most consistent wealth creator. It has outperformed the Nifty total return index in all the last five years, and has the highest price CAGR of 68 per cent."

Raamdeo Agrawal, the Chairman of Motilal Oswal Group, has been commissioning the annual wealth creation study every year for the last 29 years.

CCI watch killer acquisitions in market

New Delhi: The Competition Commission of India (CCI) is looking at deal values in M&A transactions in the digital market sector to check if such transactions are "killer or creeping acquisitions", an official said on Wednesday.

CCI Chairperson Ravneet Kaur said the antitrust regulator is looking at the deal value in zeropriced digital models that are being operated.

Asset turnover threshold may not be there, so the CCI is trying to understand from the deal value if the M&A transaction is killer, Kaur said at CII Global Economic Policy Forum 2024.

"Killer acquisitions" refer to a practice where a dominant company acquires a smaller competitor, with the primary intent of stifling potential competition.

Creeping acquisition is a process through which shares of the target company are acquired gradually from the open market. Kaur further said poach-

ing of staff of small startups on GenAI by bigger players on the digital platform. "We have so far not looked at anything of that we will be looked at," Kaur



Kanta Pandey, Maldives Finance Minister Moosa Zameer, Bhutan's Finance Minister Lyonpo Lekey Dorji, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Director General Chandrajit Banerjee, CII President Sanjiv Puri, and former CII president R Dinesh during the CII Global Economic Policy Forum 2024 in New

BMW, UNICEF to empower children in rural India

Group and UNICEF on Wednesday announced a partnership in India with an aim to transform the educational landscape for 1 lakh children in four states.

The partners would focus on foundational learning and STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) skills from early years through adolescence.

The partnership will provide access to quality STEM education to adolescent girls from Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas and Tribal Ashramshalas, belonging to the most marginalised groups in hard-toreach rural areas in Assam, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, the ausaid in tomaker statement.

The partnership is part of a global long-term tie-up between the BMW Group and UNICEF to reach more than 10 million children and young people each year through education and training, including learning in STEM subjects in five countries where BMW has large operations, including South Africa, Brazil, Mexi-

opportunities come with greater demands for competencies in STEM. Girls particularly miss out on opportunities to learn and practice STEM. Thus, UNICEF is proud to support building a strong foundation for critical thinking in the early years of learning," Cynthia McCaffrey, UNICEF India Representative, said.

"Current employment

BMW Group India President and CEO Vikram Pawah said the partnership with UNICEF harnesses the most powerful tool for empowerment - education.

HCCBL sells 40 pc stake to Jubilant TikTok files

New Delhi: Global beverages major Coca-Cola has sold 40 per cent stake in its India bottling business Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Pvt Ltd (HCCBL) to Jubilant Bhartia Group.

Though the company has not disclosed the amount of the deal, some media reports have pegged it at around Rs 10,000 crore.

"The Coca-Cola Company today announced that it has reached an agreement with Jubilant Bhartia Group, a multi-billion conglomerate with global presence in diverse sectors, to acquire 40 per cent stake in Hindustan Coca-Cola Holdings Pvt Ltd, the parent company of the largest Coca-Cola bottler in India,

Hindustan Coca-Cola Bev-

erages Pvt Ltd," a joint

statement said.

These changes and investment represent a significant milestone for Coca-Cola as the company continues to pursue its purpose to refresh the world and make a difference, it said.

"With its diverse experience in various sectors, Jubilant brings decades of rich experience that will help accelerate the Coca-Cola system, enabling us to win in the market and provide greater value to local communities and consumers," Coca-Cola India President Sanket Ray said.

India is the fifth largest market of Coca-Cola

challenge

Ottawa: TikTok has challenged a Canadian government order to shut down the Chinese video-sharing app's business operations in the country that was imposed over national security concerns. The company said Tuesday that it filed an application for a judicial review with the Federal Court in Vancouver on December 5, which seeks to set aside the order for Tik-

New Delhi: Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Wednesday said the logistics cost in India will come down to 9

per cent within two years. Speaking during bauma Conexpo India, the Road Transport and Highways Minister said that "presently our logistics cost is 14-16 per cent... I assure you that within two years... our

logistics cost will be 9 per

cent. So we will be more

competitive in the interna-



In China, the logistics cost is 8 per cent and in the

US and European countries it is 12 per cent, the minister said. The minister further said the automobile industry is one of the important industries that is giving

Logistic cost to come down to nine pc: Gadkari

maximum revenue as part of GST to the state governments and the Centre. The role of the automobile industry is very impor-

tant to make India a USD 5 trillion economy, he said. The construction equip-

ment, he said, is also part of

this automobile industry. The government is devel oping infrastructure of international standards, he said, adding that water, power, transport and communication are four sectors where the government is giving the highest priority for development.

The aim of the government is to reduce the cost of construction without compromising the quality of construction, Gadkari

India among top three contributors to tourism

New Delhi: India, the US and China, were together responsible for 60 per cent of increase in tourism emissions between 2009 and 2019, a study has found, attributing it largely to population and a strong growth in travel demand.

China's domestic tourism expenditure expanded by 17 per cent per year over the past decade and pushed global emissions up by 0.4 gigatonnes, followed by domestic tourism in the US (0.2 gigatonnes) and India (0.1 gigatonnes), the study, published in the journal Nature Communications

Rising income levels, especially among the "emerging economic powerhouses of China and India", too could be a driving factor, researchers led by those at the University of Queensland, Australia, said in the

They tracked interna-

study.

tional and domestic travel for 175 countries during 2009-2019 and found that greenhouse gas emissions from tourism have been growing more than two times faster, compared to



those from the rest of the global economy.

Carbon footprint from tourism was found to have increased from 3.7 gigatonnes to 5.2 gigatonnes --

with most net emissions coming from aviation, utili-

ties and private vehicles. A rapid growth in travel demand has led to the carbon from tourism account for nine per cent of the world's total emissions, according to corresponding author Ya-Yen Sun, an associate professor at the University of Queensland's Business School.

"Without urgent interventions in the global tourism industry, we anticipate annual increases in emissions of three to four per cent, meaning they will double every 20 years," Sun

The author added that the trend does not comply with the Paris Agreement, according to which the sector is required to cut its emissions by over 10 per cent every year.

"The major drivers behind the increasing emissions are slow technology improvements and a rapid growth in demand," Sun

The authors wrote, "The net increase in tourism emissions is unevenly distributed, with growth in domestic travel in three countries -- the USA, China, and India -- contributing most to the absolute rise in emissions."

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"There are more than 4,000 industrial parks in the country. Some states are doing good in making available land for industrial purposes. We will have



consultations and see what more can be done (at the land front)."

Amardeep Singh Bhatia, Secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade

Syrians in a triumph of hope

MILLIONS OF SYRIANS ARE FEELING HOPE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS

Evanston: The authoritarian regime of Bashar al-Assad fell on December 8, 2024, after a 12-day rebel offensive. Most commentaries on this stunning reversal of a conflict seemingly frozen since 2020 emphasise shifts in geopolitics and balance of power. Some analysts trace how Assad's main backers -Iran, Hezbollah and Russia became too weakened or preoccupied to come to his aid as in the past. Other commentators consider how rebels prepared and professionalised, while the regime decayed, leading to the latter's collapse.

During the past two weeks, Syrians have rejoiced as symbols of Assad domination came down and the revolutionary flag went up. They held their breath as rebels freed captives from the regime's notorious prisons. They shed tears as displaced people

There should be no doubt that what has happened in Syria is the result of a joint American and Zionist plan. We have evidence, and this evidence leaves no room for doubt. A neighbouring state of Syria has this matter, and it continues to do so. Everyone can see

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Supreme Leader, Iran



Suheil Hamwi (center) who spent 32 years in prison in Syria and returned to Lebanon after the government of Bashar Assad was toppled kisses his grandchildren at his home in Chekka, Lebanon on Tuesday. Pic:AP/ PTI

returned and families reunited after years of separation.

Syrians described participating in protest as the first time they breathed or felt like a citizen. One man told me that it was better than his wedding day. A woman referred to it as the

home in Lebanon.

fetch the whiskey and make the sale.

guards had abandoned their posts.

inside and taking him away.

first time she ever heard her own voice, "And I told myself that I would never let anyone steal my voice again," she added.

It was not only the feeling of freedom that was unprecedented but also the feelings of solidarity as strangers worked together,

Chekka: Suheil Hamwi spent 32 years in a Syrian prison, and now, after an offensive by

insurgents that toppled the government of Bashar Assad, he's finally returned to his

In 1992, Hamwi worked as merchant, selling various goods in the town of Chekka in

northern Lebanon. On the night of Eid il-Burbara, or Saint Barbara's Day — a holiday

Hamwi said he handed his 10-month-old son, George, to his wife and went to his car to

As Hamwi approached his vehicle, a car filled with men pulled up, he said, forcing him

Hamwi was one of hundreds of Lebanese citizens detained during Syria's occupation

of Lebanon from 1976 to 2005 and believed to be held in Syrian prisons for decades.

On Sunday, freedom came to him and others unexpectedly — prisoners who'd heard

rumours about Syria's opposition forces and their sweeping campaign found that

Man freed after spending 32 years in Syrian prison

similar to Halloween — a man came to his door to buy some whiskey.

It would be years before his family heard from him again.

of pride as people cultivated the talents and capacities necessary to sustain revolution, and, most of all, of hope that Syrians could reclaim their country and determine their own fate.

"We started to get to know each other," an activist recalled of those heady

Ambassador of India to Lebanon Noor Rahman Sheikh with the 75 Indian nationals evacuated from Syria upon their arrival in Beirut, Lebanon.

days. "People discovered that they were photographers or journalists or filmmakers. We were changing something not just in Syria but also within ourselves."

From their start in March 2011 nonviolent demonstrations met with merciless repression. That

July, oppositionists and military defectors announced the formation of a "Free Syrian Army" to defend protesters and fight the regime. As this and other armed groups pushed the regime from large swaths of territory, new forms of grassroots organi-

India evacuates 75 nationals from Syria

New Delhi: India evacuated 75 of its nationals from Syria two days after rebel forces overthrew President Bashar Assad's authoritarian government. The evacuation, coordinated by the embassies of India in Damascus and Beirut, was put into effect following an assessment of the security situation, the MEA said.

"The Government of India today evacuated 75 Indian nationals from Syria, following recent developments in that country," it said in a late-night statement on Tuesday. "The evacuees included 44 'zaireen' from Jammu and Kashmir who were stranded at Saida Zainab. All Indian nationals have safely crossed over to Lebanon and will return by available commercial flights to India," it said. The MEA said the government accords the highest priority to the safety and security of Indian

Syrians in Germany worried

Berlin: As Syrians took to the streets of Berlin Sunday, far-right leader Alice Weidel wrote on social platform X that anyone celebrating a "free Syria" in Germany "evidently no longer has a reason to flee. He should return to Syria immediately."

With a German election approaching and the government under longstanding pressure to reduce irregular migration, some mainstream opposition politicians also appeared eager to kickstart the return of Syrians. On Monday, prominent conservative lawmaker Jens Spahn suggested on n-tv television the government could say that "for everyone who wants to go back to Syria, we will charter planes for them, they will get a starting fund of 1,000 euros (\$1,055)." He stressed, though, that it will take time before it's clear whether things have stabilized.

Chemical arms monitoring watchdog to meet

The Hague: The global chemical weapons watchdog will hold an emergency meeting on Thursday to discuss the situation in Syria over concerns about the country's stockpile of toxic chemicals.

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons told Syria on Monday it is under obligations to comply with rules to safeguard and destroy dangerous substances, such as chlorine gas, after rebels entered the capital Damascus at the weekend and overthrew the regime of President Bashar Assad.

The meeting was called by the organisation's executive council to discuss the current situation in Syria as well as the status of ongoing investigations in the country.

sation and local governance emerged, indicating what society could accomplish if permitted the northwest.

chance. Despair when Assad killed 1,400 people in a 2013 chemical attack, violating the United States' purported "red line" but escaping accountability. Despair as hundreds of thousands of people disappeared into regime dungeons, condemned to a fate of torture worse than death. Despair as the number killed in Syria climbed by hundreds of thousands, and in 2014 the United Nations gave up counting more. Despair as over half the population was forced to flee their homes, and the word "Syria" became stuck, in minds around the world, to the words "refugee crisis."

With the help of external allies and the rest of the world's inaction, Assad clawed back about 60 per cent of the country by 2020 and penned the opposition in an enclave in the

Syria dropped from the headlines, even as regime bombing continued to kill civilians, economic meltdown plunged 90 per cent of the population below the poverty line and the regime rotted into a narco state sustained by drug trafficking. A woman I met during these years of stalemate summarised things bleakly: "The most important thing at this stage is to protect the last bit of hope that people have left."

Meanwhile, millions of Syrian refugees, the lion's share of them in the countries neighbouring Syria, suffered poverty, legal precariousness and local populations who increasingly demanded their deporta-

Israeli strike on northern Gaza kills 19



Israeli soldiers moving towards the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights from Syria in the town of Majdal

Tel Aviv: Palestinian medical officials say an Israeli strike on a home where displaced people were sheltering in the northern Gaza

Strip has killed at least 19

That's according to the

Kamal Adwan Hospital, which received the casual-

UN: Aid to North Gaza blocked since two months

United Nations: Humanitarian aid to North Gaza, where Israel launched a ground offensive on October 6, has largely been blocked for the past 66 days, the United Nations has said. That has left between 65,000 and 75,000 Palestinians without access to food, water, electricity or health care, according to the world body.

In the north, Israel has continued its siege on Beit Lahiya, Beit Hanoun and Jabaliya with Palestinians living there largely denied aid, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, known as OCHA, said on Tuesday. Recently, it said, about 5,500 people were forcibly displaced from three schools in Beit Lahiya to Gaza City.

ties on Wednesday after the overnight strike in the town of Beit Lahiva.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military. Israel has been waging a renewed offensive against Hamas militants in northern Gaza since early

Hospital records show that a family of eight were among those killed, including four children, their parents and two grandparents.

The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into Israel on October 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250 people, including children and older adults. Around 100 hostages are still inside Gaza, at least a third of whom are believed to be dead.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed over 44,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to local health officials. They say women and children make up more than half the dead but do not distinguish between fighters and civilians in their count. Israel says it has killed over 17,000 militants, without providing



President Joe Biden looks on as Loretta Claiborne, Special Olympics Athlete and Board Director speaks in the White House in Washington on Tuesday. Pic: AP/PTI

Ex-Defence Min attempts suicide

Seoul: South Korea's previous defence minister was stopped from attempting suicide while in detention over last week's martial law, officials said, as police were reported to be raiding President Yoon Suk Yeol's office Wednesday in their intensifying investigation.

The main liberal opposition Democratic Party also plans to submit a new motion to impeach Yoon for his Dec. 3 declaration that imposed martial law.

Yoon's ill-conceived power grab has paralysed South Korean politics, frozen its foreign policy, and rattled financial markets, greatly reducing his chances of completing his fiveyear term and casting a turbulent shadow over one of Asia's most robust democracies.

Shin Yong Hae, commissioner general of of the Korea Correctional Service, told lawmakers Wednesday that Kim tried to kill himself at a detention centre in Seoul. He said that Kim's suicide attempt failed after centre officials stopped him and that he is in a stable condition now.

At the same parliament committee meeting, Justice Minister Park Sung Jae confirmed Kim's failed suicide attempt.

Kim was arrested earlier Wednesday after a Seoul court approved a warrant for him on allegations of playing a key role in a rebellion and committing abuse of power. Kim became the first person formally arrested over the Dec. 3 martial law decree.

Later in the day, National Police Agency Commissioner General Cho Ji Ho and Kim Bong-sik, head of the metropolitan police agency of the capital, Seoul,

Bhandari's extradition appeal opens in UK HC London: Sanjay Bhandari.

a consultant in the defence sector wanted in India on alleged tax evasion and money laundering charges, began an appeal in the High Court in London against his extradition order.

The 62-year-old businessman had won permission to appeal against a November 2022 Westminster Magistrates' Court ruling clearing his extradition earlier this year.

On Tuesday, his lawyers began making their arguments in the case, which is listed for a three-day hearing this week with the judgment expected in new year.

Lord Justice Timothy Holroyde and Justice Karen Steyn began hearing representations from barristers James Stansfeld and Edward Fitzgerald at the Royal Courts of Justice on three main grounds of appeal – whether the bar for criminality had been met in the English jurisdiction, whether a prima facie case had been made and whether the accused faces a risk of violence in an Indian prison.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), appearing on behalf of the Indian authorities, will respond to the arguments during the course of the hearing - represented by barristers Ben Keith and Alex du Sautoy.

On Tuesday, they made representations to the judges to allow a video link to be generated for the following days, to allow the Enforcement Directorate to follow

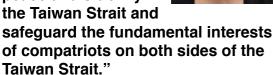
proceedings from India. "There is a real risk of violence or extortion from prisoners and prison officers," claimed Fitzgerald, during his arguments with reference to Delhi's Tihar Jail where Bhandari is to be lodged if he is extradited.

Then UK Secretary of State, Suella Braverman, had ordered the extradition last year. However. Bhandari, who offered consultancy services to defence manufacturers bidding for Indian government contracts through his firm Offset India Solutions. sought permission to appeal against the verdict of District Judge Michael Snow in the High Court.

Represented by Janes Solicitors, the appeal was sought on eight grounds, three of which were granted in a court order by Justice Robert Jay last October and four others being approved at a hearing in March by Justice Pushpin-

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"We will take necessary measures to resolutely defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity, maintain peace and stability in



Zhu Fenglian, spokesperson, Taiwan Affairs Office

S Africa to use G20 Presidency to push shared goals Johannesburg: South Af-

rica will use the G20 Presidency that it assumed at the beginning of this month to further push the shared goals of member countries, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Ronald Lamola has said.

Lamola delivered the opening remarks at the first G20 Sherpas meeting on Monday where he said that South Africa's presidency will be held under the theme Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability, which seeks to harness global will and capabilities to confront the enormous challenges the world is facing.

"South Africa will use its G20 Presidency to secure urgent progress on shared goals through several priority actions. These include strengthening disaster resilience and response; ensuring debt sustainability for low-income countries: mobilising finance for a just energy transition; and harnessing critical minerals for inclusive growth and

development." "In the spirit of Ubuntu. our shared humanity, we will address these challeng-

es through our high-level deliverables and priorities, which lie at the core of the original G20 mandate of promoting strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth and by building

partnerships across all sectors of society to find collective solutions.

The minister said three temporary task forces, an initiative and a commission will be established during South Africa's G20 Presidency. These would include the priorities of inclusive economic growth, industrialisation, employment and reduced inequality; food security; and artificial intelligence, data governance and innovation for sustainable development.

"A review of the work of the G20, 'The G20 at 20 years: A Reflection on Key Achievements and the Way Forward', will also feature as one of South Africa's deliverables through a Sherpa Track Initiative, South Africa also proposes the establishment of a Cost of Capital Commission during its G20 Presidency.'

The minister said that the South African government would continue the significant strides made by the Brazilian G20 Presidency in enhancing the G20 as a site of democratic global engagement through a comprehensive dialogue with civil society and other state and non-state

institutions. He said that in the same way that Brazil had done, a G20 Social Forum will be convened ahead of the Leaders' Summit in Nogether representatives of the existing engagement groups and other segments of civil society that may offer meaningful contributions to the G20. "As we build on the past

vember 2025, to bring to-

and set the tone for the future, we must accentuate the need to adhere to universal values, shared norms, and strong multilateral institutions. Now more than ever, multilateral institutions must be strengthened and reformed to deliver broad global consensus."

EDITORIAL

Heritage Wrangles

n a historic ruling, the Kalyan District and Sessions Court dismissed a long-standing 48-year-old dispute over the Durgadi Fort, declaring it as a Hindu site hosting a Durga Mata temple rather than a mosque. The case underscores an enduring struggle over India's heritage sites, where religious identity and historical claims intersect with Waqf Board assertions.

Durgadi Fort, steeped in history from the era of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, has witnessed contention since 1971 when the Thane District Collector designated it as a temple site. In subsequent decades, claims emerged from the Majlish-e-Mushavreen Majjid Trust asserting that the fort was a mosque and a Waqf Board property. Allegations of unauthorized construction, including the painting of religious symbols, deepened the controversy. The court, however, dismissed these claims, leaning on evidence like temple platforms and idol placements, reinforcing its verdict.

Across India, Waqf Boards claim ownership of numerous heritage sites, including forts and temples, often invoking their historical use as places of Muslim worship. The high-handedness of Waqf Boards in asserting claims has drawn criticism for framing these sites in terms of Islamic endowments.

Portions of Ajmer's Taragarh Fort, once a symbol of Rajput valour under the Chauhans, now serves as a site managed by the Waqf Board, primarily due to its association with the Dargah of Hazrat Miran Syed Hussain. Similarly, parts of Hyderabad's Golkonda Fort have seen overlapping claims of ownership and disputes regarding the right to perform religious activities. In such cases, the Waqf Board has been accused of taking an assertive stance, often sidelining the broader historical significance of these sites.

The issue is further complicated by historical distortions propagated by some Marxist historians in post-Independent India, who, have sought to downplay or whitewash instances of iconoclasm by Muslim invaders despite explicit accounts in contemporary Muslim chronicles detailing such actions. By framing these events as politically or economically motivated rather than religiously driven, their narratives obscure the historical context of contested sites.

Critics argue that Waqf Boards often exploit legal and bureaucratic loopholes to extend their jurisdiction. Under the Waqf Act of 1995, any property designated as Waqf cannot easily be contested, placing the burden of proof on claimants who oppose such designations. This legal advantage has been leveraged to secure control over properties often without comprehensive historical

The case of Durgadi Fort is a timely reminder of the stakes involved in managing India's heritage. The challenge lies not just in resolving disputes but in creating a framework that respects the multiplicity of India's past while resisting the high-handedness of any single authority, Waqf or otherwise. In the end, these monuments must serve as bridges to history, not barriers between communities

AGE OF EXTREMES

Syria's New Struggle for Identity



Shoumojit Banerjee

yria's enduring tragedy, marked by the brutal grip of the Assad family for more than five decades, entered a new phase late last month when Damascus fell to advancing rebel forces, signalling the collapse of a regime propped up by fear, repression and external support. Former president Bashar al-Assad's precipitate flight from the country has brought Syria to an ominous crossroads with foreign powers like Turkey, Israel and the United States jockeying for influence in the region.

The Syrian civil war, which began in 2011 with the promise of reform and democratic aspirations, has parallels with the collapse of empires throughout history, from ancient Rome to the Ottoman Empire: what begins as a crumbling centre of power becomes a battleground for foreign interests eager to assert their dominance.

The Assad family's rule began in 1970 when Hafez al-Assad seized power, turning Syria into an autocracy. Through the Mukhabarat, the regime controlled the population and stoked sectarian divisions to maintain fragile stability. By forging alliances with Russia and Iran, Assad positioned Syria as a bastion against Western influence and a key

The fall of the Assad dynasty signals a new geopolitical battleground in Syria as Turkey, Israel and the U.S. vie for its fractured future



player in regional geopolitics.

But the seeds of the regime's demise were sown during the Arab Spring of 2011. As the conflict spiralled into a fullscale civil war, Syria fractured into a patchwork of territories controlled by various factions, including Kurdish groups, Islamist militias, Turkish-backed rebels, and even ISIS. By 2018, Syria's territorial integrity was no more than an illusion, with each faction pursuing its vision of the country's future

The war has transformed Syria into a proxy battleground, with foreign powers becoming deeply entangled in its internal affairs. Turkey, for instance, embarked on a series of military incursions, beginning with Operation Euphrates Shield in 2016, aimed at curbing Kurdish separatism. The Turkish government under President Recep Tayyip Erdo an has long regarded Syrian Kurdish forces, particularly the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) as an extension of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), which has waged an insurgency within Turkey for decades. Ankara's intervention has a dual purpose of eliminating Kurdish autonomy in northern Syria and bolstering Erdo an's nationalist credentials. Over

time, Turkey's military presence has expanded, allowing it to exert influence over Syria's territorial disputes and the flow of refugees, positioning itself as a key player in any post-Assad settlement.

For Israel, the proximity of Iranian forces to its northern border has long been a cause for concern, especially given Syria's strategic role in Iran's 'Axis of Resistance' linking Hezbollah in Lebanon and Palestinian factions. As Assad's grip weakened, Israel intensified its airstrikes on Iranian military infrastructure in Syria. With Assad's fall, Israel now has the opportunity to deepen its interventions, aiming to further limit Iran's footprint in the country.

The United States has played a key role in northeastern Syria, supporting Kurdish-led forces in the fight against ISIS. This alignment, driven by counterterrorism goals and support for Kurdish autonomy, has strained ties with Turkey. The Biden administration now faces the challenge of balancing Kurdish control, managing Turkish aggression, and limiting Iranian influence in the region.

Syria's post-Assad future, like ancient Rome, is now a theatre for competing foreign powers, each seeking to carve out a piece of the disintegrating state.

At the forefront of this future may be Abu Mohammad al-Julani, the leader of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a group with roots in al-Qaeda. Julani, who controls much of Syria's northwest, has attempted to project himself as a pragmatic statesman, reaching out to religious minorities to garner broader support. But his group's history and past affiliations complicate any reconciliation.

As in the modern historical past, the struggle for Syria's post-Assad future will unfold not just on the battlefield, but in diplomatic corridors as well. In a sense, the roots of Syria's modern conflict (as with the broader Middle Eastern turmoil) stretch back to the early 20th century. The 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement, a secret deal between Britain and France to divide the Ottoman Empire's territories, set the stage for many of the region's current conflicts. The arbitrary borders drawn ignored the Middle East's complex ethnic and sectarian makeup.

In 1920, the French mandate over Syria was met with resistance, particularly from the Druze, a distinct religious and ethnic minority in southern Syria. The Druze, with their stronghold in the Jabal al-Druze, became a key symbol of resistance to French rule with their 1925 Great Svrian Revolt, which was eventually suppressed by the French.

The French mandate in Syria, established after World War I, was marked by the challenge of managing the region's diverse sectarian and ethnic groups. France's divide-and-rule policies deepened sectarian rifts, a legacy that continues to shape Syria's internal divisions. Meanwhile, post-WW I war decisions by Paris, London, and a rising America most notably Wilson's rejection of a more balanced approach—laid the groundwork for future tensions.

The artificial borders drawn after the Ottoman Empire's collapse, compounded by foreign interventions, have left Syria vulnerable to ongoing power struggles. As the country emerges from Assad's shadow, the forces that have shaped its past - colonialism, sectarianism and foreign interference - remain as potent as

EDUCATION MATTERS

A New Era in Education



Dr. Manisha Shrimali

he Central Board of Secondary Education is planning to soon introduce the 'Open Book Exams' for students from Grades 9 to 12. CBS's consideration of the 'Open Book Exams' aligns with India's 2020, National Education Policy, which emphasises on competency-based education and experiential learning. The current education policy aims to foster a deep understanding of the subjects and hopes to reduce the pressure of memorisation, which often leads to superficial learning. By introducing 'Open Book Exams', the CBSE therefore aims to make the assessment process more reflective of a student's true understanding of the subject. These exams are designed to evaluate critical thinking, analytical skills and the ability to apply concepts to real-world scenarios, making students more aligned with

21st-century educational needs. This transition will have a huge impact on the Indian education system as it will see a transformation from the traditional exams that emphasised on rote memorisation to students referring to their textbooks or other resource material during the test. It will therefore redefine how assessments are conducted and pave the way for a more conceptual and application-based learning framework. The one question that is often raised by the teaching and learning community together is that whether the Indian schools are equipped for this transition. This change would be resisted by parents, teachers and students who are accustomed to traditional assessments as such a shift may not be practical within the existing educational framework for Grades 9 to 12. This is because schools in many rather than just delivering monoparts of India lack the infrastruc- logues as their lectures. At this ture and resources to support such an implementation. Uneven access to teacher training, resource availability and technological tools would make such a system challenging to adopt universally.

Another major challenge faced during the assessment is that students would heavily rely on their resources or textbooks which could lead to overemphasis on searching the answers rather than understanding and synthesising the knowledge acquired. In India, not all students have equal access to high-quality textbooks, study materials or digital resources. This disparity therefore will widen the achievement gap, especially in underprivileged regions, making Open Book Exams inequitable for a diverse student population. In the era of online learning, the ability to access and use e-resources effectively is uneven, further exacerbating inequities. For students, it may reduce the stress of exams while encouraging a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

Due to the competitive nature of board exams in India emphasise on high scores and rank-based evaluations. In such an environment these exams may be viewed as less rigorous, leading to skepticism among students, parents and educators. However, critics argue that if not implemented carefully the Open Book Exams could create disparities. On the other hand access to quality resources and training for teachers. This is because, the students that belong to this age group are still to develop the cognitive skills that are required to analyse and synthesise the information effectively. Further, this age group lacks the maturity to approach an Open Book Exam as in order to make it meaningful, it requires both rigour and discipline on the part of the students. This shift if implemented will demand a reset of teaching methodologies. Today's teachers will need to focus on skills like problem- solving, interactive discussions and varied case studies

stage, neither teachers nor students are prepared to take this assessment. Without proper training and gradual implementation, such exams may fail to achieve their intended outcomes. Indian students who are used to memorising answers and reproducing them during exams, would struggle in an Open Book Exam with their ability to quickly locate and interpret relevant information within a limited time frame is crucial, a skill which has not been developed among our students. Indian exams are usually structured around predictable patterns and allow students to prepare specific answers.

The implementation of such exams demands unpredictability in questions, requiring students to think on their feet, a major shift that many students find challenging. With resources openly available, the temptation to misuse the Open Book Exam increases. Students might collaborate with peers or access unauthorised materials during the test, undermining the integrity of the examination process. The potential introduction of Open Book Exams marks a significant shift in India's educational system. While the Indian government feels that this is a progressive approach that could prepare students for higher education and workforce it forgets to realise that challenges remain as students still need to prepare for competitive exams worldwide and currently Indian teachers particularly lack the expertise or resources to create and grade such nuanced assessments consistently. It is thus evident that as India inches closer to embracing a more dynamic and inclusive education system, the government should definitely focus on not just revamping the assessment but also concentrate on creating better resources for students and teachers that would in the long run help create a more skillful population ready to survive the current changes.

(The writer is an educationalist.)

STATES WATCH

A Border That Never Heals

or decades, the Belgaum hold a conference in Belgaum, fact that the Congress and the Sena border dispute has simmered leading to protects from at the heart of a divisive regional struggle between Karnataka and Maharashtra. The latest flare-up after Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray's controversial call to make the contested district a Union Territory, has once again brought this unresolved issue to the forefront. Karnataka Chief Minister and Congressman Siddaramaiah's swift dismissal of Thackeray's proposal as 'childish' underscores the political fault lines that continue to divide the neighbouring states.

Belgaum has long been a bone of contention due to its sizable Marathi-speaking population and historical ties to the erstwhile Bombay Presidency. Maharashtra has laid claim to the region since the reorganization of states in 1957, arguing that the area should be part of its territory because of its linguistic majority. Meanwhile, Karnataka has staunchly upheld the findings of the Mahajan Commission Report, which in 1967 concluded that Belgaum and other border regions would remain part of Karnataka. Yet, this decision has failed to quell the passions of the Marathi-speaking residents, and the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES), a local political group, has repeatedly demanded the integration of these areas with Maharashtra.

The dispute reached a new high last week when the Karnataka government, led by Siddaramaiah, denied permission for the MES to

As old wounds reopen, the Belagavi dispute risks escalating into a problematic regional confrontation between Maharashtra and Karnataka.

border dispute has simmered leading to protests from activists (UBT) are allies in Maharashtra and political leaders alike.

This ban, which included detaining several MES leaders, prompted furious reactions from Maharashtra's political elite,



KARNATAKA

Minister Eknath Shinde, who accused the Karnataka government of repressing the Maratha community. Thackeray even wrote to Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis urging the central government to step in and grant Union Territory status to Belgaum, citing "injustice" against the Marathi-speaking people of the

Not to be outdone, the opposition in Maharashtra, too, particularly the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT), jumped into the fray, slamming the Congress government in Karnataka with Thackeray scion Aaditya Thackeray calling for Belgaum to be declared a Union Territory. The

did not stop the latter from taking an aggressive stance over the border issue – a matter particularly close to the heart of undivided Shiv Sena founder Bal Thackeray. The demand generally reflects

the frustrations of a significant segment of Maharashtra's political class, which sees the Marathispeaking communities in Belgaum as being subjected to neglect and discrimination by the Karnataka government.

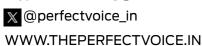
The Karnataka government, for its part, views the dispute as a closed chapter. Last month, H. K. Patil, Karnataka's Tourism Minister and a former chairman of the border disputes committee, bluntly stated that for his state, the issue was settled. He claimed that Maharashtra's politicians merely wield the border dispute as a political weapon and that such demands were in no way reflective

of any genuine claim over Belgaum.

While the MES continues to push for the merger of Marathispeaking villages into Maharashtra, the Karnataka government maintains that the region's status is non-negotiable. The construction of the Suvarna Vidhan Soudha, Karnataka's second legislative complex, in the district has been a way of bluntly communicating this point to Maharashtra.

Historically, this dispute has been a political flashpoint that exacerbates ethnic and linguistic tensions. For Maharashtra, it represents an unfulfilled historical claim. Attempts to resolve the issue through dialogue have repeatedly stalled, and with the matter now in the hands of the Supreme Court, there is little indication that a quick resolution is forthcoming.

While both Karnataka and Maharashtra continue to posture over the issue, the real cost is the rising animosity between communities that share more commonalities than differences.







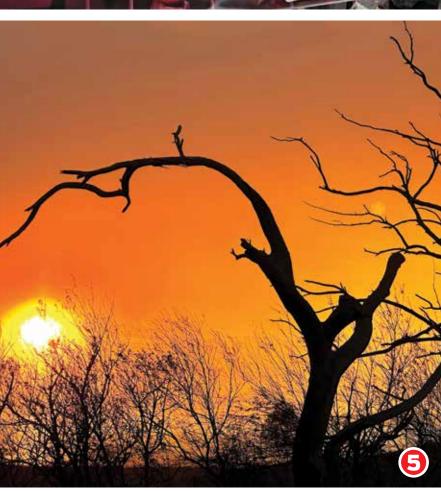






- 1. A contingent of the 'Prantiya Rakshak Dal' marches past during its foundation day celebrations in Dehradun.
- 2. Members of a collective of senior citizens watch a performance during 'Vayojanolsavam', a festival for elderly citizens, in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday.
- **Demonstrators hold banners** demanding the imprisonment of **Brazilian former President Jair** Bolsonaro during a protest in defense of democracy in Sao Paulo on Tuesday.
- 4. A nomadic shepherd from Rajasthan leads his herd of sheep during a cold winter morning in Gurugram.
- 5. The sun sets behind a group of trees burned by the Franklin Fire in Malibu.

All Pictures PTI, AP



FORENSIC MATTERS

Combating Food Adulteration: The Power of Food Forensics





Dr. Keshav Kumar and Bimrisha Boruah

ood forensics, a specialised branch of forensic science, plays a pivotal role in verifying the authenticity, quality, and origin of food products. Its importance in upholding food production standards, preventing adulteration, and protecting consumer health has become essential. With globalisation and increasingly complex supply chains, food forensics has emerged as a critical tool in combating food fraud, fostering a sense of security and trust for consumers.

In India, food adulteration is a widespread issue, with common products like milk, spices, tea, and honey often mixed with harmful substances. Adulterants such as water, detergent, urea in milk, brick powder in red chilli powder, and synthetic dyes in sweets pose serious health risks to consumers. The presence of these adulterants can lead to digestive issues, liver damage, and even more severe health complications.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has been instrumental in implementing regulations to counter these issues. For instance, in 2018-2019, FSSAI's enforcement reports revealed that out of 106,459 food samples tested, 3.7% were deemed unsafe, 15.8% were substandard, and 9% had labelling issues.

Recently, food forensics has specialised further in detecting fraudulent practices like false labeling and contamination by banned substances. A landmark moment for food forensics was the 2013 discovery of undeclared horse meat in beef products in Europe, which highlighted the field's significance.

In India, food forensics has proven invaluable in high-profile cases, such as the recent "Laddu row" controversy at Sri Venkateswara Swamy

Adulterated food and deceptive labelling pose serious risks to consumer health, but cutting-edge technology is being leveraged to uncover and prevent these threats.

Temple in Tirumala. Allegations of "animal fat" in the laddus led to public anxiety, prompting the Supreme Court of India to order a thorough investigation. A Special Investigation Team (SIT), comprising officials from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Andhra Pradesh Police, and FSSAI, was tasked with the inquiry. Initial forensic tests from FSSAI showed inconsistencies in laddu samples; however, further analyses confirmed the absence of animal fat. This case, along with others involving adulterated milk and mislabeled ghee, underscores the role of food forensics in strengthening consumer protection laws in India. FSSAI's Milk Safety and Quality Survey in 2018 indicated that 7% of milk samples contained contaminants such as antibiotics and pesticides, while 41% failed to meet quality standards.

The Supreme Court's response in the Tirupati Laddu case reaffirms the importance of forensic evidence in food safety, recognising it as crucial to consumer confidence. It also advocated for stringent penalties against perpetrators of food adulteration, especially when public health is compromised.

Recent advancements Next-Generation Sequencing (NGS) enable rapid identification of species in food products, helping to detect undeclared unauthorised ingredients. Stable Isotope Ratio Analysis (SIRA) aids in tracing food origins, and

verifying claims like 'locally sourced" or "organic." Moreover, blockchain technology has emerged as a promising tool, allowing each step of the food production process to be securely documented from raw material sourcing to final delivery. India is still exploring blockchain to counter food adulteration and authenticate food labels.

Food forensics has become essential in the effort to combat food adulteration, helping to protect both consumer health and cultural practices. The Food Forensic Division at the Directorate of Forensic Sciences (DFS) Gujarat plays a pivotal role in analysing and verifying food safety, authenticity, and quality. Similarly, the National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU) offers advanced research and training in food forensics. leveraging cutting-edge techniques to detect food adulteration and fraud, ensuring consumer safety, and upholding legal standards. Moreover. increased public awareness, strengthened regulations, and consistent application of forensic practices are crucial to safeguarding consumer interests and promoting food safety across a wide range of products.

> (Dr. Kumar is a retired IPS officer and forensic advisor to the Assam government. Boruah is a Forensic Psychologist Alumni, NFSU, Gandhinagar. Views personal.)

EXPLAINER

What is Russia's new hypersonic Oreshnik missile?

he silent black-and-white surveillance camera video of the Russian missile attack in the Ukrainian city of Dnipro was brief but chilling: Six huge fireballs pierced the darkness and slammed into the ground at astonishing speed.

Within hours of the Nov 21 attack on the military facility. Russian President Vladimir Putin took the rare step of speaking on national TV to boast about the new, hypersonic missile. He warned the West that its next use could be against Ukraine's NATO allies who allowed Kyiv to use their longer-range missiles to strike inside Russia.

Putin said the missile was called the "Oreshnik" - Russian for "hazelnut tree."

A look at the weapon, how it fits into Moscow's battle plan and what political message Russia wants to send by using it:

What's the Oreshnik?

A satisfied smile played across Putin's face as he described how the Oreshnik streaks to its target at 10 times the speed of sound, or Mach 10, "like a meteorite," and claimed it was immune to any missile defense system. Ukrainian military officials said it reached Mach 11.

Gen. Sergei Karakayev, head of Russia's Strategic Missile Forces, said the Oreshnik could carry nuclear or conventional warheads and has a range to reach any European target.

The Pentagon said the Oreshnik was an experimental type of intermediate-range ballistic missile, or IRBM, based on Russia's RS-26 Rubezh intercontinental ballistic missile, or ICBM. The attack marked the first time such a weapon was used in a war.

Intermediate-range missiles can fly between 500 to 5,500 kilometers (310 to 3,400 miles). Such weapons were banned under a Soviet-era treaty that Washington

and Moscow abandoned in 2019. Ukraine's Main Intelligence Directorate said the missile had six warheads, each carrying six sub-



munitions. Its payload of independently targetable warheads, like a cluster of hazelnuts growing on a tree, could be the inspiration for the missile's name.

What are other missiles?

Russia has used an assortment of missiles to pummel Ukraine since the start of its invasion in February 2022, but none had the range and power of Oreshnik.

They included subsonic longrange cruise missiles that carry about 500 kilograms (1,100 pounds) of explosives, enough to inflict a significant damage to Ukrainian power plants and other key infrastructure. The winged, jet-propelled cruise missiles have a range of up to 2,500 kilometers (1,550 miles), able to reach all of Ukraine.

Russia also used swarms of inexpensive, Iranian-designed drones that carry only about 50 kilograms (110 pounds) of explosives. The slow-flying drones are relatively easy to intercept, but Russia used dozens of them at a time to overwhelm Ukrainian defenses and divert attention from simultaneously launched cruise

For some priority targets, Russia has used faster and harderhitting missiles, including the ground-launched Iskander shortrange ballistic missile with a range of 500 kilometers (310 miles).

What is message?

Putin described the Oreshnik as a response to the U.S. and U.K. allowing Ukraine to use their longerrange weapons to strike Russian territory, a move he said gave "elements of a global character" to the

'We believe that we have the right to use our weapons against military facilities of the countries that allow to use their weapons against our facilities," he said.

Russian state media extolled the Oreshnik, claiming it will take just 11 minutes to reach an air base in Poland and 17 minutes to reach NATO's headquarters in Brussels. T-shirts have appeared with images of Putin and the Oreshnik, and he was told at a briefing that a couple planned to name their daughter after the missile.

Military expert Mathieu Boulègue of Chatham House in Britain said that while the Oreshnik isn't a game-changer on the battlefield, "in terms of psychological warfare, it works great" in serving the Kremlin's goal to scare a Western audience.

The Nov 21 attack came two days after Putin signed a revised version of Russia's nuclear doctrine, which lowered the threshold for using nuclear weapons. The doctrine allows for a potential nuclear response by Moscow even to a conventional attack on Russia by any nation that is supported by a nuclear power.

The use of the Oreshnik was an expression of Moscow's anger at the use of longer-range Western missiles and a signal to Ukraine and President-elect Donald Trump that Russia was going to pursue its goals, regardless of the support for Kyiv, said James J. Townsend, senior fellow at the Center for New American Security.

Putin's warning about potential strikes on NATO assets follows calls by Russian hawks for such attacks to force Ukraine's allies to

Unlike other Russian conventional weapons with a shorter range, Oreshnik offers the capability to launch a powerful, conventional strike anywhere in Europe, giving the Kremlin a new instrument of escalation without tapping its nuclear arsenal. There will be no way to know whether Oreshnik carries a nuclear or a conventional warhead before it hits the target.

India lose after Mandhana's hundred, suffer 0-3 whitewash

Perth: Opener Smriti Mandhana's elegant century went in vain as India lost to Australia by 83 runs in the third Women's ODI to suffer a 0-3 series whitewash here on Wednesday

Opting to field after winning the toss, India had Australia on the ropes at 78 for four before middle-order batter Annabel Sutherland's scintillating 95-ball 110, and brisk half centuries from Ashleigh Gardner (50) and skipper Tahlia McGrath (56 not out), lifted the hosts to a competitive 298 for six in the allotted 50 overs at WACA. In reply, India were

bowled out for 215 in 45.1

In pursuit of a stiff target of 299, the stylish Mandhana anchored the innings beautifully during her 105 off 109 balls and as long as the southpaw was at the crease, the visitors were in with a chance.

However, her dismissal at a crucial juncture put paid to India's hopes of earning a consolation win.

The problem with the Indian innings was that the senior batter lacked support from the others after Alana King ended a 118-run partnership between Mandhana and Harleen Deol (39 off 64 balls) by dismissing the latter.

During her stay in the middle. Mandhana found the fence 14 times and cleared it once, leading the team's recovery after the swashbuckling Richa Ghosh's (2) early departure.

Spin bowling all-rounder Gardner completed a fine match by taking five wickets for 30 runs

> after her contribution with the willow. Besides Ghosh, captain Harmanpreet Kaur (12 off 22 balls) and Jemimah Rodrigues (16



breakthroughs in the first powerplay with Phoebe Litchfield (25 off 33) and Georgia Voll (26 off 30) going strong.

the course of the game in one over by removing the openers in a space of four

flopped, getting out for a duck

Earlier, Australia survived a stellar spell from India pacer Arundhati Reddy to post a challenging total in the final match of what has been a one-side series dominated thoroughly by the formidable home team

Sutherland led Australia's recovery after Reddy struck four times in quick succession for career-best figures in limited-overs cricket.

> Having already lost the series. India opted to bowl at the iconic WACAground but did not get the required

However, Reddy, playing only her fifth ODI, changed

Unlike Renuka Thakur

got the ball to swing back from a fuller length which led to the fall of last match's centurion Voll, who saw her stumps disturbed.

Left-handed Litchfield was caught behind chasing an away swinger and all the momentum gained by Australia was suddenly lost.

Next to depart was star all-rounder Elysse Perry who had no answer to a beauty from Reddy that held its line to hit the top of offstump. When Beth Mooney departed, Australia were reduced to 78 for four from 58 for no loss.

Sutherland and Gardner then showed the enviable depth of the Australian batting by sharing a 96-run stand for the fifth wicket. Sutherland was the aggressor in the partnership and especially pounded the spinners, smashing two fours and a six off Deepti in the

India's catching left a lot to be desired as they grassed three tough chances.

McGrath joined Sutherland in the 35th over and the duo pushed the score towards 300. Sutherland got to her hundred by dispatching Deepti for a six over midwicket in the final over of the innings.



Mumbai on Wednesday

Malaysian doubles coach returns for second stint

New Delhi: Malaysian doubles specialist Tan Kim Her has reunited with star pair Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, starting his second stint at the Indian badminton

The 53-year-old has been roped in by the Badminton Association of India (BAI) for a four-year term till the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

"I am very happy to be back in India and get a chance to work with Satwik-Chirag and also the young and talented group of doubles players who have the potential to follow on the path of Satwik-Chirag," Tan said in a release.

"I am looking forward to creating a bigger group of doubles combinations who can win tournaments at the world stage.'

Tan, who arrived in Hyderabad on Sunday, was India's doubles coach from 2015 to 2019 and was instrumental in bringing Satwik and Chirag together before the 2016 Olympics.

He will take over the reins from Denmark's Mathias Boe, who guided Satwik and Chirag to many highs, including attaining the world number 1 status, winning an Asian Games gold, and securing a World Championships

However, the pair faced heartbreaks in two Olympics - Tokyo and

In his second stint, Tan, who had taken up an offer from Japan's badminton association in 2019, will "focus on developing strong doubles partnerships and bench strength ahead of the 2026 Asian Games and 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.'

"We had been looking for quality foreign coaches who could work with our current top players and also guide our next-generation players as we prepare for the 2028 Olympics," said BAI Secretary General Sanjay Mishra.

"Finding the right coach took time, but we were determined to bring in those who can continue the development of our badminton stars and also work with a bigger group of players and help build a strong pipeline of talent for the future," he said.

News of Tan's return has been doing the rounds since last month, but BAI had termed it "premature," saying nothing was concrete and the Malaysian was yet to accept the contract.

In 2022, Tan was tipped to take over as doubles coach, but it didn't

After returning to action following their heartbreaking quarter-final loss at the Paris Olympics, Satwik and Chirag had recorded a semifinal finish at the China Masters last month. -PTI

FIFA to confirm Saudi as host of 2034 WC

Zurich: Saudi Arabia will be confirmed by FIFA as host of the men's soccer 2034 World Cup on Wednesday, giving the oil-rich kingdom its biggest prize yet for massive spending on global sports driven by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman

The decision completes a mostly opaque 15-month bid process which FIFA president Gianni Infantino helped steer toward Saudi Arabia without a rival candidate, without taking questions, and which human rights groups warn will put the lives of migrant workers at risk.

FIFA and Saudi officials say hosting the 2034 tournament can accelerate change, including more freedoms and rights for women.

A fast-track path to victory was cleared last year by FIFA accepting a threecontinent hosting plan for the 2030 World Cup led by Spain, Portugal and Morocco. That bid also will win Wednesday in a combined approval for the 2030 and 2034 tournament hosts by applause from more than 200 FIFA member federations in an online meeting hosted from Zurich by Infantino

It will kick off a decade of scrutiny on Saudi labor laws and treatment of

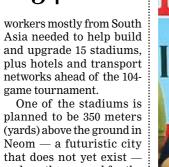
workers mostly from South Asia needed to help build and upgrade 15 stadiums, plus hotels and transport networks ahead of the 104-

planned to be 350 meters (yards) above the ground in Neom — a futuristic city that does not yet exist and another named for the crown prince is designed to near Riyadh.

was widely criticized this year at the United Nations.

Saudi and international rights groups and activists warned FIFA it has not learned the lessons of Qatar's much-criticized preparations to host the 2022 World Cup.

The kingdom plans to spend tens of billion of dollars on projects related to the World Cup as part of the crown prince's sweeping Vision 2030 project that aims to modernize Saudi society and economy. At its core is spending on sports by the \$900 billion sovereign wealth operation, the Public Investment Fund, which he oversees. Critics have called it "sportswashing" of the kingdom's reputation.



be atop a 200-meter cliff During the bid campaign, FIFA has accepted limited scrutiny of Saudi Arabia's human rights record that



Jhaveri, Karmarkar emerge champions

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Aditi Jhaveri and Marianne Karmarkar combined well as a team and emerged champions in the Amla Ruia Women Pairs competition of the 66th Ashok Ruia Memorial National Bridge Championships being played at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Sports Complex, Balewadi, Pune.

In the final league round, Jhaveri and Karmarkar won the title handsomely with a total of 73 imps at the end of 51

boards in the all-play - all finals played amongst 18 pairs to finish as the National women bridge champions.

In second place was the pair of Vasanti Shah (Mubai) and Gopika Tandon (Delhi) who finished way behind with 64 imps. Alka M. Kshirsagar and Bharati Dey claimed the third position with a poor score of 43 imps.

Overnight leaders Asha Sharma and Puja Batra, both from Delhi finished in sixth position with 28 imps.

Rayaan Razmi wins double billiards title

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Rayaan Razmi clinched a grand double by winning the senior billiards title in the Malabar Hill Club Maharashtra State Billiards & Snooker Championships 2024. The tall lanky cueist Razmi, who had earlier won the senior snooker title, defeated World champion Dhruv Sitwala 4-2 in the Senior Men's billiards final played at the Malabar Hill Club billiards hall.

The talented Razmi has now won seven Maharashtra state titles - three in the junior category and four in the senior category.

Razmi played steadily and grabbed every opportunity that came his way and made it count to overcome the experienced and formidable opponent Sitawala with a degree of comfort.

Sitwala was not his usual self and he made too many mistakes and was unable to take control of the proceedings. The champion Rayaan went home richer by Rs 40,000, while Sitwala received the runner-up check of Rs 20,000. The losing semi-finalists, Siddharth Parikh and Vishal Madan were presented with a check of

No break left me emotionally drained: Tanisha

By Himank Negi

New Delhi: Tanisha Crasto described her turbulent Olympic debut in Paris as a period of heartbreak, admitting she made the "mistake" of not taking a break afterward, but said reuniting with Ashwini Ponnappa with a renewed approach led to their triumph at the Guwahati Masters.

Tanisha and her seasoned partner Ashwini, who endured three lopsided losses on the trot to make a group stage exit in Paris, bounced back to put up a dominant performance and defend their Guwahati Masters Super 100 title on Sunday.

"It's been a tough transition after the Olympics for everyone, including me and Didi (Ashwini). I made the mistake of not taking a break, and it left me emotionally drained. But Didi took a huge break, and when we reunited, we focused on enjoying the game," the 21-year-old told PTI "We decided not to think about results,

just to go out there and enjoy ourselves. And when we did that, the results followed."

The Paris Olympics was a challenging chapter for Tanisha and all other Indian shuttlers as India returned without a medal for the first time in 12-years.

"It hurts because you're there, representing your country, and when things don't go your way, it's tough to process... I didn't take a break after the Olympics, thinking it would help me snap out of it. But as a person, I was a mess, dealing with insane emotions", she said. For her 35-year-old partner

Ashwini, the Olympics marked an

emotional turning point as well, as she announced that the 2024 Olympics was her last ever

"We cried together during an

interview, and even the interviewer was moved to tears," Tanisha recalled. "It was a mix of emotions, but it

strengthened our bond", she added. Tanisha also had a runners-up

finish along side her mixed doubles partner Dhruv Kapila going down to Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Supissara Paewsampra in a tough three-game battle at the Syed Modi International Super 300 event in Lucknow earlier this month.

"We had a very tough draw since the first match. For Dhruv (Kapila), who was recovering from an ankle tear, to pull through until the finals and defeat good pairs is something I'm really proud of.'

"They (Dechapol and Supissara) really caught us off guard in the final two games. And they really changed the whole game.

"And Dechapol being a very, very experienced player, he's won a number of titles. I think he really managed the pressure of the game. And he really controlled the game very well in the second and third.

"Could we have won? Yes, 100 per cent. Did we do enough in the second and third games? No. But I'm proud of how we played overall, especially considering Dhruv's in-

Women's HIL will boost confidence, talent flow: Vandana

Bengaluru: Star Indian forward Vandana Katariya believes the inaugural Women's Hockey India League will strengthen the talent flow to the national team, besides offering the players a never-before opportunity to

"mingle with international players." Returning after a seven-year hiatus, the league, to be held from December 28 to February 5, will feature a women's competition for the first

"As everyone can see in the previous editions, the men's team got a chance to mingle with international players, raise their confidence levels and it has helped the team immensely and they are getting medals on a consistent basis now," Vandana said in an HIL release.

"I expect the same effect when the Women's HIL begins with four teams this year. This will be a good opportunity for players who could not make the cut for the National Camp to showcase their potential and grow under different coaches.

"It will also help strengthen the conveyor belt of talent coming into the Indian women's hockey team."

A veteran of 317 matches with 158 goals, the 32-year-old will lead the forward line of Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers in the inaugural edition.

"When the HIL was running for the men, I used to watch those matches and dream that I would one day play in a league



lakh at the HIL auction.

"The women's team is looking at it as an opportunity to showcase potential. Playing with the best players in the world will undoubtedly improve our performance and confidence," she added.

In addition to Vandana, Bengal Tigers have a strong Indian core comprising Udita, Lalremsiami, Beauty Dungdung, Mahima Choudhary and Sushila Chanu.

Vandana will also share the dressing room with Olympic bronze medallist Fiona Crackles and Grace Stewart, a three-time Olympian from Australia.

They also have a few young Indian prospects on the team like Jvothi Edula, Mumuni Das and Lalrinpuii.

"The Women's HIL is a chance for me to show my capabilities so that I can maintain my place in the Indian Team but as a forward. I will concentrate equally on building good chem-

istry with all the players in the team. "The League is also bound to take a few players out of their shells and make them more comfortable," she