



Builders' Association of India, Mumbai Centre

(All India Association of Civil Engineering Construction Contractors and Builders)

cordially invites you to a

Knowledge Session on Direct Tax Implications on Contractors and Builders

Friday 15th December, 2023, 7.30 p.m.

Tardeo, Mumbai 400034

Speaker



CA Tarun Ghia

Chairman, Direct Taxes Committee, BAI;
Former Chairman, Direct Taxes Committee &
former Central Council Member, ICAI

Convenor



Shri Harshad Shah

Chairman,
BAI Mumbai Centre



Shri Mohinder Rijhwani
Imm. Past Chairman



Shri Jaiprakash Bhatia
Vice-Chairman



Shri Aniruddha Nakhawa
Hon. Secretary



Shri Sunil Mathreja
Hon. Treasurer



Shri Narendra Panani
Hon. Jt. Secretary



Shri Rakesh Shah
Hon. Jt. Treasurer

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For any clarification please send email to bai.mumbaicentre@gmail.com or WhatsApp 9820517064

MUMBAI SCHOOLS SURVEY 2023

With today's edition of the Free Press Journal: The much anticipated Mumbai Schools Survey 2023

THE FP BULLETIN

AMRITRAJ, PAES IN HALL OF FAME

Former doubles world No. 1 Leander Paes and broadcaster and promoter Vijay Amritraj of India have become the first Asian men to be inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame. Besides the duo, renowned journalist and writer Richard Evans have also been selected in what is deemed as ultimate honour in Tennis. Paes, an 18-time Grand Slam champion in doubles and mixed doubles, has been selected in the player category, while Amritraj and United Kingdom's Evans are inductees in the contributor category, which is considered for election every two years. The contributor category recognises true pioneers, visionary leaders, or individuals/groups who have made a transcendent impact on the sport.

BIDEN WARNS ISRAEL ON GAZA

The United Nations on Tuesday demanded an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in the Gaza Strip as US President Joe Biden warned Israel it was losing international support because of its "indiscriminate" bombing of civilians in its war against Hamas militants. After dire warnings by UN officials about a deepening humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution calling for a ceasefire with 153 countries voting in favour and 23 abstaining. The US and Israel, which argue ceasefire only benefits Hamas, voted against the measure along with eight other countries.

LOUDSPEAKERS FACE THE HEAT

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has decided to strictly enforce use of sound amplifiers (loud speakers and DJs) in keeping with prescribed norms at religious and other places. It has been also decided to form flying squads in all districts to check noise pollution and illegal use of loudspeakers. The decision was taken under the Madhya Pradesh Noise Control Act, under which use of loudspeakers and other sound amplifying devices at loud volumes without permission is completely prohibited.

MOHAN YADAV TAKES OATH

Mohan Yadav took oath as the CM of Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday. Governor Mangubhai C. Patel administered the oath of office to him at the sprawling Motilal Nehru Stadium, Lal Parade Ground in Bhopal. Rajendra Shukla and Jagdish Devda took the oath as deputy CMs.

LAST WORD

Hold Pune bypoll immediately, HC tells EC

URVI MAHAJANI / MUMBAI

Observing that people of a constituency cannot go unrepresented for a long period of time as it would be unconstitutional, the Bombay High Court has directed the Election Commission of India (ECI) to "immediately" hold by-elections for the Pune Lok Sabha constituency which fell vacant after the death of Member of Parliament (MP) Girish Bapat on March 29.

The high court also termed as "bizarre and wholly unreasonable" the ECI's stand to not hold elections as it was busy

with other polls, including the preparatory activities for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. It quashed the certificate issued by ECI in August to not hold bypoll to the Constituency.

"In any parliamentary democracy, governance is done by elected representatives who are the voices of people. If a representative is no more, another must be put in place. People can't go unrepresented. That is wholly unconstitutional and is fundamental anathema to constitutional structure," noted a division bench Justices Gautam Patel and Kamal Khata on Wednesday

The high court also termed as "bizarre and wholly unreasonable" the ECI's stand to not hold elections as it was busy with other polls, including the preparatory activities for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections

The HC passed the order while hearing a petition filed by a Pune resident Sughosh Joshi, through his advocates Kushal Mor, Dayara Singla and Shraddha Swarup, challenging a certificate issued by ECI to not hold by-election to the Constituency.

The ECI had maintained

that it would not hold the by-polls because of two reasons; one, it was busy with other polls including the preparatory activities for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections; and two, that even if the by-poll was held the elected representative would get a very short tenure.

Youth driven by angst?



OUR BUREAU / NEW DELHI

Six people were involved in conspiring and executing the security breach, the plot of which was hatched online. They were known to each other for four years or so, it is claimed. Two of them were believed to be on the run and one of them had been apprehended when news trickled in late in the evening.

The two individuals who caused the commotion in the House were identified as Sagar Sharma from Lucknow and D Manoranjan from Mysore in Karnataka.



Two others -- Neelam Devi from Hissar in Haryana and Amol Shinde, a resident of Latur in Maharashtra -- recreated the canister scene outside Parliament.

The fifth has been named as Lalit Jha, at whose Gurgaon home the others stayed, which seems to suggest a well-concerted criminal conspiracy. The sixth person has been named as one Vicky Sharma, also from Gurgaon. Both are absconding.

There is, at this time, no evidence to suggest they were radicalised by any terror group.

THE LATUR CONNECT

VISHAL SINGH / MUMBAI

Amol Dhanraj Shinde, the 25-year-old lad who has been arrested for the canister attack on Parliament on Wednesday, was preparing for recruitment into army and the police services, said a police officer. Shinde, a native of Navakundzhari village in Chakur taluka of Latur, was one of those who released yellow smoke

from a canister outside Parliament House and raised slogans. The youth is in the custody of Delhi Police and a Latur Police team has reached his house and is interrogating his parents. They are checking his background as he does not have a criminal record; they are also looking for tell-tale signs of his political leanings

CONTD. ON NATION

Nations agree on shift from fossil fuels

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / DUBAI

Two hundred countries have reached a deal at the COP 28 summit in Dubai, calling for "deep, rapid and sustained reduction in greenhouse gas emissions" and "transitioning" away from fossil fuels -- coal, oil and gas -- that are dangerously heating the planet.

The sweeping agreement, which comes during the hottest year in recorded history, was reached on Wednesday after two weeks of furious debate at the United Nations climate summit in Dubai.

European leaders and many of the nations most vulnerable to climate-fueled disasters were urging language



that called for a complete "phaseout" of fossil fuels. But that proposal faced intense pushback from major oil exporters like Saudi Arabia and Iraq, as well as fast-growing countries like India and Nigeria. So, the document does not speak about the "phase out" of fossil fuels; instead, it calls for transitioning away from fossil fuels

CONTD. ON NATION

ED team in UAE to secure custody

Mahadev App promoter Ravi Uppal is detained in Dubai on red corner notice

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / MUMBAI

Mahadev App investor and promoter Ravi Uppal has been detained in the United Arab Emirates based on a Red Corner Notice initiated by the Enforcement Directorate, it is learnt. He was detained last week. "An ED team is in Dubai to complete all legal process and get the accused back to India," confirmed a senior ED official.

An ED team ed by a Deputy Director ranking officer is camping in Dubai to facilitate

Intruders cleared layers of security, detectors



FPJ NEWS SERVICE / NEW DELHI

The two intruders in the House, Sagar Sharma and Manoranjan, who were seated in the visitors' gallery before they inflicted the disruption in the main chamber of Lok Sabha, had cleared multiple layers of security, including frisking and metal door detectors.

It is a mystery how they could sneak in cylindrical canisters -- roughly the size of a mobile phone -- when

even a fountain pen cannot go past the metal detectors. According to one lawmaker, the canisters were hidden in the footwear.

One of them had an authorisation pass from BJP's MP from Mysore, Pratap Simha. He was known to the lawmaker as his father resides in the MP's constituency. The pass was sought on the plea that the duo wanted to watch the proceedings in new Parliament.

CONTD. ON NATION

Visitor Pass suspended

The Parliament complex has been closed to visitors in a knee-jerk response to the security breach. The visitor's pass has been suspended and when the visitors return, they will be allowed entry through a fourth gate. Currently, 'Makar Dwar' is used by MPs, guests, and Parliament staff, leading to commotion and din. Now, it will be used exclusively by MPs. In addition, the visitors' gallery will be encased in glass to thwart people from jumping into the Lok Sabha chamber. Full-body scan machines, similar to those in airports, will be installed in Parliament. The Opposition MPs have informed the Speaker that currently there was a shortage of security personnel and at least 150 more personnel should be deployed.

OUR BUREAU / NEW DELHI

In a sensational security breach in the Lok Sabha -- by an uncanny coincidence on the 22nd anniversary of the terror strike on Parliament -- two intruders jumped into the well of the House from the visitors' gallery, shouted slogans and sprayed coloured gas contained in canisters, which was luckily not toxic.

In what seemed to be, on the face of it, a common intent and motive, two other people -- a man and a woman -- were also detained for protesting outside Parliament by setting off canisters of coloured gas. The group had two more accomplices, one of whom has been apprehended.

The two incidents occurred while lawmakers were in session in the Lok Sabha and zero hour was on; one of the intruders was seen hopping from table to table in the House after he jumped into the main chamber; the other was seen dangling from the

visitor's gallery before he too jumped into the well, according to several MPs present in the House.

Both were restrained by the members of Parliament, thrashed and handed over to the security staff.

The two intruders were identified as Sagar Sharma and Manoranjan. Sagar was found to be carrying a visitor's pass signed by Mysore's BJP MP Pratap Simha (47); it is understood that Sagar's father, a farmer, resides in the MP's constituency. It was unclear how Manoranjan's entry was facilitated and how the canisters, which were allegedly hidden in footwear, went past the multi-layered security without being detected.

The two other interlopers, who were picked up outside the entry gate of the Parliament House, gave their names as Neelam and Amol Shinde. They did not have a pass to enter the main building; no ID-proof or mobiles were found on their person.

CONTD. ON NATION

SNIPPETS

MHA PROBE ON

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has ordered an inquiry into the parliament security breach incident. An Enquiry Committee has been set up under Anish Dayal Singh, DG, CRPF, with members from other security agencies and experts. The committee will investigate the reasons for the breach in the security of Parliament, identify lapses and recommend further action. The committee will submit its report with recommendations, including suggestions on improving security in Parliament, at the earliest.

SMOKE BOMBS

Smoke canisters or smoke bombs, as they are better known, are used in sporting events and photoshoots. Available online and across the shelf, these devices emit non-hazardous colourful smoke for visual effect. Smoke bombs are also used in defence operations to provide cover to security personnel. They are also used in photography and during parties to create captivating visual effects and illusions.

5 DOCTORS, 4 DANCERS HELD IN RAVE PARTY



RAMBHAU JAGTAP / MUMBAI

Five doctors and four dancers were among those arrested by Panchgani police during a rave party at a Spring Resort in Kaswand, near Bhilar in Mahabaleshwar taluka on Tuesday night.

Anchal Dalal, Additional Superintendent of Satara, received information about a

party involving doctors and lewd dancing in Kaswand village near Panchgani. A police team reached the location and interrupted the dancers. Five of them were doctors from Satara and one from Miraj, along with six to seven individuals engaging in "provocative dancing" in front of an audience of inebriated onlookers.

CONTD. ON NATION

TAILPIECE

MENSTRUATION NO HANDICAP, DOESN'T WARRANT PAID LEAVE



FPJ NEWS SERVICE / NEW DELHI

Menstruation is not a "handicap" and therefore does not warrant a "paid leave policy", Union minister for women and child development Smriti Irani said on Wednesday.

Last week, Irani, while responding to Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, told the Lok Sabha that there is "no proposal under the consideration of the government to make provision for paid menstrual leave mandatory for all workplaces." She was responding to

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor. "As a menstruating woman, menstruation and the menstruation cycle is not a handicap, it's a natural part of women's life journey... We should not propose issues where women are denied equal opportunities just because somebody who does not menstruate has a particular viewpoint on menstruation," the minister said on Wednesday, while responding to a question by Rashtriya Janata Dal member Manoj Kumar Jha in the Upper House.

CONTD. ON NATION



NCW chief calls for collective efforts for women’s empowerment

Thane: National Commission for Women chairperson Rekha Sharma on Wednesday underlined the need for efforts by various sections of society for women’s empowerment. Sharma discussed issues related to

women at a review meeting with officials of Thane district, as per an official release. The meeting was attended by commissioners of six municipal corporations under Thane district and police officers.

Bhujbal claims threat to his life

NCP leader says he has police inputs that he will be shot for taking anti-Maratha stand

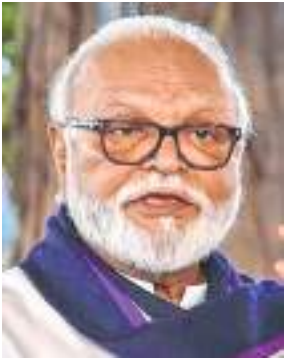
RAJENDRA MADE / MUMBAI

NCP (Ajit Pawar) leader **Chhagan Bhujbal** (left) claimed on Wednesday that Maratha activist **Manoj Jarange-Patil** and his supporters had threatened him for his reservation stand.

During a debate on Maratha reservation in the assembly, the food and civil supplies minister said he had police inputs that he would be shot for taking an anti-Maratha stand.

“The activists set houses of two MLAs on fire during the Maratha reservation protests. They included the NCP legislator from Beed, Prakash Solanke, whose house was vandalised and car set on fire. The house of MLA Sandeep Kshirsagar was also set on fire in Beed during the same protests. The next number could be mine, but I am ready to die,” he said.

Bhujbal reiterated that OBC reservation should not be reduced while granting Maratha reservation, and said the Maratha community had sufficient representation in the government and jobs.



Bhujbal said the Marathas have sufficient representation in government and jobs

Replying to Congress leader Prithviraj Chavan’s barbs against him for using provocative language against Marathas, Bhujbal said he would be happier if the former chief minister had paid visit to homes of Solanke and Kshirsagar.

“Did you tell Jarange-Patil not to threaten me or others? Did you tell him not to threaten the government to grant reservation before a deadline?” he asked Chavan.



Shiv Sena leader Bhaskar Jadhav questioned why police lathi-charged protesters at Jarange-Patil’s village of Antarwali Sarati in September, which led to statewide protests. “Even the Guinness Book of Records has taken note of the Maratha community’s peaceful marches. Those marches did not require any police presence. Why did the protests take place then?” he asked.

Shelar backs Jarange-Patil

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / NAGPUR

Activist Manoj Jarange-Patil is articulating the stance of the Maratha community and must not be mocked, city BJP president and MLA **Ashish Shelar** said on Wednesday.

He was speaking on the Maratha reservation issue in the assembly.

Shelar said without jeopardising the reservation of the other communities, the Marathas must get a reservation that is just, legal and sustainable. He also supported the stance taken by Jarange-Patil.

Those whose records state that they are Kunbi must be given Kunbi certificates, he said, adding that the government must be ready to defend any court challenge in this regard.

The central government has given 10% reservation to economically weaker sections, of which almost 8% to

8.5% benefit is taken by the Maratha youth for employment and education. Hence the government must work towards providing permanent reservation to this community and also explore if it can give 10% reservation to the EWS on the lines of the central government, Shelar said. The Rohini Commission report, which states that OBC beneficiaries must be bifurcated into A, B, C and D groups, was recently released, the MLA said, adding there is doubt as to how much people who are taking Kunbi certificates based on old records would benefit.

If they seek other backward reservation, then they will not be able to get benefit from EWS. Looking at the figures, if both central and state government’s 10% reservation was clubbed, would the Maratha youth get 20% benefit instead of the existing 16.5% to 18%? he asked.



BETTING APP SCAM

Court rejects Sahil Khan’s anticipatory bail petition

CHARUL SHAH JOSHI / MUMBAI

The sessions court on Wednesday rejected the anticipatory bail plea of Bollywood actor Sahil Khan, booked for his association with the online betting application Lion Book, which in turn is alleged to be linked to Mahadev betting application.

Rejecting the plea, the sessions judge, Dr Abhay A Joglekar, observed that prima facie there is evidence to show his link with Lion Book. The court has said that the probe is at an initial stage, hence his plea cannot be granted.

Khan had approached the court for anticipatory bail on Tuesday, and his lawyer Rajiv Chavan had argued that as per the agreement his role was only to promote the application on various platforms. He further said that the actor was not involved in any illegal activities.

Public prosecutor Abhijeet Gondwa opposed the plea, stating that Lion Book was connected to Mahadev and 66 other such applications.

According to the prosecution, these applications operate through more than 2,000 fictitious SIM cards and over 17,000 bogus bank accounts. Hence, the agency said the volume of the fraud was huge. The agency said so far it is revealed that the syndicate is said to have not paid taxes to the tune of Rs15,000 crore out of the total profits earned by these apps. Besides, it said online betting was promoted through more than 1,000 channels on Telegram.

The Lion Book app is similar to Mahadev Book app, with the tagline: ‘One life, one chance.’ It is claimed that the said application is a subsidiary app of Mahadev.

Meanwhile, the cyber cell of the crime branch will soon issue summons to the actor, according to sources.

‘What good will a PhD do?’

Ajit Pawar’s remarks in legislature about the futility of pursuing a doctorate spark uproar among opposition as well as students

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / MUMBAI

Deputy Chief Minister (DCM) **Ajit Pawar**’s remarks in the state legislature about the futility of pursuing a PhD has sparked sharp reactions.

Responding to a demand by Congress MLC Satej Patil to increase the number of fellowships to Maratha students pursuing PhD, Pawar said that there’s no use adding to the number of PhD holders. “What good will they do (kay dive lavnar) after doing PhD,” the NCP leader said. The comment drew the ire of opposition leaders as well as students, who termed it an insult to research scholars.

The opposition leader Ambadas Danve from Shiv Sena (UBT) said that the comment reeks of arrogance. “The government shouldn’t make fun of PhD holders in this manner,” he said. While Congress state president Nana Patole criticised the government for being ‘anti-education’, Sambhaji Brigade state president Manoj Akhre said that he doesn’t expect anything better from a ‘non-graduate’ DCM.

Students at Shivaji University Kolhapur are also up in arms against Pawar’s remarks. They threatened to imolate themselves and work to defeat the ruling coalition if it doesn’t take a ‘positive decision’ about scholars.

Last week, state school education minister Deepak Karkar had also made similar remarks about the lack of career opportunities for PhD holders following demands by Other Backward Caste (OBC) students to increase their fellowships. “The only career option available for PhD holders is to teach. And there aren’t



In June, Chief Secretary Manoj Saunik had directed to limit the number of fellowships to 400-200 for SCs, 100 for STs and 50 each for OBC and Maratha students

This is a sharp reduction from around 3,000 fellowships given to these students in the last cycle



STIPEND

₹31,000
Monthly stipend that marginalised students pursuing PhD get under the fellowship schemes for the first two years

₹35,000
Monthly stipend that they get for another three years

many teaching positions available at the moment,” the minister had said at a press conference.

“The government decides the number of graduates of a particular course based on its

requirement. We are providing facilities for several courses. Students can pursue them,” he added.

The Free Press Journal had earlier reported that the government is looking to drastically cut the number of fellowships awarded to research scholars belonging to marginalised communities. Over the past few years, there has been substantial growth in beneficiaries, much more than the actual number of fellowships sanctioned, due to persistent demand from students.

In June, at a meeting with officials from various government departments held in Mantralaya, Chief Secretary Manoj Saunik had directed to limit the number of fellowships to 400-200 for Scheduled Caste (SC), 100 for Scheduled Tribe (ST) and 50 each for OBC and Maratha students, according to minutes of the meeting accessed by FPJ. This is a sharp reduction from around 3,000 fellowships given to these students in the last cycle.

Under the fellowship schemes, the marginalised students pursuing PhD get a monthly stipend of Rs31,000 for the first two years and Rs35,000 per month for another three years.

The government’s four autonomous organisations, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Research and Training Institute, Tribal Research and Training Institute, Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Research & Training Institute and Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj Research, Training and Human Development Institute, provide fellowships to SCs, STs, OBCs and Marathas, respectively.

Judge recuses from plea after litigant sends him an email

URVI MAHAJANI / MUMBAI

Bombay High Court Justice Gautam Patel has recused himself from hearing a case after the litigant sent him a personal email complaining that the matter was not being heard.

After Justice Patel mentioned in open court his decision to recuse, the litigant’s advocate Kanchan Pannani said that she was unaware of the email and apologised to the judge and urged him to take up the matter.

Justice Patel, however, refused and asked the litigant to approach another bench. “Personal emails to judges. You mail us and matter gets compromised. Matter may be pending for how much ever time but you cannot send personal emails to judges. I am never going to touch this matter. Not with a 10-foot pole,” he said.

Justice Patel also emphasised the impropriety of a litigant sending personal emails to judges. “Imagine if I hear this and pass a favourable order. The message sent would be that you send personal emails to judges and you will get favourable orders,” he said.

The HC was dealing with a petition seeking directions to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) to make its website more accessible for people who are visually impaired. One of the litigants sent an email to Justice Patel urging the court to look into the issue and mentioned this petition, which had not been heard for two years.

The litigant’s counsel apologised for the email and urged the bench to hear the matter.

Justice Patel, however, recused from the case and recorded the reason for recusing in the order. He then asked the petitioner to approach another bench.

Oppn walks out over death of women in state hospitals

RAMU BHAGWAT / NAGPUR

Members of the ruling alliance targeted the Health Department on Wednesday after opposition legislators in the assembly claimed three women died due to lack of proper treatment in state-run hospitals.

The opposition later walked out of the House, saying they were not satisfied with the reply of Health Minister Tanaji Sawant in the matter.

During question hour, Congress MLA Varsha Gaikwad raised the issue of death of two women from Gadchiroli district, and another woman from Buldhana who was shifted to Akola for pregnancy-related complications.

During the discussion, Sanjay Gaikwad, a member of the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena, and Yogesh Sagar of the BJP

I will appoint an additional chief secretary (ACS) to conduct a probe into the death of the three women. I will give a deadline of 15 days to the ACS to submit the report

Health Minister Tanaji Sawant

came down heavily on the Health Department.

Sagar said a pregnant woman named Vidya Gawande was brought to a government hospital in Buldhana for treatment.

“The information revealed the foetus had died, still she was kept in the hospital for long and later referred to a hospital in Akola. This is highly unprofessional and she should not have been referred to the Akola hospital. It finally led to her death,” he said.

Congress leaders Sunil Kedar, Subhash Dhote and Aslam Shaikh said the doctors of Buldana Women’s Hospital were responsible for the death of the woman and her child.

Sanjay Gaikwad said the same health officials who were responsible for the death of patients were asked to investigate the incidents. “This will never improve the health department’s functioning,” he said.

Sawant, who also belongs to the Shiv Sena (Shinde), said he will appoint an additional chief secretary (ACS) to investigate the death of the three women. “I will give a deadline of 15 days to the ACS to submit the report.”

However, the ruling alliance members as well as opposition leaders said the minister’s reply was not satisfactory.

BREAKING THE LAW – IN THE OPEN



A man selling banned tobacco products on a skywalk at Grant Road Station

—VIJAY GOHIL

HC seeks plans for early disposal of 2nd appeals

Court asks government to ensure that all vacancies, including that of chief information commissioner, is filled up by Feb 2024

URVI MAHAJANI / MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday asked the State Information Commission (SIC) to chalk out a roadmap fixing a “reasonable time limit” for early disposal of second appeals and complaints filed under the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

The court also asked the government to ensure that all vacancies, including the post of the chief information commissioner, is filled up by the first week of February 2024.

In its order, the court noted that while the statutory provisions say that first appeals have to be heard within a period of 45 days of filing, there was no such prescription for disposal of second appeals /

complaints. However, there cannot be any doubt that even in absence of any such statutory prescription, the

commission is expected to dispose of second appeals in an “appropriate time frame”, the court said.

“Efficient functioning of the commission and desirability of early disposal of second appeals and complaints... cannot be disputed,” a division bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Arif Doctor said.

The directions were passed while hearing a PIL by former chief information com-

missioner Shailesh Gandhi and some Right to Information (RTI) activists raising concerns over the efficient functioning of the commission.

During the hearing, additional government pleader Jyoti Chavan informed the court that all vacancies in the SIC including the office of the CIC would be filled

by the first week of February. Accepting the statement, the bench expressed hope that the state abides by its word.

The HC has kept the matter for further hearing on March 6, 2024.

Efficient functioning of the commission and desirability of early disposal of second appeals and complaints being brought before the commission cannot be disputed
Bombay High Court

Govt says Dec 24 is Christmas Day; Christians seek correction

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / MUMBAI

Christians have drawn the state government’s attention to an error in the loudspeakers notification for 2023, which mentions Christmas Day as December 24. This is the second year that the government has made mistakes in the notification for noise rules relaxation.

The community said that the wrong terminology is confusing as the midnight mass is not held on Christmas Day but the previous night, December 24.

The error was made in the notification issued on February 15, 2023, by the collector, Mumbai Suburban District, regarding the relaxation of timings for the use of loudspeakers and public address systems on various festival days throughout 2023.

The Noise Pollution (Regu-

lations and Control) Rules, 2000 prohibit the use of loudspeakers and public address systems between 10pm and 6am. Later the Bombay High Court allowed relaxation of the rules on 15 days a year. On these days, loudspeakers can be used for two extra hours –

between 10pm and midnight. Among days when the rules are relaxed are Maharashtra Day, four days of Ganeshotsav, two days of Navratri, and one day each for Shiv Jayanti, Babasaheb Ambedkar’s birth-day, Eid-e-Milad, Christmas Eve, Diwali (Laxmi Puja), and New Year’s Eve. In addition, the government can declare two additional days when

Community draws authorities’ attention to an error in loudspeakers notification for 2023, which gets Christmas Day wrong

Advocate Godfrey Pimenta of Watchdog Foundation said that in the notification dated February 16, 2022, it was wrongly mentioned that the noise rules will be relaxed on December 25, 2022. This has been corrected this time.

“The Christmas Eve midnight mass, a significant event for the Christian community, is traditionally observed on

noise rules are allowed to be relaxed.

In a letter to the Mumbai District collector, chief minister, chief secretary, and home minister, community groups have asked for a correction of the date to avoid confusion and legal problems.

24th December each year; necessitating the relaxation under Regulation 5 (3) of the Noise Pollution (Regulations and Control) Rules, 2000,” Pimenta said in the letter to the government.

The noise rules make it mandatory for users of loudspeakers on these days to apply for permission from the local police station. A resident of Borivali who wanted to apply for permission to use loudspeakers at a community Christmas event on the evening of December 24 found the error in the notification.

The community has asked for a corrigendum to rectify the mistake. They said that the corrected information should say that the relaxation for the use of loudspeakers and public address systems pertains to “Christmas Eve Midnight Mass – 24th December 2023”.

Vaze seeks discharge in ED case

CHARUL SHAH JOSHI / MUMBAI

Dismissed cop Sachin Vaze has sought discharge from the money laundering case in which he is booked along with former home minister Anil Deshmukh. The moves comes after the Enforcement Directorate withdrew its consent to Vaze’s plea to turn approver.

Vaze had on Monday moved a plea from the prison stating that he be discharged from the case as he ceases to be an accused in the predicate offence registered by the CBI against Deshmukh. He has claimed that in the CBI case, he has now been made an approver.

Vaze stated that he had made an application to turn approver in the present case. The ED also filed an application supporting his prayer to turn approver. The court has now asked the ED to respond to Vaze’s plea and scheduled the hearing on December 18.

Mumbai: The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of Maharashtra plans to recruit 750 new officials to overcome staff shortage, the government told the Legislative Council here on Wednesday. Minister Dharmarababa Atram acknowledged that the FDA did not have enough staff,

and said vacant positions, including 22 posts of officials who are on deputation elsewhere, would be filled up by recruiting 750 new officials. He also said that action will be taken against paan/tobacco shops operating in the 100mt radius of schools.

Must follow new city speed limits



“I saw the notification while I was stuck in a jam at JVL.R. I don’t think the cops should be worried about us speeding as there is no possibility or space for us to do so.”
Sagar Jain, PR professional

“Speed limit across the city should have been the same. How will we remember as every road has a different limit now? Maybe they should put warning signs for us to know.”
Anonymous motorist

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / MUMBAI

The Mumbai traffic police imposed new speed limits on nine key roads from Wednesday. In a notification, the police said this will prevent “danger, obstruction and inconvenience” to the public. The newly instituted speed limits will be applicable for all types of vehicles within the city’s jurisdiction.

A speed limit of 50kmph (kilometres per hour) has been mandated for P D’Mello Road at Shahid Bhagat Singh Road, the stretch from Godrej Junction to Opera House at Maharshi Karve Road and the Haji Ali Junction to Mahalaxmi railway station at Keshavrao Khade Marg.

Motorists can’t drive at a speed greater than 60kmph at Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan Road – from Bindu Madhav Chowk to Dr Keshav Balram Hedgewar Chowk (Love Grove) Junction.

BKC’s Diamond Junction to the MTNL Junction at Avenue-1 will have a speed limit of 60kmph. On the Jogeshwari-Vikhroli Link Road (JVL.R), one of the prominent

east-west suburban connectors of the city, the speed limit stands at 70kmph. However, at the slope of the bridge ramps and turns and curves, the speed limit will be 30kmph.

It will be 60kmph for Chembur’s Veer Jijamata Bhosle and Chheda Nagar flyovers, with 40kmph at the start and foot of the bridge. At Amar Mahal flyover, the speed limit will be 70kmph, with 40kmph at ascend and descend.

A bunch of netizens panned the move and said that it’s a way to make more “money via challan”. One tweeted, “Cops may find an opportunity to make a quick buck for those exceeding these limits.” Another posted, “This is a fantastic way of imposing a penalty in the name of violation and creating opportunities for police to bribe.”

“Another scam by the traffic police.... with potholed roads, speed breakers, hawkers and pedestrians walking leisurely on roads, where they can drive above 30kmph,” another X user asked.

Mobile toilets unseated yet again

SHEFALI PARAB-PANDIT
MUMBAI

The BMC’s plans to install 24 toilets at eight beaches in the city received a setback for a second time. The experiment of prefabricated bio-toilets on beaches had earlier received stiff resistance from locals. The civic body had, therefore, decided to replace it with mobile toilets. However, the contract was terminated due to delays in work and a fresh tender was invited on Wednesday.

Following the directives of the National Green Tribunal (NGT), after obtaining an NOC from the Maharashtra Maritime Board, the solid waste management (SWM) department started the process to install pre-fabricat-

Girgaon 2	Dadar-Mahim 8
Juhu 6	Versova 5
Madh-Marve 1	
Manori-Gorai 2	



ed bio-toilets at beaches last year. The BMC had to change the locations at Versova and Aksa beaches twice after protests from local people.

Accordingly, a tender was invited in September. A civic official said the contractor was not ready to work on the decided location, resulting in delays. “We had to then terminate the contract and invite another tender. We are also planning to impose a penalty on the contractor for delays,” he said.

Additional municipal commissioner Sudhakar Shinde said, “Mobile toilets will have three seats each for men and women, and one for specially-abled people. There will also be a lower platform toilet which can be used by senior citizens and specially able visitors. After the work order is issued, they will be made available on the beaches in four months.”

MIDDAY BLAZE AT LTT’S POD HOTEL



KAMAL MISHRA / MUMBAI

A fire broke out at the busy Lokmanya Tilak Terminus railway station in Tilak Nagar on Wednesday afternoon. It started at 2.50pm at an under-construction pod hotel on the first floor adjacent to the Jan Aahar canteen, spreading to the surrounding areas within minutes, with plumes of heavy smoke triggering panic in the area. However, no injuries were reported in the incident.

The cause is yet to be conclusively determined, but initial reports suggested that sparks from welding work may have set fire to foam material. The authorities have initiated an inquiry to ascer-

tain the exact reason. It could have caused bigger damage as the station canteen is right next door to the hotel on the first floor and the passenger reservation counter is downstairs. However, swift action by three fire engines controlled the blaze by 3.30pm, an official said.

The LTT handles around 30 pairs of long-distance trains for both southern and northern parts of India, making it a critical transportation hub.

The Central Railway (CR) took precautionary measures by temporarily suspending train services for approximately 90 minutes from platform number one. Dr Shivraj Manaspure, CR’s

chief public relations officer, clarified that train services were halted for a brief period to ensure safety, and the interruption did not significantly impact operations due to the considerable distance between the fire site and the tracks.

An official said that the fire primarily affected the electric wiring, installations, wooden partitions and furniture in the 2,000-2,500 sq ft area of the Jan Aahar canteen on the ground-plus-one-storey station building. The incident prompted immediate evacuation of booking counters and announcement centres above the main ticket booking counter in the concourse area.

Doused within 40 minutes but chars parts of Jan Aahar canteen; booking counter downstairs evacuated; trains suspended briefly



VIJAY GOHIL

2.50pm Fire reported at LTT Dhanalaxmi under construction sleeping pod	2.52pm Fire Brigade called	3.10pm Fire Brigade arrived
3.30pm Fire brought under control		



3 cars gutted in early morning fire, man sustains 90% burns



VIJAY GOHIL

FPJ NEWS SERVICE

A 45-year-old man sustained 90% burns after three cars were gutted in a fire at Mahakali Keluj Road in Andheri East on Tuesday night. Faruq Siddhiki was admitted to Trauma Care Hospital and later shifted to Kasturba Hospital for further treatment. The police and the fire brigade department are yet to ascertain the cause.

The blaze broke out at

2.25am and was doused by 2.44am. First a Maruti Suzuki Wagon R caught fire, which spread to a Tata Indica and another Wagon R; two of the cars were completely gutted.

According to the Fire brigade officer from Marol division, the vehicles were parked across Trans Residency. Siddhiki was in the driver’s seat in one of them. As the car caught fire, he screamed for help and battled

to get out. He was eventually pulled out by passers-by and local residents.

In November, 18 vehicles, including 16 four-wheelers and two two-wheelers, were gutted after a fire broke out at the BMC-run Kohinoor parking lot in Dadar West. BJP MLC Prasad Lad had raised the issue in the state legislative council and sought a report from the state government about BMC-run public parking security.

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SIES to honour Piyush Goyal for robust trade

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / MUMBAI

Union commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal will be among the four recipients of the 26th South Indian Education Society's (SIES) Sri Chandrendra Saraswati national eminence award. The honours are bestowed in four fields; public leadership, community leadership, science and technology, and social leadership with primacy on spiritualism. The awards are named after the late 68th seer of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam Sri Chandrasekarendra Saraswathi.

A cabinet minister for nine years, Goyal has been instrumental in keeping Indian trade robust despite global headwinds, said SIES while underlining the reason for felicitating him. Citing further accomplishments, the organisation pointed out that the Preferential Trade Agreements with developed nations have opened up opportunities for Indian entrepreneurs. The breakthrough has paved the way for the Indian economy to be the world's third-largest by 2030, it underlined.

Goyal helmed portfolios like coal, power, railways and mines. Other awardees are Professor Anurag Behar, educationist and founder vice-chancellor of Azim Premji University, Professor Urbasi Sinha, a leading researcher in the field of quantum technology and writer Dushyant Sridhar.

A part of the Sri Kanchi Mahaswami festival, the ceremony will be held at the Sri Shanmukhananda Auditorium, Sion, on December 16.



NRIs seek piece of Alibaug action

Improved connectivity coupled with future capital appreciation and better prospects of rental incomes spur expats to buy homes in coastal town; ₹3,000 cr investment on the anvil

DRAUPADI ROHERA
MUMBAI

Alibaug, which is situated just a few hours away from Mumbai, is emerging as a preferred investment destination for non-resident Indians (NRIs), thanks to big-ticket projects like the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link and Navi Mumbai airport. Improved connectivity, future capital appreciation and better prospects of rental incomes are spurring expatriates to buy homes in Alibaug. The coastal town's scenic beauty has given birth to the concept of Bali-themed villas, aptly named Bali-baug. From sprawling villas with private beaches to lavish apartments overlooking the Arabian Sea, the offerings are as diverse as they are opulent.

According to industry sources, Alibaug is expected to witness an investment of approx Rs3,000 crore as luxury villas and integrated townships are likely to come up on an estimated 250 acres. The demand for such holiday homes is on the rise among NRIs living in the Gulf. Take the case of Dubai-based couple, Vaishali and Vishal Sawant who recently invested in Balibaug said, "Alibaug's development is remarkable as increased connectivity promises to transform it into a prime investment destination. The economic advantage of investing in India is evident, offering cost-effective opportunities compared to global markets."

Pardeep Sharma and Nupoor Bharadwaj, another Dubai-based couple who recently purchased a property in Alibaug, summed up the purchase as a smart choice.



These investments are not only motivated by financial considerations, but also deeply influenced by the emotional bonds that NRIs maintain with their country of origin.

Saurabh Garg,
NoBroker.com co-founder

"Purchasing this Bali-themed holiday home is a dream come true for us. The serene atmosphere and exotic vibes of Alibaug will make every stay feel like a tropical getaway. Not only will we get to enjoy our own private paradise, but also the return on investment has exceeded our expectations." The popularity of the Bali theme will attract vacationers, leading to a steady stream of rental income. It's not just a home; it's a smart investment that brings both relaxation and financial benefits, they rejoiced.

Speaking on the sidelines of the recently-concluded India property show 2023 held in Dubai, Pushpam Group Managing Director Dr Sachin Chopda said, "We are en-

thusud by the response that we have received from NRIs in Dubai towards our Balibaug project. There is no denying that the holiday home concept is fast catching with the expat community in the Gulf as an investment option." He claimed that 80% of inventory has been sold out in the inaugural 'Balibaug' package. Several reputed developers like Hiranandani, House Of Abhinandan Lodha and Pushpam Group have also launched resorts, based on a holiday home concept, in Alibaug.

According to a study by NoBroker.com, an online property portal, NRIs constituted around 10% of the total real estate investors in India between 2019 and 2020. With a steady surge, the figure cur-

rently stands at 15%, said a survey report, adding that it will touch 20% by 2025.

With NRI investments in India showing an upswing, NoBroker.com co-founder and chief business officer Saurabh Garg highlighted the fact that there has been a 35% growth year-on-year in the investment of NRIs in Indian residential real estate. "The NRI segment of buyers is expanding with the NRI sales doubling in the last two years," he said. Affordable property prices in India as compared to abroad are the main attraction for expat investors.

The increased demand from the diaspora is especially from the Gulf, with Singapore, the United States of America and Australia trail-

Gulf investors rejoice

Alibaug's development is remarkable as increased connectivity promises to transform it into a prime investment destination. The economic advantage of investing in India is evident, offering cost-effective opportunities compared to global markets.

Vaishali and Vishal Sawant,
Dubai-based couple

Purchasing the Bali-themed holiday home is a dream come true for us. The serene atmosphere and exotic vibes of Alibaug will make every stay feel like a tropical getaway. Not only will we get to enjoy our own private paradise, but also the return on investment has exceeded our expectations.

Pardeep Sharma and Nupoor Bharadwaj, also from Dubai

ing, according to NoBroker research. Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad have seen maximum demand. Mumbai is one of the top picks for NRI investors with 24% followed by Bengaluru (29%). "The surge is chiefly driven by a confluence of factors such as increased rental yield, the continued depreciation of the Indian rupee, favourable government policies and the resilience shown by the real estate sector in the face of adversity. These investments are not only motivated by financial considerations, but also deeply influenced by the emotional bonds that NRIs maintain with their country of origin," remarked Garg.

Detailed report:
freepressjournal.in

CR witnesses 15% rise in ticketless travel in Mumbai

Surge due to checkings, say officials; passengers blame ticket counter queues

KAMAL MISHRA / MUMBAI

The Central Railway, Mumbai Division, witnessed a staggering 15% increase in ticketless travel cases during November, with a daily average of 6,900 detections. "A total of 2.07 lakh passengers were found travelling without ticket or unbooked luggage last month. The figure stood at 1.8 lakh passengers during November 2022, which translates to an increase of 14.85% this year," said an official. A

booking windows as a potential reason behind the worrying trend. "From April to November 2023, a total of 14.19 lakh ticketless travel cases were detected, resulting in a collection of Rs81.73 crore penalty. This represents a 5.27% increase in ticketless passengers and a 6.09% rise in penalties as compared to the same period in 2022," explained the official.

Specifically targeting AC locals, the CR nabbed 2,403 ticketless passengers in No-

2.07 lakh Cases detected in November 2023		
1.8 lakh Cases detected in November 2022		
₹13.7 crore Penalty recovered last month	₹10.15 crore Fines collected in November 2022	₹81.73 crore Penalty recovered in 8 months
14.19 lakh		Cases detected between April and November 2023

whopping penalty of Rs13.7 crore has been recovered from such commuters nabbed last month, while Rs10.15 crore was collected in fines during the same period last year, informed the official.

The surge in the number of ticketless travellers was attributed to continuous monitoring by senior officers and vigilant ticket-checking staff. However, some passengers pointed out long queues at

November 2023, imposing fines totaling Rs7.97 lakh. "Throughout the calendar year, 36,978 people were found without tickets or with irregular tickets in AC trains. The penalties recovered from them stands at Rs1.24 crore," said the official.

The CR appealed to the passengers to travel with proper and valid tickets for avoiding inconvenience and commuting with dignity.

45 TB, four leprosy cases in twin-city

SURESH GOLANI
MIRA-BHAYANDAR

The detection of 45 cases of tuberculosis (TB) and four non-contagious leprosy patients in Mira-Bhayandar has raised the caseload of both the ailments to 1,250 and 21, respectively. The fresh cases were found during a 14-day door-to-door survey conducted by the health department of the Mira-Bhayandar Municipal Corporation (MBMC) between November 20 and December 6.

Armed with a targeted health assessment questionnaire and detailed knowledge about the symptoms, 162 teams comprising auxiliary nurse midwives and accredited social health activists visited 68,519 households. Of 885 suspected leprosy patients, four were diagnosed with non-contagious leprosy. Similarly, 45 out of 2,894 people surveyed turned out to be TB patients.

Aimed at saving patients from physical disability and deformity with early detection, the leprosy case detection campaign is an initiative under the national leprosy



1,250 TB caseload	21 Leprosy tally
68,519 Households visited	162 Health teams formed

control programme. The main objectives of the exercise are to reach the potentially missed leprosy and TB patients and stop the transmission of the diseases at the community level. Health workers will continue following up with homes which were found locked, said a health officer.

10 Thane kids in National Science Congress



Shravni Katkar and Anjali Manoj Jha (third from left) from Shreerang Vidyalaya are among meritorious students

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / MUMBAI

The 31st state-level Children's Science Congress was recently held at Dhanalakshmi High School, Pathardi, Nashik. More than 4,500 projects were registered by students from across 36 districts. Thirty-two experts examined the 188 selected projects designed in accordance with the theme 'Understanding eco-system for health and well-being'. Of 188, 30 projects were selected for the national level and 10 of them were from Thane district alone.

The projects of Hridayam Pathak of Sulochanadevi Singhania High School, Thane, and Soumya Singh of DAV International School, Kharghar, were selected in the seniors' category, according to Surendra Dighe, Chairman, National Children's Science Congress, Maharashtra. Also included were entries of Tanmayi Bhosale of Bedekar Vidyalaya, Naupada, and Shravni Katkar and Anjali Manoj Jha from Shreerang Vidyalaya, Thane.

Encouraged by neighbour, teen opens up on molestation by father

AISHWARYA IYER / MUMBAI

A 32-year-old man was arrested by the Trombay police for allegedly molesting his minor daughter. The 15-year-old victim and her brother were earlier staying with their mother in West Bengal, who separated from the accused. As the woman married another man, the siblings had no choice, but to shift with their father and their stepmother. Accordingly, the duo moved to Mumbai three months ago.

The girl, who studied till class 9 in West Bengal and planned to resume studies in the city, said her ordeal began a month ago. The accused laid himself next to her when she was sleeping and allegedly started touching her inappropriately. In her police state-

ment, the minor said that she brushed off the incident, thinking she was mistaken.

From December 1 onwards, the accused started talking to her about sexual topics when nobody was around. He also tried to con-

The 15-year-old had no option, but to shift with the man and his second wife after her mother remarried

vince her for a physical relationship. Between December 8 and 9 when she was alone at her home, he tried grabbing her and again forced her to get intimate, said the complainant.

The girl confided in a neighbourhood woman whom she was close to. She fi-

nally mustered courage and independently approached the police, thanks to the woman's encouragement. After reaching the Trombay police station, the victim narrated her father's alleged abhorrent act, while demanding justice for herself. On December 11, a FIR was registered against the accused and he was arrested the same day.

The cops have recorded statements of her family members, including the wife of the accused, the girl's brother and the neighbour woman. The statements will be included in the chargesheet as evidence, police said.

The man has been booked under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.

ULC stalls redevelopment of buildings: MLA in assembly

SURESH GOLANI
MIRA-BHAYANDAR

Although the state government has implemented the much-needed cluster scheme in various cities, including Mira-Bhayandar, the process of procuring Urban Land Ceiling (ULC) clearances for redevelopment of rickety buildings continues to remain a herculean task for residents.

MLA Geeta Jain, who raised the contentious issue in the ongoing winter session of the state assembly, stated that the cluster scheme is a boon for every city. However, hundreds of buildings in the twin-city, which are in existence since the gram pan-

chayat regime, find it extremely difficult to get ULC clearances to initiate redevelopment. Consequently, residents are compelled to risk their lives by staying in old buildings, said Jain.



"The onus of procuring ULC clearances, which is a much-needed document for transfer of land, rests on the shoulder of the builder. However, in several cases, neither the builder is traceable nor

there is a mechanism in place for the handover process of ULC flats. The government should simplify the process in the larger interests of people who are forced to live in rickety buildings," said the MLA. She has been demanding a single window clearance system for redevelopment.

Passed in 1976, the Urban Land (Ceiling & Regulation) Act was aimed at preventing profiteering through massive land hoarding and to create affordable housing for the weaker section. While any individual could not hold land more than 500 sq m, the Act mandated developers to hand over 5% of the flats/surplus land for public housing.

Kid's innocence helps cops nab fugitive from Uttar Pradesh

After allegedly stabbing his friend over petty issue, 24-year-old accused pulled out all stops to dodge police

AISHWARYA IYER / MUMBAI

A 24-year-old man, who was on the run after allegedly stabbing his friend over a petty issue, was arrested from his native in Uttar Pradesh. The accused was identified as Mehboob Mukhtar Ahmed. However, nabbing him was a task for the Oshiwara police who faced freezing temperatures, unknown terrain and dearth of clues. The operation was finally successful, thanks to the innocence of a

child.

The accused had allegedly stabbed Mohammad Nayaf Baloch, who works as a gym trainer, while seeking refund for his smartwatch which he had exchanged with the one belonging to Baloch. The crime took place on December 6 when Ahmed assaulted Baloch on neck and chest. Next day, the victim registered an attempt to murder case.

However, Ahmed simply vanished along with his fam-

ily, and even his phone was switched off.

Informants tipped the cops that he was hiding in Gonda, UP. Immediately, senior Inspector Mohan Patil formed a four-member team led by Assistant Police Inspector Sandeep Patil. After reaching the northern state, the cops treaded cautiously and didn't inquire with locals so that the accused didn't come to know about their presence.

"We were completely dependent on the informants

and our cyber team which was sending technical inputs. It was pretty dark when we reached Gonda and we found that Ahmed's house was in a remote area. We were sitting outside his village the entire night while the mercury dropped to a chilling 12 degrees Celsius. We entered the village early Tuesday morning," recalled Patil.

However, Ahmed somehow came to know that the cops were in his pursuit. He escaped from a route which was

known only to locals. The villagers were also non-cooperative and didn't respond positively when queried about the accused. "They kept defending him. We showed Ahmed's photo to a kid who said that he has gone out hence confirming his presence," said Patil. Subsequently, we detained Ahmed's brother and father so they don't pass on information and also kept a watch on his other kin, he added.

Following the incomplete

information provided by the kid, the cops travelled up to 13 km, but the efforts finally paid off as they spotted Ahmed near a petrol pump on a national highway. After being arrested, he revealed that he had asked all his family members to switch off their phones to get off the police radar.

A local court in Gonda has approved his transit remand. He will be soon brought to Mumbai and produced in Dindoshi court, police said.



VISHAL SINGH / MUMBAI

Two people, alleged to be mastermind of a mega job fraud racket, were finally arrested from West Bengal on Tuesday after absconding for more than a month. The accused were identified as Mohammad Shikh Mansoori, 49, and Patit Paban Halder, 36. Five of the racketeers

over fake visas to the individuals. To make the con look genuine, they would take office spaces on rent and then open fake job consultancy.

In June, they had set up an office, Bombay International Consultancy, in Ballard Pier, a posh area of south Mumbai, said Roshan, adding that they also gave fake visas and

appointment letters to the job aspirants.

When many of their targets found that the visas given to them were fake, the accused opened a new office, Indian Overseas Placement Services, in Andheri. To dodge the people they cheated, they also used to continuously change their names.

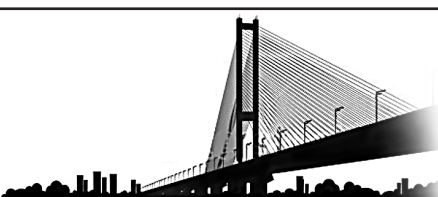
Acting on a tip-off that the duo was hiding in West Bengal, a team of cops from Crime Branch Unit 5 went there and succeeded in nabbing them, said the DCP.

Duo was absconding since November; 482 passports and more than ₹70 lakh found in their possession

Nine Bangladeshis held for illegal stay in Mumbai

Mumbai: The Mumbai crime branch's Unit 6 has arrested nine Bangladeshi persons illegally living in Mumbai. The police said they came to India and got bogus Aadhaar cards made for bank accounts, from which they were sending

money to Bangladesh through hawala. DCP Raj Tilak Roshan said they also funded other Bangladeshis coming for work. He said two of them have been living here for years. They have been remanded to police custody till December 16.



WATCH OUT FOR WALKING PNEUMONIA SYMPTOMS

SWAPNIL MISHRA / Mumbai

Mycoplasma pneumonia or walking pneumonia cases are being reported from public and private-run hospitals. However, contrary to fears, it is not linked to China pneumonia. Health experts have recommended that precautions are taken for children and the elderly as respiratory infections are on the rise at the onset of winter.

Many health experts have attributed these cases to poor air quality across the Mumbai Metropolitan Region and unseasonal rains. Recently, two cases of walking pneumonia were reported at the SRCC Children's Hospital in Worli, but the patients were discharged after treatment.

Dr Manish Itolikar, consultant physician, Fortis Hospital Mulund, said that walking pneumonia is caused by certain bacteria, viruses or fungi but commonly caused by a bacterium called mycoplasma pneumonia. These are mild cases and affected persons carry out daily activities without knowing. It affects children two years or younger, and people aged over 65 years.

Walking pneumonia, as the name suggests, is mild and doesn't manifest as people go about work normally

Dr Itolikar said, "It's is more commonly seen in people with immunosuppressed conditions, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma, and those who are on regular corticosteroids. Some common signs are sore throat, low-grade fever, fatigue, chest, pain, sneezing, cough and sometimes headache. It is contagious and can spread through droplets when the affected person coughs or sneezes."

Walking pneumonia is common worldwide and a surge in cases is seen every three to seven years. A doctor said they have been treating walking pneumonia cases on an OPD basis as only a few required hospitalisation. They said that time taken for recovery depends on the diagnosis of uncontrolled fever, and respiratory distress with pneumonia patches. Its diagnosis involves clinical examination and radiological findings. In addition, a confirmatory test of mycoplasma infection can also be done by a PCR based swab test.

Wait for smog guns gets longer



SHEFALI PARAB-PANDIT / Mumbai

Did the BMC overpromise 24 anti-smog guns for the city in the wake of deteriorating air quality? It seems, yes. Of the 24 machines promised to combat air-pollution in Mumbai, only four arrived last month. The remaining are expected to arrive by the end of December. Until then, civic workers are forced to use just one in the island city, another in the eastern

suburbs and two in the western suburbs.

A tender was invited to purchase 30 anti-smog guns to spray water mist to help settle suspended dust. The plan had to be put on hold as these machines are available only in the northern states. Instead of new ones, the BMC decided to temporarily rent 24 machines, with just four arriving from Jamshedpur.

A senior civic official said that northern states use the machines during winter to disperse dense fog. He said, "We feared that the winter would come to an end by the time the

anti-smog guns arrived. So we decided to rent them to fulfil our immediate requirement. We have received four and another four will be available by Monday. The remaining machines are expected to arrive by December 25." He said these machines will be vehicle mounted and used in the most polluted areas.

Earlier, the BMC had eight anti-smog guns, out of which three are in working condition. While one is vehicle mounted, the other four are on tractors, which makes it difficult to get to each and every ward, a civic source said.

Beware of morphed and fake online personas of fraudsters, adverts

CERT-In issues fresh advisory after a spate of frauds using the new modus operandi

SOMENDRA SHARMA / Mumbai

The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) has issued an advisory against cyber fraudsters donning morphed and fake online persona of police officials in video calls to threaten people with implication in crimes they haven't committed. Fearing loss of reputation and respect, victims pay money to criminals.

The advisory states that 'morphing' is altering or changing the picture of a person using sophisticated tools. Criminals send friend requests on social media to unsuspecting people, who get trapped once they accept the request. They receive video calls using images/videos of police officials and get blackmailed into paying up after being threatened.

Citizens have been asked to never accept friend requests from unknown people. They should lock profile visibility from public searches, and never attend to calls from strangers through social media accounts. The advisory states, "Keep the privacy set-



tings of your social media profile at the most restricted levels, especially for those not in your contacts."

Other safety guards include enabling multi-factor authentication with strong passwords, and saving the evidence and the screen shots for referring to the incident later.

"Don't suffer in silence, reach out and seek help from trusted family and friends. If you observe your fake profile

or any such objectionable posts on social media, report them to the respective social media help centre or report cyber crimes immediately by calling 1930 or visit https://www.cybercrime.gov.in," the advisory states.

In another advisory related to fake online advertisements, the advisory states, "Fraudsters engage in online scams through advertisements with the intention of stealing mon-

ey or harming someone's online reputation. Fraudsters may also display an urgent tone as a limited-time offer and may have fake review videos," as per the advisory.

The advisory further states that fraudsters offer expensive and in-demand items at a cheaper rate and request an upfront payment and demand delivery fees or GST after getting the victim's attention. Fraudsters also send the delivery tracking details to make the victim believe that they are actually going to receive the product, following which they block calls.

So, check before you click on any link. Always check the domain names and see if the link is legitimate. Analyse and verify the genuineness of the reviews and comments on any product or advertisement. Do not interact with strangers on social media. Avoid clicking on any link or attachment received from strangers in SMS or chats on social media platforms. Moreover, never share your financial details over the phone or on any social media platforms with strangers.

Broke caterer goes missing, leaves 'sorry' note

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / Mumbai

A renowned wedding caterer from Kandivali, Hitesh Rathod, went missing on Monday. The matter surfaced on Tuesday when his staff found a note from Rathod, saying he can't cope with being in debt. They rushed to the police station and filed a

missing person complaint. Rathod, a resident of Mira Road, has been operating Yash Caterers at Mahavir Nagar in Kandivali West for the past 25 years.

In the note dated December 11, Rathod wrote, "My dear staff, you have supported me but I am going now. Sorry and forgive me. Do not try to find

me. I took many loans and I am in debt... not able to handle it now. I am taking a huge step in my life, so inform all the people who booked our services and paid us advance money. I cannot handle it anymore, I am depressed." The note was found inside Rathod's office at Veena Santoor Building, along with his

mobile phone.

To revive his business, Rathod apparently arranged a free food-tasting event at Borivali a month prior to his disappearance. During this event, he earned at least 40 plus marriage bookings from couples, families and several banquet halls.

Several clients are now anx-

ious about their booking status. They all found out about Rathod's disappearance via social media where the 'note' went viral. Soon after, many of those who had paid an advance showed up at Kandivali police station. The police said they have initiated a search operation and are positive about finding Rathod.

Rock samples, Shivaji's foot imprint at 1st ever show

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / Mumbai

For the first time in Mumbai, archaeologists are putting together an exhibition of state-related artefacts from geological and human history for the interest of students and enthusiasts.

The three-day exhibition at Sathaye College, Vile Parle, which starts on December 15, will feature exhibits like a replica of the foot impression of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, rock samples from Mumbai, fossils, and a sculpture of Varaha found in Chaul, Alibaug, apart from coin collections.

The exhibition is being held by the Department of Archaeology, Centre of Extra Mural Studies, University of Mumbai, in partnership with the Department of Ancient Indian Culture, Buddhist Studies, and the Department of Mass Media of the Parle Tilak Vidyalaya Association's Sathaye College. The event is part of the celebration of the 115th and 109th birth anniversaries of archaeologist HD Sankalia and numismatist PL Gupta, respectively.

Suraj Pandit, professor of ancient Indian culture at Sathaye College, said they are trying to bring various fields of 'archaeology under one roof. "Every subfield of archaeology is introduced at the exhibition," said Pandit.

The exhibition covers epigraphy or the study of inscriptions, iconography or the study of statues, and pottery, numismatics or research on coins, and geoarchaeology, a recent field of research where earth sciences are used to solve archaeological questions.

Besides private collections, the artefacts have been sourced from the museums at Sathaye College and the University of Mumbai's Department of Archaeology. They will all tell the story of human evolution, right from the stone tools used by early humans to the dawn of trade and cultural exchanges, exemplified by the display of coins from the Satavahana (Deccan region dynasty) period, Harappan pottery, manuscripts, samples of ancient ornaments, and ancient sculptures.

To make the event accessible for differently abled individuals, there will be audio guides of the exhibition in English and Marathi. The organisers have included a



Statues, fossils and stone inscriptions

poster exhibition titled 'The Story of Mumbai' which will provide a comprehensive overview of the historical evolution of Mumbai. Another exhibition, 'Careers in Archaeology', will discuss potential career paths. The event will also feature demonstrations of traditional Indian games like 'langdi paani' and 'saripat'.

HC: Landlord best judge of his needs

URVI MAHAJANI / Mumbai

The landlord is the best judge of his residential requirement and the tenant cannot dictate terms to him as to how he can, or should, adjust in the available premises, observed the Bombay High Court recently.

Justice Anuja Prabhudesai noted that if the landlord wishes to live with comfort in his own house, the law does not command or compel him to squeeze himself tightly into lesser premises to protect the tenant's occupancy. While upholding the eviction decree, the court observed that the landlords had shown a "reasonable and bonafide requirement" of the premises as they, a joint family of 11 members, were occupying only 400 sq ft in area, in Gulawadi in south Mumbai.

"The proven fact is that the need of the plaintiffs (owners) for additional accommodation is genuine, honest and conceived in good faith and thus reasonable and bonafide," Justice Prabhudesai said.

A dispute arose over 319 sq ft premises in Gulawadi. The owners of the premises - Chan-

drakant, Ketan, and Sanjiv Shah - issued a notice to tenant Hasmukh Shah on May 17, 2004, asking him to vacate the premises. Hasmukh Shah had sublet the place to Ajay Shah, who claimed that he was in possession of the premises for residential cum commercial purposes. The owners then filed an eviction suit before the small-causes court, wherein they stated that the premises were sublet without their written consent. They also contended that their joint family was facing space constraints.

However, Ajay Shah denied the claim of subletting contending that the premises were originally occupied by his father and uncle since 1954 for residence-cum-office use. He said that he was an income-tax practitioner and was using the premises for residence-cum-office purposes. He also claimed that the owners had ample space. The small-causes court ruled in the owners' favour, which was upheld by the appellate bench of the court. Ajay Shah challenged this before the HC, which has granted him three months to vacate.

Hacker gains access to YouTuber's home CCTV, posts post-bath photo

A 21-year-old YouTuber has approached the police on learning that someone gained access to CCTV cameras at his home and uploaded post-bath nude photos on social media platforms. The video was posted on November 17. A police official said that a cyber team is tracking the Internet Protocol (IP) address of the uploader with the help of technical support. Meanwhile, a request has been sent

to social media platforms to remove the video. The YouTuber, who works as an eSports player, came to know about the video last week on Saturday after his friend saw it on Instagram, Telegram and other platforms. The police said they are how the CCTV details were illegally accessed. A case has been registered under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and the IT Act. -Vishal Singh

THE FREE PRESS JOURNAL

Unfiltered laughter on the 25th episode of buzz by the bay with Cyrus Broacha

Cyrus says, 'How can you not make a dosa crisp? These are the crimes in India nobody wants to talk of!'

Laugh out loud as Cyrus Broacha joins us for a hilarious ride discussing his current podcast, future endeavors, and everything in between on 'Buzz by the Bay'

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FREE PRESS JOURNAL

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PUNE: Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra received a positive response in Pimpri Chinchwad area, where over 12,000 citizens benefited

directly from various schemes. Notably, women expressed satisfaction, having directly benefited from the initiative.



CHIKHALI POLICE BUST ₹24 LAKH INTERSTATE COPPER THEFT RING

GUNWANTI PARASTE / PUNE

The Chikhali police have apprehended an interstate gang engaged in copper theft from small industries and workshops.

Following a review of 200 CCTV footage recordings, the police managed to recover items valued at ₹24.45 lakh.

According to the police information, the arrested individuals include Abdul Kalam Rahman Shah (23), Yogesh Tanaji Chandane (26), Ravishankar Mahavir Chorchiya (23). Additionally, two minors associated with the gang have been detained.

Hailing from Uttar Pradesh, the gang arrived in Pune with the objective of breaking into houses. They rented accommodations, executed crimes, and then returned to their hometown.

The accused strategically monitored locked industries at night, entering them to steal copper. Proceeds from these thefts were utilised for personal indulgence, and a portion was sent back to their families in Uttar Pradesh.

Dnyaneshwar Katkar, the



Senior Police Inspector of Chikhali police station, said, "Reviewing 200 CCTV recordings, we identified two individuals on a motorcycle involved in copper theft. Similar individuals appeared in footage from Mahalunge,

Dighi, and Chikhali, confirming their role in multiple thefts. The gang sold the stolen goods to Abdul Shah, who played a key role, leading to his arrest. The police have resolved eight break-in cases and retrieved goods worth

₹24.45 lakh from the accused."

Given the rise in house-breaking incidents in the Pimpri-Chinchwad area, housing several small industries and workshops, the police have heightened night-time patrols.

21-year-old drowns near Tamhini Ghat

STAFF REPORTER: A 21-year-old boy, a Solapur native pursuing education in Pune, drowned in a water body at Plus Valley in Tamhini Ghat on Tuesday.

The incident occurred around noon, and despite extensive efforts, his body was recovered much later, around 9:30 in the evening. The boy has been identified as Rohan Viresh Loni.

As per the information received, Loni was among a group of friends visiting Plus Valley in Tamhini Ghat. While exploring the area, they came across a water body and decided to swim.

Unfortunately, Loni misjudged the depth and drowned. Despite valiant attempts by his friends to rescue him, their efforts proved unsuccessful. Responding promptly to the incident, disaster management teams swiftly arrived at the location to retrieve Loni's body. However, the challenging terrain, characterised by large boulders and steep slopes, made the retrieval operation difficult. The teams worked persistently from 4:30pm, finally succeeding in recovering the body by 9:30pm.

Central team declares 'drought-like situation' in 75 circles in Pune

STAFF REPORTER / PUNE

Due to a rainfall deficit, a Central government delegation visited the Pune division to assess the severity of losses faced by farmers in the state.

"Drought-like situations" were declared in 75 out of 156 circles in the Pune district and 100 out of 110 circles in the Solapur district, as reported by Divisional Commissioner Saurabh Rao.

A state-level review meeting at the Divisional Commissioner's office addressed crop losses during the Kharif season due to drought conditions on Tuesday.

Priya Rao, head of the central team and joint secretary of the central government's agriculture department, underscored collaborative efforts with farmers, public representatives, and officials to provide relief to citizens in drought-affected areas. The meeting aimed to assess actual crop damage through visits to drought-affected areas, with the central team inspecting and gathering information within two days. The teams were briefed at the divisional commissioner's office of Pune before they visited Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, Jalna, Beed, Dharehiv, Pune, Solapur, Nasik and Jalgaon districts. Ranjan highlighted the impact of average sowing in drought-affected areas, citing production challenges due to rainfall variations and groundwater concerns.

Rao highlighted the impact on Solapur district due to low water storage in the Ujani dam. Under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), Rs 35.37 crore was demanded in the Pune district, and Rs 86.68 crore in Solapur.

Agriculture Commissioner Dr Gedam's presentation detailed the agricultural effects of drought, including decreased production of sorghum, millet, moong, urad, and sunflower.



DROUGHT AT A GLANCE

- Pune Circles in Drought: **75/156**
- Solapur Circles in Drought: **100/110**
- Districts Visited: **8**
- Rabi Area Sown: **36.37L/53.97L** ha
- Demands under PMFB in Pune: **₹35.37 Cr**
- Demands under PMFBY in Solapur **₹86.68 Cr**
- Severe Drought Talukas: **24** talukas in **10** districts
- Moderate Drought Talukas: **16** talukas in **7** districts
- Livestock-Affected Talukas: **40**

Severe drought was observed in 24 talukas across 10 districts, while 7 districts experienced moderate drought in 16 talukas. Of the 53.97 lakh hectares of Rabi, only 36.37 lakh hectares were sown, affecting 24.76 lakh hectares of drought-affected areas.

Animal Husbandry Commissioner Hemant Vasekar highlighted the substantial fodder and water requirements for livestock in 40 talukas over the next 6 months.

10 city restaurants and pubs raided for licensing violations

STAFF REPORTER / PUNE

The Maharashtra State Excise Department recently conducted surprise raids on

10 prominent restaurants and pubs in central Pune and its surrounding areas.

The establishments were found operating outside

THE ESTABLISHMENTS SUBJECTED TO THE RAIDS INCLUDE

Plunge — Koregaon Park
Local Gastro Bar — Koregaon Park
Elrow Pune — Kalyani Nagar
Unicorn House — Kalyani Nagar
Iron Bar & Grill — Balewadi

Narang Ventures Metro Hotel
Lemon Tree Hotel — Viman Nagar
Bowlers — Kalyani Nagar
Hotel Kaka's

permitted hours and without the necessary liquor licenses.

The targeted locations were predominantly upscale venues located in Koregaon Park, Kalyani Nagar, Viman Nagar, and Balewadi.

During the inspections, it was revealed that these venues were operating beyond the authorized hours and lacked the essential permits required for serving liquor, revealed one of the sources on anonymity.

Three booked for assaulting mother-daughter in Viman Nagar

STAFF REPORTER: Three individuals have been booked for assaulting a mother-daughter duo in Viman Nagar following a dispute over playing loud music in their car during late hours.

The Vimalant police station filed a case against the three accused—Ashutosh Vijay Sable (25), Aditya Vijay Sable (27), and Ashish Vijay Sable (23)—residents of Gangapuram Society in Viman Nagar.

According to the information received, the trio arrived near Neko Garden Society around midnight, playing loud music in their car.

Disturbed by the noise, a woman approached the men, requesting them to lower the volume. This simple request quickly escalated into a heated argument instigated by the accused. Subsequently, the woman's mother intervened, urging the trio to lower the volume of the loudspeaker. However, the trio disregarded the request and assaulted the mother-daughter duo, resulting in the breaking of one of their mangalsutras.

STAFF REPORTER / PUNE

Bhosari MLA Mahesh Landge on Wednesday raised an important issue of pollution of the Indrayani and Pavana rivers during the ongoing winter session of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader shared a video of his speech on social media where he said, "Today, the critical issue of pollution in Pavana and Indrayani rivers, lifelines of Pimpri-Chinchwad, was raised in the Vidhansabha through Lakshvhi. Emphasise the urgency of addressing this concern, the need for the Namami Indrayani project was highlighted to the Minister (Uday Samant)."

"In response, the Minister (Samant) assured that the state government, under the Chief Minister's leadership, is actively considering the



matter and concrete action will be initiated soon," he added.

Before the beginning of the winter session, Landge had pledged to raise this concerning issue in the Assembly. "We will highlight the issue of river pollution in the Legislative Assembly," he had posted.

The river pollution issue has sparked unrest in Pune, leading various social groups to stage protests, demanding administrative action.

Last month, environmental activists sought direct intervention from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing the Pim-

Fatal road rage: 3 arrested, 8 booked related to murder of city bizman

GUNWANTI PARASTE / PUNE

A 30-year-old man died after being assaulted by a group of individuals following a road rage incident on Tuesday

night on the road from Phursungi to Chandwadi around 10pm.

The Hadapsar police have registered a case against 11 persons and arrested three of them.

According to the police, Abhishek Bhosale, a resident of Shewalwadi, Manjari, and the main accused, Vilas Sakat, a resident of Chand-

wadi, Phursungi, got into an argument after Bhosale's car brushed against Sakat, who was on foot. Allegedly, in a fit of rage, Sakat broke one of the car's rear-view mirrors.

Subsequently, Bhosale went to Sakat's residence to resolve the dispute and seek compensation for the damage. However, the accused and several others attacked him with sharp weapons and stones.

During the assault, Atharva Dadasaheb Sable, an 18-year-old nephew of the deceased, also suffered injuries

while trying to intervene and protect his uncle.

Assistant Police Inspector Nanasaheb Jadhav is currently leading the investigation into this crime.

DCP (Zone 5) R Raja, in a conversation with the Free Press Journal, stated, "What initially began as a road rage incident evolved into a murder case. Bhosale had approached the accused to discuss the damage to his car, leading to a dispute and a brutal assault that tragically resulted in his death. The police have filed a case under IPC 302 (Murder) against the accused individuals."

Tarang 2023: Pune police's citizen connect event scheduled from December 22 to 24



GAURAV KADAM / PUNE

The Pune city police are preparing to host the 'Tarang 2023' event, previously known as 'Tejomay Sohala'.

Initially planned for November 4 and 5, the event faced postponement due to state-wide protests for Maratha reservation.

Now rescheduled, the event is set to take place from December 22 to 24 at the Pune Police headquarters in Shivajinagar.

Running from 11am to 10pm, the event will provide a full three-days of activities and engagement for the public.

The event will feature a showcase of various units of the Pune Police, including the Damini Squad and Cyber Cell. Attendees can enjoy a weapons showcase, a police dog show, a guard of honor ceremony, and a QRT commando mock drill.

Cultural performances like Ganesh Vandana, dhol tasha pathaks' performances, a police band jugalbandi, and a stand-up act by Atharva Sudame will also be part of the event. Marathi TV and film actors, singers, and musicians are scheduled to make appearances.

Adding to the attractions,

there will be a special festive flea market, a dedicated children's play zone, and exhibitions by the Wireless Museum, Crime Investigation Department (CID), State Reserve Police Force (SRPF), Motor Transport, and Maharashtra Prisons.

Last month, Commissioner of Police (CP) Reetesh Kumar had announced the postponement of the event. Speaking to the Free Press Journal, Kumar said, "Protests for Maratha reservation are currently underway, and our police force is actively involved in maintaining law and order during these events. Consequently, we have decided to reschedule the Tejomay Sohala' programme."

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Rohidas Pawar further explained, "Ensuring law and order is of paramount importance, and in light of this, we have opted to reschedule the event. We are contemplating rescheduling the programme for a later date."

LAST WORD

Mango house, Chiku house, and beyond: Satara village's unique abode names

RAMBHAU JAGTAP

Nestled in the heart of Patan taluka within Satara district, the picturesque village of Manyachiwadi boasts a distinctive tradition where houses are not merely identified by family names but rather adorned with the vibrant identities of indigenous trees, fruits, and flowers.

Welcome to Mango House, Chiku House, Cinnamon House, Cashew House, Guava House, Jambhul House, Amla House, Fanas House, Moghani House, Cherry House, and Sita Ashok House—a living tribute to the diverse biodiversity that paints the village in the vivid hues of nature's poetry.

In a remarkable naming ceremony held recently, villagers bestowed each house with names inspired by native species of trees, fruits, and flowers, turning this event into a celebration of na-



ture's splendor.

The gathering, attended by the entire village, dedicated each house with the name of a fruit, flower, or tree, marking a unique connection between the homes and the surrounding natural landscape.



Approximately 500 fruit and flower trees representing 30 indigenous species were meticulously planted in front of houses.

To further enrich this initiative, detailed information about these trees was showcased on house walls and doors.

Manyachiwadi village in Patan taluka has been a consistent beacon of rural development through its innovative endeavors, emerging as a

guiding force in implementing various state and central government schemes.

As part of the Majhi Vasundhara Abhiyan, the village seamlessly integrated tree plantation and conservation efforts while emphasizing the significance of the five elements—land, air, water, fire, and sky.

In a concerted effort, every house in the village now proudly stands adorned with 30 varieties of trees bearing

fruits such as mango, chickpea, cinnamon, cashew, and guava.

This endeavor serves to raise awareness among representatives studying village development.

The unique practice of naming houses after the species of trees planted in front of them has been accompanied by informative posters detailing the benefits, uses, and scientific aspects of these trees, strategically



MARATHWADA HOSPITAL DEATHS STIR DEBATE AT NAGPUR SESSION

AGENCIES

The alarming rise in deaths at government hospitals in Marathwada and other districts has taken centre stage at the ongoing winter session in Nagpur.

Opposition parties in Maharashtra protested against the state government and Health Minister Tanaji Sawant, specifically addressing the fatalities in state-run hospitals, with a focus on Marathwada.

With Ambadas Danve, a member of the Maharashtra Legislative Council (MLC) representing the Aurangabad-Jalna Local Authorities constituency and the Leader of the Opposition (Council), taking centre stage at the protest, along with Leader of Opposition (Assembly) Vijay Wadettiwar, the opposition voiced their concerns and protested against the state government and Health Minister of the state,



Tanaji Sawant.

The protest highlighted deaths in the Marathwada region in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Nanded, along with

deaths in Chandrapur, and Thane, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's hometown.

Danve emphasised the need to examine the govern-

ment's handling of health issues, expressing concern about the well-being of the people.

In October, Dr Shankarrao

Chavan Government Medical College and Hospital in Nanded reported at least 24 deaths, including 12 infants, allegedly due to a shortage of medicines and medical supplies.

Additionally, 18 patients succumbed at the Government Medical College and Hospital in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, leading to significant political turmoil.

Whereas, in mid-August, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Hospital in Thane witnessed around 27 patient deaths in barely 48 hours, triggering a statewide outcry.

Leaders of the Congress, Shiv Sena, Nationalist Congress Party symbolically wore stethoscopes, surgical masks, and oxygen masks, raising slogans outside the Legislature on Tuesday, criticising Health Minister Tanaji Sawant for the deplorable state of government-run hospitals in Marathwada and the state at large.



State excise seizes 27.395 kgs of Cannabis valued at ₹3.28 Lakhs

STAFF REPORTER

The State Excise Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar division conducted a significant operation resulting in the arrest of three individuals and the seizure of cannabis valued at Rs 3,28,740 across three separate incidents in Nagonichi Wadi, Golatgaon district, on Tuesday night.

Excise department officials received information about the illegal storage of cannabis by three individuals at Nagonichi Wadi in Golatgaon.

Acting on this information,

the officers conducted raids. The first raid took place at the residence of Sumanlal Ramesh Bimlot, where a search led to the discovery of 9.324 kgs of dried cannabis concealed under his bed.

Subsequently, raids were conducted at the homes of Santosh Ramchandra Bimrot and Babulal Ramchandra Bimrot, resulting in the seizure of 12.710 kgs and 5.360 kgs of cannabis, respectively. The cumulative haul amounted to 27.395 kgs valued at Rs 3,28,740. All three accused have been apprehended, and

cases have been filed against them under the NDPS Act.

This operation was carried out under the guidance of Commissioner Dr. Vijay Suryawanshi, Director Sunil Chavan, Divisional Deputy Commissioner Pradeep Pawar, SP Santosh Zagade, Deputy SP Atul Kotalwar, and led by inspectors N S Dahake, A B Chaudhary, Second Inspector S B Rote, S D Ghule, G S Pawar, R K Vitore, A E Tatale, S S Patil, Ganesh Nagve, Ramjeevan Bharti, Shareq Qadri, Shravan Kharat, Harshal Bari, and others.

Academic audit planned for BAMU's PG departments

STAFF REPORTER

Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University's (BAMU) postgraduate (PG) departments will undergo academic and administrative audit soon. Over the past four years, an academic audit has already been conducted for 394 colleges affiliated with BAMU.

Since assuming office, Vice-Chancellor Dr Pramod Yeole has been committed to instilling discipline across educational, financial, and administrative domains.

His emphasis remains on fostering skilled manpower and enhancing facilities with-

in colleges. The upcoming audit involves 45 PG departments within the BAMU campus and an additional 10 departments under the Dharrashiv Sub-centre, totaling 55 departments.

To streamline the process, departments are required to submit necessary information through an online system. Department heads must furnish details such as student numbers, faculty strength, ongoing research projects, patents, placements, and more.

Dr Gulab Khadkar, Director of the Internal Quality Assurance Cell, highlighted that experts will evaluate the sub-

mitted data. Departments will be graded across four categories—A, B, C, and No Grade—based on the information provided.

Under the leadership of Science and Technology Stream Dean Dr Bhalchandra Waikar, along with Dr Pravin Yannawar and others, an assessment marking system for academic audits has been devised. A team comprising coordinators, including Captain Dr Suresh Gaikwad, Dr Mustajeeb Khan, Dr Syed Azaruddin, and Dr Prashant Dixit, has been appointed to conduct the audit in the near future.

HUNGER STRIKE TO SAVE YASHWANTRAO CHAVAN AUDITORIUM



Yashwantrao Chavan Auditorium, a cultural gem in Beed, has fallen into disrepair due to neglect by the Beed Municipal Corporation. In response, artists staged a hunger strike at the Collector's Office, urging urgent repairs for the auditorium

Five injured in motorcycle crash at Jikthan Phata

STAFF REPORTER

Five individuals sustained severe injuries in a collision involving motorcycles at Jikthan Phata in the Waluj area on Tuesday.

The incident occurred when a speeding motorcycle, carrying Sachin Vanjare, Punam Vanjare, and their two-year-old son Kartik (MH12 H P 2566), collided with another motorcycle (MH 20 CL 1243) parked by Suresh Maske and his wife Usha along the roadside at Jikthan Phata. The collision resulted in injuries to all five individuals on both motorcycles.

Local residents immediately summoned assistance, and

the injured were promptly transported to the district hospital using the Jagadguru Narendracharya Maharaj Sansta's free medical ambulance.



MARKET WATCH			
SENSEX	69,584.60	▲	33.57
NIFTY	20,926.35	▲	19.95
USDINR	83.41	▼	0.04
GOLD	61,820.00	▼	80.00
SILVER	75,050.00	▼	700.00

⚡ BIZ BULLETIN

SRF infuses ₹3.55 billion in arm SRF Altech

SRF Ltd has infused 3.55 bln rupees in its wholly-owned subsidiary SRF Altech Ltd through rights issue, the parent company said in an exchange filing. Pursuant to a rights issue made by SRF Altech Ltd, the company had subscribed 355 mln shares at 10 rupees each in cash for an aggregate of 3.55 bln rupees. The infusion of funds by way of shares will be utilised to repay the existing debt of the wholly-owned subsidiary without impacting overall projected debt levels for SRF on a consolidated basis.

Sundram Fasteners to get ₹2.1 bn incentives from TN

Sundram Fasteners Ltd said it is eligible to receive incentives of 2.12 bln rupees in equal instalments over 10 years after the Tamil Nadu government approved its application for incentive schemes, according to an exchange filing. In terms of the approval, the investment period is up to 2027-28 (Apr-Mar).

Domestic tractor sales up 6.4% on year in Nov

Domestic tractor sales in the country rose 6.4% on year to 72,266 units in November, data from the Tractor and Mechanization Association showed. However, domestic sales in November were 38.9% lower than 118,232 units sold a month ago. Tractor exports contracted 32.0% on year to 6,722 units in November. In absolute terms, November exports were the lowest in 41 months.

Ultratech to have 85% green energy mix by 2030

The largest cement and ready-mix concrete maker Ultratech Cement on Wednesday announced that it plans to increase the overall share of green energy in its total energy mix to 85 per cent by 2030. As an interim target for its sustainability objectives and targets, the AV Birla Group company plans to increase its total green energy share from its current 22 per cent to 60 per cent by FY26.

Thermax to infuse ₹291 mn in Singapore arm

Thermax Ltd will additionally infuse 291.7 mln rupees in wholly-owned subsidiary Thermax Engineering Singapore Pte Ltd via the equity route, the company said in an exchange filing. Thermax Engineering Singapore is an investment holding company. The funds infused will be used to invest further in its Indonesia-based wholly-owned subsidiary PT Thermax International.

HPL Electric bags smart meter orders worth ₹5 bn

HPL Electric and Power Ltd has won smart meter orders worth 5.45 bln rupees from various customers, the company said in an exchange filing. HPL Electric, an established electric equipment manufacturing company in India, manufactures a diverse portfolio of electric equipment.

Denta Water files IPO papers with Sebi

Denta Water and Infra Solutions Ltd, a player in the field of water engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) services, has filed preliminary papers with market regulator Sebi to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO). The initial share sale is entirely a fresh issue of up to 75 lakh equity shares with no offer for sale (OFS) component, a draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) filed with Sebi showed on Wednesday.

Graphisads lists on NSE, opens at premium

Graphisads Ltd on Wednesday listed on the NSE Emerge Platform after a successful IPO earlier this month. The stock opened at Rs 111.50, a slight premium over the IPO price of Rs 111, and rose to a high of Rs 112 before paring gains to close at Rs 105.95, according to stock exchange data.

GST dept disallows Asian Paints' ₹5.5 mn ITC

Asian Paints Ltd has received an order from the goods and services tax department disallowing input tax credit amounting to 5.5 mln rupees, the company said in an exchange filing. Further, the department has also imposed a penalty of 554,736 rupees. The order related to disallowing input tax credit related to suppliers whose registrations were cancelled retrospectively, the filing said.

IDFC First Bank's debt instruments rtgs affirmed

India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) has affirmed IDFC First Bank's debt instruments ratings at 'IND AA+' with stable outlook, the private sector lender said. Ind-Ra has re-affirmed the rating/outlook of bank's debt instruments (Basel-III Tier-2 Bonds, Infrastructure Bonds and Non-Convertible Debt Instruments) amounting to Rs 29,148 crore at 'IND AA+/Stable', the lender said in a stock exchange filing.

HDFC MF cuts stake in Apar Industries to 4.66%

HDFC Mutual Fund, through various schemes, sold 723,112 shares, or 1.80% stake, in Apar Industries Ltd through open market on Dec 8, the company said in an exchange filing. —Agencies

India offers huge investment opportunities: Piyush Goyal

Foreign investors should explore business opportunities in India as it provides a huge domestic market and investment-friendly environment, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Wednesday.

The availability of skilled manpower, equal treatment to all investors, and the aspirational young population are also some of the key reasons for investing in India, the minister added.



STOCK MKTS SETTLE marginally higher ON LATE BUYING; L&T, RELIANCE ADVANCE

Market participants adopted a cautious approach ahead of the US Federal Reserve interest rate decision

PTI / Mumbai

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty eked out marginal gains on Wednesday following late buying in capital goods, auto and utility stocks as investors adopted a cautious approach ahead of the US Fed interest rate decision.

The 30-share BSE Sensex advanced 33.57 points or 0.05 per cent to settle at 69,584.60, driven by late buying. During the day, it fell 450.47 points or 0.64 per cent to 69,100.56.

The Nifty gained 19.95 points or 0.10 per cent to 20,926.35.

"The market's focus now shifts to the upcoming FOMC (Federal Open Market Committee) meeting. And the recent global upside is getting far stretched in anticipation of a rapid fall in US Fed rate in CY



2024," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Among the Sensex firms, NTPC, Power Grid, Mahindra & Mahindra, Larsen & Toubro, Sun Pharma, State Bank of India, Titan and Tata Steel were the major gainers.

OPEC's Nov crude output falls slightly to 27.84 mn bpd

INFORMIST / Mumbai

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries' crude oil production declined slightly in November with output from Angola and Iraq falling the most among all the members, the cartel said in its monthly Oil Market Report.

In November, OPEC produced 27.84 mln bpd of crude oil, 57,000 bpd lower than October, according to secondary sources cited by the cartel. Crude oil production in Saudi Arabia rose slightly by 12,000 bpd last month to a little below 9.0 mln bpd.



Production by Angola declined by 37,000 bpd to 1.13 mln bpd last month, while that of Iraq slipped by 77,000 bpd to 4.28 mln bpd, according to the report.

After much deliberation late on Dec 1, OPEC and allies agreed to reduce oil production by an additional 1 mln bpd for Jan-Mar on growing concerns over a possible glut in the market.

As part of the deal, Saudi Arabia also announced the extension of its voluntary production cut of 1 mln bpd for the first quarter of 2024, taking the total amount of reductions to 2.2 mln bpd.

'Govt not considering any proposal to take over Vodafone Idea'

PTI / New Delhi

The government is not considering any proposal to take over Vodafone Idea (VIL), Parliament was informed on Wednesday. This was stated by Minister of State for Communications Devusinh Chauhan in a written reply in Lok Sabha.

To a question on whether the government has any plan to take over Vodafone Idea, Chauhan said, "No such proposal is under consideration in the Department".

The government became the largest stakeholder in Vi with a 33.1% stake in February this year, when the telecom department converted the company's accrued interest on deferred adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues worth Rs 16,133 crore into equity.

Rupee falls 3 paise to revisit all-time low of 83.40 against US dollar

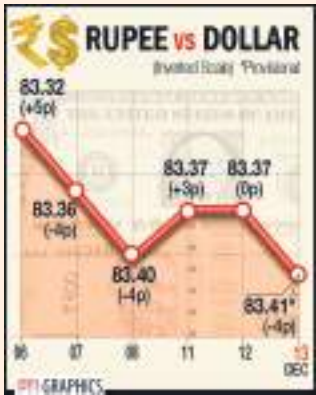
PTI / New Delhi

The rupee depreciated 3 paise to revisit all-time closing low of 83.40 against the US dollar on Wednesday amid a strong American currency overseas.

Forex traders said a steep fall in crude oil prices from USD 76 per barrel to the below USD 73 level provided support, but a muted trend in equity markets triggered negative bias against the local unit.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.39 against the greenback and traded in a tight range of 83.38-83.42.

After dropping to its all-time intra-day low of 83.42, the rupee finally settled at 83.40, a fall of 3



paise from the previous close.

On Tuesday, the domestic currency settled at 83.37 against the dollar.

The rupee had earlier record-

Services exports hit \$192 bn so far this fiscal: SEPC

PTI / New Delhi

The country's services exports have touched USD 192 billion so far this fiscal and are expected to reach USD 400 billion by the end of 2023-24, SEPC said on Wednesday. Services Export Promotion Council (SEPC) said that key sectors which are recording healthy growth rates include telecom, computer, information, and transport and travel.

The council is also engaged in formulating strategies to propel the sector's growth, it said.

"As of the latest report, the services sector has demonstrated progress, with over USD 191.97 billion already accomplished out of the targeted USD 400 billion," the council added.

It added that sectors like tourism, hospitality, and medical value tourism which suffered due to COVID-19 are now showing revival signs. In addition to this, sectors like legal, auditing, higher education, accounting, and logistics are showing good growth. "At SEPC, our mission is



SEPC said that key sectors which are recording healthy growth rates include telecom, computer, information, and transport and travel

clear, to guide the services sector in India's pursuit of achieving USD 400 billion by 2024 and USD 1 trillion in services export by 2030," Karan Rathore, Chairman at SEPC, said.

Services Export Promotion Council, set up by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, has been mandated to facilitate global business opportunities for India's services sector.

FORMER RBI GOVERNOR RAGHURAM RAJAN SAYS

'Infra spending, good performance by large economies pushed GDP in H1FY24'

PTI / New Delhi

Former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan has attributed the sharp uptick in GDP in the first half of the current fiscal to infrastructure spending and good performance by large economies of the world but added India has to do a lot of catching up and the USD 5 trillion economy goal for 2025 is nearly impossible.

Rajan further said that even as India's growth rate is strong, private investment and private consumption have not picked up.

"So if you look at why we have done so well this year, one of the

reasons we are doing so well is also because the world is doing well.

"... the other reason for this very strong growth in the first half is tremendous government spending on infrastructure," Rajan told PTI. India retained the tag of the world's fastest-growing major economy, with its GDP expanding by a faster-than-expected rate of 7.6 per cent in the July-September quarter on booster shots from government spending and manufacturing.

At constant (2011-12) prices in April-September 2023-24 (H1 2023-24), GDP is estimated at Rs 82.11



lakh crore as against Rs 76.22 lakh crore during the corresponding period of the previous year, showing a growth of 7.7 per cent in H1 2023-24 as against 9.5 per

cent in H1 2022-23.

He noted that over the last four years, from the pre-pandemic days till today, the Indian economy has grown about 4 per cent a year. "That is way below our growth potential (economic growth rate) of 6 per cent.

"So you said inflation is contained. One of the reasons inflation is contained is we haven't even grown at our potential rate," Rajan, presently Katherine Dusak Miller Distinguished Service Professor of Finance at Chicago Booth (USA), observed.

The eminent economist emphasised that India needs to grow

much faster as the worrying fact that the growth is not providing enough jobs. "We are about 5 per cent below our trendline which was the pre-pandemic trendline. So there is some catch-up to be done at this point," he said.

Noting that for democracy to work, the government needs to share the data with the people, he said, "You can not simply pull numbers out of a hat and say...we will be a USD 5 trillion economy by 2025." According to Rajan, it is virtually impossible for India to become a USD 5 trillion economy by 2025 unless a "miracle" happens.

UPWARD REVISION

ADB raises India's FY24 GDP growth forecast to 6.7%



IANIS / New Delhi

Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Wednesday raised its forecast for India's economic growth rate to 6.7 per cent for 2023-24 from 6.3 per cent that it had predicted in September.

The upward revision is based on India's higher-than-expected 7.6 per cent GDP growth in the July-September quarter of the current financial year. "The ADB also factors in the double-digit growth in the industrial sector. Although agriculture is expected to grow slightly slower than expected, this will be more than offset by industry's much stronger-than-expected growth, hence the upward revision," the report stated.

However, ADB has left its growth forecast for 2024-25 unchanged at 6.7 per cent. Fixed investments - driven by increased capital spending by the Central and state governments - will compensate for lower growth in private consumption expenditure and weaker-than-expected exports in 203-24, the report said.

At the same time, ADB has kept its earlier forecasts on India's inflation unchanged at 5.5 per cent for the current financial year.

ADB also projected growth in China to reach 5.2 per cent in 2023, an increase from the previous forecast of 4.9 per cent made in September. China in 2024 is expected to slow down to 4.5 per cent.

ADB also revised the Asian region's growth projection to 4.9 per cent for the calendar year 2023.

SETBACK FOR TESLA

'No proposal to provide duty concession on import of EVs'

PTI / New Delhi

The government on Wednesday said it is not considering any proposal to provide duty concessions and exemption from local value addition for import of electric vehicles into the country.

Responding to a question whether there is any proposal to exempt Tesla and other multinational car companies from local value addition of cost in heavy batteries, semiconductors and magnetic parts; and subsidy on the import duty on the import of Electric Vehicles (EVs) in India, Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Som Parkash said a PLI scheme for automobile and

auto component industry with a budgetary outlay of Rs 25,938 crore was announced by the government.

The move was aimed at providing financial incentives to boost domestic manufacturing of advance automotive technologies products including EVs and their components, he said.

"Presently, there is no proposal either to provide exemption from local value addition cost or to provide subsidy on import duty on import of EVs in India," Parkash said. The government has also taken various steps to boost domestic and foreign investments to enhance local value addition under Make in India initiative, he said.

Gilts end higher as Nov CPI lower than view; FOMC outcome eyed



INFORMIST / Mumbai

Government bond prices ended higher on Wednesday after India's CPI inflation print for November was softer than expected, but demand for the 10-year gilt dried up as it approached the psychologically crucial 7.25% mark, dealers said. Traders now await the outcome of the US Federal Open Market Committee's two-day meeting past midnight.

The 10-year benchmark 7.18%, 2033 bond closed at 99.45 rupees, or 7.26% yield, against 99.28 rupees, or 7.27%, on Tuesday.

According to the data released after market hours on Tuesday, India's CPI inflation for November rose to 5.55% from 4.87% in October. A poll by Informist had estimated the November CPI print at 5.8%.

The uptick in headline inflation was largely because of a rise in vegetable prices, which the market saw as transitory and not a great worry for monetary policy, dealers said. Core CPI inflation, which excludes volatile items such as food and fuel, was at a 44-month low of 4.1% on year.

Meanwhile, The government will switch six gilts worth a total of 140 bln rupees with six bonds through an auction on Monday, the RBI said in a release on Wednesday. According to the central government's borrowing calendar, switches of government bonds are scheduled for the third Monday of every month. The Union Budget for 2023-24 had set a gilt switch target of 1 trln rupees.

➤ BIZ BULLETIN

2 promoter entities offload 4.1% stake in Sunteck

Two promoter entities on Wednesday offloaded their entire 4.1 per cent stake in real estate developer Sunteck Realty for Rs 288 crore through open market transactions. Satguru Infocorp Services and Starlight Systems were the promoter entities that sold their shares in the Mumbai-based real estate developer. According to the bulk deal data available with the BSE, Satguru Infocorp Services and Starlight Systems disposed of 30 lakh shares each, amounting to a 4.10 per cent stake in Sunteck Realty.

Bajaj Allianz Life's AUM crosses ₹1 lakh crore

Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance on Wednesday said its assets under management has surpassed the Rs 1 lakh crore mark. The Pune-based leading private sector life insurance player in a statement said this makes them one of the fastest growing life insurers among the top-10 players and the AUM touching Rs 1 lakh crore reflects a 1.8 times growth from Rs 56,085 crore in FY20.

Inox India secures ₹438 cr from anchor investors

Cryogenic tank maker Inox India Ltd on Wednesday collected Rs 438 crore from anchor investors, a day before its initial public offering (IPO). The company has allotted 66.33 lakh equity shares to 41 funds at Rs 660 apiece, which is also the upper end of the price band, according to a circular uploaded on BSE's website.

Biocon's stake in arm to fall below 20% post funding

Biocon Ltd on Wednesday said in an exchange filing that its stake in associate company Bicara Therapeutics Inc will fall below 20% post allotment of shares by Bicara after infusion of Series C funding, according to a regulatory filing. Bicara will cease to be an associate company of Biocon after allotment of shares. US-based Bicara Therapeutics completed its \$165 mln Series C financing on Tuesday.

NBCC gets ₹15 bn order to build 1,469 warehouses

NBCC (India) Ltd has received an order worth 15 bln rupees from National Cooperative Development Corp for construction of 1,469 warehouses and other agri-infrastructure at various locations across India, the company said in an exchange filing. The National Cooperative Development Corp is a statutory body under the cooperation ministry.

M2P Fintech acquires Goals101 for ₹250 cr

Digital banking infrastructure company M2P Fintech on Wednesday said it has acquired Goals101, a firm specialising in transaction behavioural intelligence, for about Rs 250 crore. This acquisition will act as a catalyst to bring in a high degree of personalisation in its digital banking products to its customers, the companies said in a joint statement.

Titagarh Rail Systems raises ₹700 cr via issue of shares to QIBs

PTI / New Delhi

Titagarh Rail Systems Ltd on Wednesday said it has raised Rs 699.9 crore by issuing fresh shares to Qualified Institutional Buyers.

The issue of Titagarh Rail Systems Ltd (TRSL), formerly known as Titagarh Wagons Ltd, opened on December 7 and closed on Tuesday.

"In respect of the issue which opened on Monday, 7th December, 2023, the Qualified Institutions Placement (QIP) Committee at its meeting held today...approved the issue and allotment of 75,02,679 equity shares to the eligible Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) at the issue price of Rs 933 per equity share ...aggregating to Rs 69,999.99 lakh," the company said in a BSE filing.

The Kolkata-based company is a leading railway rolling stock manufacturer.

Agilitas Sports raises ₹100 cr from Nexus Venture Partners

PTI / New Delhi

Agilitas Sports, co-founded by Abhishek Ganguly, on Wednesday said it has raised Rs 100 crore in funding from Nexus Venture Partners.

The fresh infusion by the venture capital firm will help Agilitas Sports with more resources in its "ambitious journey", which is planning to build consumer brands to tap the fast-growing domestic sports and athleisure markets, Ganguly told PTI.

Agilitas, which earlier raised Rs 430 crore, acquired Mochiko Shoes in September this year. After having a sports footwear manufacturing vertical, it now plans to own brands either through acquisition or licensing for a comprehensive play into the sportswear market. "We would have a comprehensive approach and invest in the en-

ADANI TO INVEST \$100 BILLION IN GREEN ENERGY TRANSITION

PTI / New Delhi

Billionaire Gautam Adani's group will invest USD 100 billion over the next decade towards achieving energy transition over the next 10 years across its ports, power and cement operations as it aims to become a net zero emitter by 2050.

The conglomerate is expanding its renewable portfolio to 45 gigawatts as well as building three giga factories to manufacture solar panels, wind turbines and hydrogen electrolyzers, it said in a statement.

"The portfolio companies will be investing USD 100 billion over the next decade towards achieving energy transition," it said.

The group has set a target to become net zero by 2050 or earlier for five of its portfolio companies – renewable energy firm Adani Green Energy Ltd, power transmission utility Adani Energy Solutions Ltd, ports firm Adani Ports & SEZ Ltd, and cement makers ACC and Ambuja Cements.

The portfolio businesses are actively sourcing renewables, electrifying operations and adopting biofuels, and deploying waste heat



recovery and energy storage technologies.

The road map to net zero transition will require last mile green hydrogen solutions, Adani Group said, adding its businesses have started pilot projects such as development of hydrogen fuel cell electric trucks as part of the switch.

Detailing the decarbonisation pathway, the apples-to-airport conglomerate said it is looking to cut Scope-1 emissions by electrification of operations where possible, and adopting green hydrogen and its derivatives (green ammonia) for energy storage, heat and mobility

where electrification is not possible.

Scope-2 emissions would be cut through sourcing renewable electricity and deployment of waste heat recovery and energy storage technologies such as batteries and hydrogen.

"Adani Group plans to invest USD 100 billion in energy transition over the next decade, with 70 per cent of the investments earmarked for clean energy," it said.

It is building giga factories to make 10 GW solar panels, 10 GW of wind turbines and 5 GW hydrogen electrolyzers.

"Adani's renewables portfolio is expanding to 45 GW, which would be able to commercialize 3 million tonnes per annum of green hydrogen," it added.

Group chairman Gautam Adani had in recent days shared details of the green investments.

"Our commitment to achieving 45 GW of renewable energy by 2030 initiative will help cut annual emissions by an amount equivalent to 80 million tonnes of CO2," he said in a post on X, formerly Twitter.

Presence of Indian banks via subsidiaries increased to 417 in FY23: RBI survey

PTI / Mumbai

Indian banks increased their overseas presence through the subsidiaries route to 417 during 2022-23, from 399 at the end of the preceding fiscal, as per Reserve Bank data released on Wednesday. Their employee strength, too, rose 0.5 per cent and 6.2 per cent for foreign branches and subsidiaries, respectively, during 2022-23, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) survey on Interna-

tional Trade in Banking Services 2022-23 showed.

The survey covers 14 Indian banks having overseas branches or subsidiaries and 44 foreign banks having branches or subsidiaries in India.

On the other hand, the number of branches and employees of foreign banks in India contracted during 2022-23 to 774 from 858 in 2021-22.



"Overseas business of Indian banks expanded as both mobilisation of deposits as well as lending activities increased

during the year," the RBI said.

Shifting of retail business of a major foreign bank in India to a domestic private sector bank led to decline in aggregate deposits and credit of foreign banks, whereas their capital and investments increased during 2022-23.

SAT quashes Sebi's ₹7 lakh fine against RIL's subsidiary

PTI / New Delhi

The Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) on Wednesday quashed a Sebi order imposing a penalty of Rs 7 lakh on Jio Financial Services Ltd in case of alleged manipulation in certain trades in long-dated Nifty options in 2017.

Earlier this year, Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) demerged its financial services undertaking into Reliance Strategic Investments Ltd (RSIL) and renamed it as Jio Financial Services Ltd (JFSL) – formerly known as Reliance Strategic Investments Ltd.

The case pertains to certain trades in long-dated Nifty options between Reliance Strategic Investments and Morgan Stanley France SA done back in 2017.

The order came after the Reliance group company approached the appellate tribunal against an order passed by Sebi in June 2023. In the order, the regulator levied a fine of Rs 7 lakh on the company. Setting aside the Sebi's order, a bench consisting of Justice Tarun Agarwala and Presiding Officer Meera Swarup, said the regulator has not considered the evidence properly.

"To hold a simple one-way trade as manipulative when it is not a circular or reversal trade and in the absence of any shred of evidence of mutual arrangement with a motive to manipulate the market, the impugned order cannot be sustained and is quashed," the tribunal said in its 33-page order on Wednesday.

Muthoot Microfin fixes ₹277-291 price band for ₹960 crore IPO

PTI / Mumbai

Muthoot Microfin, the microlending arm of the Muthoot Pappachan Group, on Wednesday fixed the price band at Rs 277-291 for its Rs 960 crore initial public offering which is opening next Monday.

The promoters of the fifth largest microlender with Rs 10,800 crore of loan book said that as much as Rs 760 crore of the Rs 960 crore issue will be the primary share sale and the remaining Rs 200 crore will be through the offer for sale (OFS) route.

External investor Greater Pacific Capital, which owns 19.06 per cent of the company, will sell 2.06 per cent of its holding for Rs 50 crore through the OFS.

The promoter family will also dilute its stake through the OFS route.

Muthoot Pappachan Group is a diversified group with interest in gold loan, credit through NBFC arm, real estate, education and hospitality among others. This will be their second public issue after Muthoot Capital, which is a two-wheeler lending



Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC).

Muthoot Pappachan group chairman Thomas John Muthoot told PTI that post-issue, the shareholding in the holding company Muthoot Fincorp will come down to 50.5 per cent from 59 per cent, while that of the members of the promoter family will be halved to 5 per cent. The company began operations in 2011 and has two external investors.

One of the investors, Creation Capital, entered the firm in 2016 with Rs 50 crore and doubled down with a similar quantum in 2017. It further infused Rs 31 crore in 2018 when Muthoot promoters pumped in Rs 220 crore through a rights issue.

Mahindra & Mahindra to acquire 60% stake in Emergent Solren for ₹2.88 bn

INFORMIST / Mumbai

Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd has approved the acquisition of 5.86 mln shares, comprising a 60% stake in Emergent Solren Pvt Ltd, from Mahindra Holdings Ltd for 2.88 bln rupees, the company said in an exchange filing. The transaction is expected to be completed by Dec 31.

Post the transaction, Emergent Solren will cease to be a subsidiary of Mahindra Holdings, and will become a direct subsidiary of M&M.

Emergent Solren is engaged in the business of developing and operating renewable solar projects with a capacity of 360 megawatt peak.

In 2022, M&M's two subsidiaries, Mahindra Holdings and Mahindra Susten Pvt Ltd, and Ontario Teachers Pension Plan Board's arm, 2452991 Ontario Ltd, entered into an agreement for sale of operational as-



sets pertaining to 360 MW peak portfolio by Mahindra Susten to a new company, i.e. Emergent Solren, which would later be sold to Infrastructure Investment Trust.

The InvIT, proposed to be formed by Mahindra Susten and 2452991 Ontario, would comprise renewable power assets seeded by Mahindra Susten with an operational capacity of around 1.54 GW peak. Mahindra Susten is Mahindra Group's renewable energy platform, which includes a photovoltaic infrastructure business and an independent power producer business.

M&M 2-wheeler arm to get ₹875 cr investment from parent, others

Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd said that it, along with existing shareholders and new investors, would invest 8.75 bln rupees in its two-wheeler subsidiary Classic Legends Pvt Ltd, according to an exchange filing.

Of the proposed amount, Mahindra & Mahindra will invest 5.25 bln rupees and the rest of the investment would be from existing shareholders and new investors. Classic Legends will use the investment to build a strong business that leverages the strengths of Mahindra & Mahindra and its partners, the filing said.

CPL owns brands like Jawa, Yezdi and BSA.

HCCB announces ₹3,000 cr investment in Gujarat

PTI / New Delhi

Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages (HCCB) Ltd – the bottling arm of beverage major Coca Cola in India – on Wednesday said it is planning to invest Rs 3,000 crore in Gujarat to set up a state-of-the-art facility to manufacture juice and aerated beverages in Rajkot, which is projected to commence operations in 2026.

"The investment is expected to create a considerable industrial footprint, fostering substantial economic and social growth in the region," HCCB said in a statement.

"The Government of Gujarat, in turn, has assured comprehensive support to facilitate HCCB in obtaining all necessary permissions, registrations, approvals, and clearances, in a time-bound manner," said an HCCB statement.

HCCB already operates facilities at Goblej in Kheda district



and Sanand in Ahmedabad district.

Now, HCCB's total employee strength in the state will more than double to 1,500.

"We foresee this project as a catalyst for regional development, bringing in new opportunities for local talent and reinforcing our commitment to Gujarat's economic and social progress," said an HCCB official.

HCCB operates 16 factories across India, where it manufactures 60 products under seven categories. For the financial year ended March 31, 2023, HCCB reported a revenue of Rs 12,735.12 crore from its operations.

Moody's affirms Reliance Ind's Baa2 ratings; outlook stable

INFORMIST / Mumbai

Reliance Industries Ltd's consumer businesses of retail and telecom will support EBITDA growth over the next two years even as earnings from oil and gas business are likely to remain flat, Moody's Investors Service said as it affirmed the company's Baa2 rating. Moody's has also maintained a stable outlook owing to the expectation that the company's earnings will continue to grow across most of its business segments, such that consolidated credit metrics will remain solidly positioned for its ratings over the next 12-18 months. "The affirmation of RIL's Baa2 ratings reflects the company's large scale and leading market position across its diverse businesses as well as management's strong execution track record," says Sweta Patodia, Moody's Assistant Vice President and Analyst.

Seven Officers of W Rly bag 'Ati Vishisht Rail Seva Puraskar', 2023

Every year, Indian Railways felicitates around 100 of its employees who have excelled and have shown



exemplary, outstanding, meritorious and commendable performance in various categories. These officers/staff are chosen from the pool of 1.2 million railway employees across Indian Railways. These Awards till last year was termed as the National Railways Award or the Minister of Railways (MR) Award. However, this year onwards the awards have been renamed as 'Ati Vishisht Rail Seva Puraskar'. The Award which will be presented by Ashwini Vaishnav - Minister of Railways, includes presentation of a Silver Medal and Merit Certificate to the awardees. This year the 68th National Railway Week Function to present these



Awards & shields will be held at Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi on December 15, 2023. This year Western Railway's seven officers/staff will be receiving the coveted 'Ati Vishisht Rail Seva Puraskar' for their meritorious performance during the year 2022-23. Amongst these are (1) Yogesh Kumar – Dy. Chief Engineer (2) Anant Kumar – Dy. Chief Engineer (3) Dr. Zenia Gupta - Sr. Divisional Operations Manager (4) Priyansh Agrawal - Divisional Engineer (5) Menaka D Pandian – Sr. Section Officer (6) Binay Kumar Jha – Station Superintendent (Operating) and (7) Sanju Pasi – Commercial Superintendent.



CORPORATE GALLERY

C&MD, NFL chairs a session in the FAI Annual Seminar



U. Saravanan, C&MD, NFL chaired the 5th session of the Fertilizers Association of India (FAI) Annual Seminar 2023 held in New Delhi on December 9, 2023. The session was dedicated to Fertilizer Marketing Innovations covering the topics like Digital Marketing, Specialty Fertilizers, Fertilizer Logistics, use of Drones in Agriculture and PMKSKs. The audience lauded the session and found it knowledgeable and industry oriented.

Sanjay Mehrotra takes charge as Director (Finance) of GRID-INDIA



Sanjay Mehrotra has assumed charge as Director (Finance) of Grid Controller of India Limited (GRID-INDIA) formerly POSOCO w.e.f. December 7, 2023 at New Delhi. Prior to joining GRID-INDIA, he served as Executive Director (Finance) at Power Finance Corporation Ltd. Sanjay Mehrotra

is a seasoned professional, holding qualifications as a Cost Accountant and a Master's degree in Commerce. With an illustrious career spanning more than 32 years, he has amassed extensive expertise in the power sector. His rich professional background includes significant roles at organizations such as Power Finance Corporation Ltd., NHPC Ltd., Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd. and REC Ltd. In his previous roles, Mehrotra has acquired substantial expertise in project financing and infrastructure development. His diverse skill set includes the formulation and execution of consultancy assignments, fund mobilization from both domestic and international markets, banking and treasury management, as well as asset liability management and stressed asset resolution. As Director (Finance) of GRID-INDIA, Mehrotra will be a member of the Board of Directors and responsible for the overall finance and accounts function of the organization while evolving and formulating finance policies. As Director (Finance) of GRID-INDIA, Shri Mehrotra will be a member of the Board of Directors and responsible for the overall finance and accounts function of the organization while evolving and formulating finance policies.

Vivek Kumar Dewangan, CMD, REC Limited, honoured with 'Most Sustainable Maharatna Leader' Award at World Sustainability Congress

In recognition of his remarkable leadership in Sustainability initiatives, Vivek Kumar Dewangan, CMD, REC Limited, was conferred with the 'Most Sustainable Maharatna Leader' award at the World Sustainability Congress held in Mauritius on December 12, 2023. The award was received on behalf of Vivek Kumar Dewangan, Executive Director Mrs. Taruna Gupta and Chief General Manager R Anbalagan received the award. The award is conferred on individuals & organizations who are doing exemplary work and based on track record of their achievements. The award was presented by Mr. Doumeraj Jahajeeah, Director Technical Services, Ministry of Energy & Public Utilities, Mauritius and Mr. Jabir Udhin, Head, Governance, Economic Development Board, Mauritius. In response to this esteemed recognition, Vivek Kumar Dewangan conveyed his heartfelt appreciation and said, "It is an absolute moment of pride and honour to receive such an esteemed award on a global platform. I believe it is a recognition of the teamwork at REC. Therefore, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to all the members of REC for this achievement. REC stays strong in its commitment to positively impact the environment and be sustainable towards the environment and society. I congratulate you all." Under the discerning leadership of Dewangan, REC has been conferred with the Maharatna status and also diversified into the non-power infrastructure & logistics sector and is poised to play a key role in the power sector's transformational journey in the country. Dewangan had also been conferred with the prestigious 'The Most Promising Business Leaders of Asia' award at the Economic Times Asian Business Leaders Conclave 2022-23 in March 2023.



Adani Electricity Employees volunteer for CSR projects



Adani Electricity employees voluntarily participated in CSR project activities in Mumbai, carried out by Adani Foundation to show their gratitude for sustenance of the society. Adani Foundation, in association with Adani Electricity, drives two landmark projects for underprivileged communities, 'Utthan' learning programme for BMC school students and 'Swabhimaan' a skilling programme to promote sustainable livelihood development for women in lesser privileged areas in Mumbai. Adani Electricity's leadership teams actively participate in community engagement by dedicating time alongside beneficiaries of the Utthan and Swabhimaan CSR projects. Volunteering in these CSR projects provides an excellent perspective into the needs and challenges of Consumers served by Adani Electricity. The volunteers participated in 'Mothers Meet' designed to boost attendance and retention of students, 'Reading Clubs' focused on boosting foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) and also interacted with beneficiaries, teachers and parents impacted by the Utthan CSR activities in BMC schools. Similarly, Volunteers interacted with Swabhimaan program beneficiaries to discuss market access enablers and resources to further the sustainable livelihood development for women being skilled in several crafts, including jewellery making, masala creation, and home decoration. Adani Electricity Mumbai spokesperson said, "We are extremely proud of our employees who are voluntarily participating in CSR projects. At Adani Electricity leadership team have a responsibility to not only achieve business goals but also to make a positive impact on society and the environment. It is, most importantly, an excellent platform for leadership teams to understand the needs and challenges of the communities we serve." Adani Foundation spokesperson said, "Integrated approach of wholehearted participation of employees is always appreciable, their wilful participation in CSR projects boosts the motivation of beneficiaries, stakeholders and the foundation teams." Project "Utthan" empowers students by enhancing their learning abilities and fostering better academic success. This ambitious initiative involves adopting government primary schools, providing individualized support for high-potential learners (Priya Vidyarthi), tackling dropout rates, and fostering collaboration to upgrade teachers' skills. Through engaging teachers and parents, the project bolsters foundational literacy and numeracy skills among students. Together, under the umbrella of "Utthan," over 12,000 children across 60 Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) schools have been impacted. In Mumbai and Dahanu, the "Swabhimaan" project is empowering women from underprivileged communities. This project aims to elevate the lives of women by equipping them with valuable skills, financial literacy, and access to microloans. Ultimately, "Swabhimaan" strives to cultivate self-sufficiency and economic empowerment within these women, enabling them to actively contribute to the prosperity of their families and communities. The project has been implemented in two phases, the first focusing on honing skills and the second on financial knowledge and micro-credit. Currently, approximately 4,000 women are actively involved in "Swabhimaan" within the Adani Electricity distribution area.

whispersinthecorridors

Dr Suresh Mehrotra



» Why did Shivraj Singh go?

The political observers believe that Shivraj Singh did go as Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister after he tried to project himself as more popular than PM Narendra Modi in the state. His over publicity also led to his change.



» JNPT Chairman to return parent cadre

Sanjay Sethi, Chairman of the Jawaharlal Nehru Post Trust, is returning to the parent cadre Maharashtra early next year after completion of his five year term. He is a 1992 batch IAS officer of Maharashtra cadre.



» Govt servants not allowed awards with a monetary component

The Center has asked all ministries and departments to enforce a 23-year-old rule that remained ignored, prohibiting government servants from accepting awards with a monetary component from private organizations. According to an office memorandum from the Union Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances, and Pensions, government staff can accept awards only with approval from the secretaries of their respective ministry or department.

» Tenure of Ms Chandrani Gupta as CVO, BBJ extended

The deputation tenure of Ms Chandrani Gupta working as CVO, The Braithwaite, Burn & Jessop Construction Company Limited (BBJ), Kolkata, has been extended upto December 15, 2025. She is a 2007 batch IES officer.

» ECI revokes suspension of DGP, Telangana

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has revoked the suspension of Director General of Police (DGP) Anjani Kumar, who was suspended over the violation of the model code of conduct by meeting Congress leader (now chief minister) Revanth Reddy on December 3, when the counting votes for the assembly poll were in progress. Photos of Kumar with Reddy triggered a storm on social media and raised questions about potential MCC violations.

» A T Mishra is also DDGF(C), Regional Office, Ranchi

A T Mishra, Deputy Director General (Central), Regional Office, MoEFCC, Bhubaneswar, has been assigned the additional charge of DDGF(C), Regional Office, Ranchi, MoEFCC. He is a 1994 batch IFOs officer of Jharkhand cadre.

» Soma Das is also Regional Director, FSI, Shimla

Mrs. Soma Das, Regional Director, FSI, Kolkata has been assigned the additional charge of Regional Director, FSI, Shimla. She is a 2002 batch IFOs officer of Chhattisgarh cadre.

OUR PREDICTION CAME TRUE

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Dy Chief Ministers appointed in three states in last three days

(WE SAID THIS ON DECEMBER 5, 2023)

Two Dy Chief Ministers likely ?

Atleast one or two Dy Chief Ministers are likely to be appointed in the three BJP ruled states. One can wait and watch.

(WE SAID THIS ON DECEMBER 8, 2023)

Will top BJP leaders get important positions in three States?

The Union Ministers and Members of Lok Sabha, who have resigned, will get important assignments in the three States: Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. The posts include State Unit Party President, Speaker and Deputy Chief Minister.



» Mohanji is happy with Mohanji

Appointment of Mohan Yadav as new Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh has pleased RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat. Earlier the darling of RSS was former CM Shivraj Singh.



» New CAT office, Mumbai bench inaugurated

The new office premises of Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT), Mumbai Bench at Nishtha Bhawan, Mumbai was inaugurated by Chief Justice of India Dr D Y Chandrachud recently. The new office premises of the Bench is equipped with all the facilities to cater to the needs of all the stakeholders in the best possible ways.

» Two posts advertised by RGNAU

The Rajiv Gandhi National Aviation University (RGNAU) Fursatganj, Amethi, Uttar Pradesh has invited applications for the posts of Consultant Academic Affairs and Consultant Quality Assurance, Placement and Collaboration on contract basis. The applications must reach latest by December 29, 2023.

» Six IPS officers shifted in Telangana

Six IPS officers have been shifted in Telangana. Kothakota Sreenivasa Reddy has been appointed as Commissioner of Police, Hyderabad City, while Sandeep Shandilya is posted as Director, Telangana State Anti Narcotics Bureau, Hyderabad and Avinash Mohanty is shifted as Commissioner of Police, Cyderabad. Similarly, G Sudheer Babu is shifted as Commissioner of Police, Rachakonda. Besides, Devendra Singh Chauhan and M Stephen Raveendra have been directed to report to the Office of DGP, Telangana, Hyderabad on transfer.

» Vivekanand Dwivedi appointed JGM (OP&BD), DFCCIL

Vivekanand Dwivedi, Deputy Chief Operations Manager (Dy.COM), Planning, Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR), has been selected for deputation to Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited (DFCCIL) as Joint General Manager (OP&BD) at Corporate Office for a period of three years. He is an Indian Railway Traffic Service (IRTS) officer.

— Correctness of this content is the responsibility of the author.
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Civil Defence Day Observed On Western Railway

The Civil Defence Unit of Western Railway celebrated the All India Civil Defence Day on Wednesday, 13th December, 2023 at the Western Railway Sports Ground, Malahaxmi. Ashok Kumar Misra – General Manager of Western Railway presided over the function and unfurled the Civil Defence flag on the occasion. He also addressed the large gathering of railway officials, civil defence volunteers, staff and their families present at the event. He exhorted the Civil Defence Volunteers to continue to contribute substantially in community capacity building & assisting people in times of crisis. According to a press release issued by Sumit Thakur – Chief Public Relations Officer of Western Railway, the Civil Defence Volunteers from all the 6 divisions of WR i.e Mumbai, Vadodara, Ahmedabad, Bhavnagar, Rajkot and Ratlam participated in the event. The volunteers displayed their preparedness towards safeguarding civilian life and property in times of emergencies and calamities. A spectacular show consisting of a ceremonial parade by 7 contingents and demonstrations of their skills and techniques of rescue & relief used during emergencies arising out of air strikes, bomb blasts etc. in public domains was conducted. GM Misra inaugurated the exhibition showcasing the Civil Defence activities and details of volunteer works carried out by the organization, as well as various tools & equipment were on display. Ujjwal, Deputy General Manager (G) & Controller of Civil Defence, Western Railway conducted the event.





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CHANDIGARH: The Punjab and Haryana High Court has directed the Chandigarh Police to provide protection for a week to a businessman and his family after he filed a plea alleging threats from BJP MP Kirron Kher and her aide. The plea by Chaitnya Aggarwal through advocate Anmol Rattan

Sidhu submitted the businessman, his wife Ruchika Aggarwal and their two minor daughters were apprehending a threat to their lives from the Chandigarh MP. The petitioner alleged there were financial issues between him and the respondents which might be the reason for such apprehension.



RIPPLES

SC J&K verdict: India rejects OIC's comments

NEW DELHI: India on Wednesday strongly rejected the comments by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) expressing concern over the Supreme Court's verdict upholding the 2019 revocation of Article 370 of the Constitution that gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir. External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said the OIC's action at the behest of a "serial violator of human rights and an unrepentant promoter of cross border terrorism" makes its action even more questionable. Though Bagchi did not name any country, it was clear that the reference was towards Pakistan. "India rejects the statement issued by the General Secretariat of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on a judgement of the Indian Supreme Court. It is both ill informed and ill intended," Bagchi said. "That OIC does so at the behest of a serial violator of human rights and an unrepentant promoter of cross border terrorism makes its action even more questionable. Such statements only undermine OIC's credibility," he said.

Govt OKs ₹2,800cr rockets for Pinaka weapon system

NEW DELHI: In a major boost for the Indian Army, the Defence Ministry has approved a ₹2,800 crore proposal to buy around 6,400 rockets for Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launcher systems. The Defence Ministry's Defence Acquisition Council's recent meeting had cleared the proposal for the acquisition of two types of these rockets, known as Area Denial Munition Type 2 and Type-3, defence sources told ANI. The rockets would be procured by the Indian Army from indigenous sources only and two main contenders include the Economic Explosives Limited of Solar Industries and the Munitions India Limited — one of the ammunition-producing companies created by the corporatisation of the erstwhile Ordnance Factories.

Kharge to appoint C'garh CLP leader

RAIPUR: All the new 35 Congress MLAs in Chhattisgarh unanimously agreed party's national president Mallikarjun Kharge will appoint the leader of Congress Legislature Party for the state assembly. All 35 Congress MLAs reached consensus after a meeting held on Wednesday in presence of Chhattisgarh Congress in-charge Kumari Selja and AICC observer for Chhattisgarh and National Treasurer Ajay Maken, sources said. Ajay Maken said all MLAs had passed a resolution authorising the AICC President to appoint the CLP leader for Chhattisgarh House.

—Avdesh Mallick

India in favour of Gaza ceasefire

NEW DELHI: India voted in favour of a UN General Assembly resolution demanding immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza, a shift in New Delhi's stance about two months after it abstained on a text that had called for truce in the Israel-Hamas conflict. "India has voted in favour of the resolution just adopted by the General Assembly," India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ruchira Kamboj said after the vote. "We welcome the fact the international community has been able to find a common ground to address the multiple challenges facing the region right now," she said.

NO CLARITY ON MOTIVE OR AGENDA, IF ANY

Neelam Verma is Haryana civil services aspirant



RAJESH MOUDGIL / CHANDIGARH

One of the six accused, **Neelam Verma**, who hails from Haryana is the lone woman involved in the security breach. She was one of the two, the other being Amol Shinde, who threw smoke canisters outside Parliament. According to information, Neelam, 37, is a native of village Ghaso Khurd, Jind, who comes from a farming family. Her father, Kohar Singh, has small land holdings and has a dairy business and runs a sweets shop (*halwai*) while her two brothers work as milkmen. According to reports, Neelam, who has masters' de-

grees, was upset over her being unemployed despite being "highly qualified" and has appeared in several tests, including the state teachers' exams, but had not got any suitable job. Villagers said Neelam was an educated woman who always spoke against injustice and took part in protests by farmers and by wrestlers. Neelam's mother Saraswati Devi said, "I don't know how she took this step. Maybe she did this to get a job. I spoke to her in morning. She asked me to take my medicines regularly. We were unaware she was in Delhi." Saying she was not associated with any political party, her younger brother **RamNi-**

was said, "Neelam is preparing for civil services, and has been staying at a PG in Hisar for 5 months. We don't know when she reached Delhi." He said, "Neelam visited home two days. I was informed by friends there was news about Neelam on TV and she was detained by police. Agreeing that she was active in farmers' and wrestlers' protests, he said the family had always asked her to focus on studies and exams and not on protests. Meanwhile, unconfirmed reports said the accused were in touch with each other on social media platforms and Instagram. Four of them stayed at the house of Vicky Sharma at Sector 7, Gurgaon, on Tuesday. Sources said Sharma, who hails from Hisar, has been detained.

LOK SABHA SECURITY BREACH

Hang my son if guilty, says Karnataka techie's father

BENGALURU: "What my son did was wrong and he should be punished if found guilty," said **Devraj Gowda**, father of D Manoranjan who jumped into the LS chamber and opened canisters that emitted a yellow-coloured smoke. "This is wrong, nobody should do anything like that. If my son has done anything good, of course, I support him.

But if he has done something wrong, I strongly condemn it. Let him be hanged if he has done something wrong for the society," ANI quoted him. Gowda said he was surprised to see his son's name being mentioned for his role in the security breach in the Lok Sabha. He said he is a supporter

of BJP MP Pratap Simha and comes from the farming community. "I gave my son a good education. He is a good boy. He must have fallen into bad company," he said. Manoranjan D.35, is a Mysuru resident and BE in Computer Science from Vivekanand University, Bengaluru. Manoranjan, along

with Sagar Sharma, entered Parliament on a visitor's pass issued in the name of Pratap Simha. He was unavailable for comment, but the Congress has demanded that his membership of the House be suspended. Sinha had won from Mysore with 43.46% votes in 2014 and raised his vote share to 52.27% in 2019 LS poll. The 42-year-old is a former journalist and is known for a series of columns. He wrote a biography of PM Modi in 2007. —**Shankar Raj**

Sagar left UP home for protest in Delhi: Family

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / LUCKNOW

Family members of Sagar Sharma, one of the two men who jumped into the Lok Sabha, said he left home in UP's Lucknow two days ago to take part in a "protest" in Delhi. The family said they were unaware of his involvement in the Parliament security breach. Sharma, 28, a resident of Ramnagar under Manak Nagar police station limits in Lucknow, police said. Rani Sharma, Sharma's mother, said, "Sagar left home two days back. He said that he was travelling to Delhi with friends for some work. I spoke to him over phone yesterday. We have called Sagar's father Roshan Lal, a carpenter, to ask about his son." SHO of Manak Nagar police station Shiv Mangal Singh said. According to police, the family hails from Unnao district of UP. Po-

lice quoting family said Sharma had returned to Lucknow from Bengaluru recently. Sharma's minor sister said, "I heard my brother telling my mother that he was going to Delhi to attend a protest a few days ago. My brother would drive an e-rickshaw. He earlier used to work in Bengaluru," the sister added. Singh, SHO of Manak Nagar police station, said, "Sagar Sharma, along with his sister and parents, lived in a rented house in Ramnagar area. The family has been living in the rented house for over a decade. Sharma would drive an e-rickshaw." "The family members have denied having any knowledge of his involvement in the Lok Sabha incident. We are trying to gather information from them," he added. A police team was seen at Sharma's residence speaking to his family members.

'2 were sitting quietly, disrupted House proceedings suddenly'

NEW DELHI: Visitors at the LS public gallery said the two protesters were sitting quietly and disrupted the proceedings "all of a sudden". An eyewitness said while some MPs were chasing the protesters, a smoke canister was thrown by another. "The protesters were not chanting any slogans while being seated at public gallery and jumped into the Lok Sabha all of a sudden," the eyewitness said. "The moment the protesters jumped into the House's chamber, the MPs tried chasing them. The protesters also threw a smoke canister there. During the incident, we were evacuated as per security instructions," he said. They said 30-40 visitors were seated at the gallery during the breach. "It was shocking to see it happening, despite five layers of security," another said. Eyewitnesses outside Parliament claimed despite having passes, they were not allowed inside. Narayan Swami, one of the eyewitnesses, claimed 23 of them had gathered outside Parliament after acquiring passes to visit the gallery of the House, but they were denied entry. —**PTI**

Scribes in canister snatching match

RUDDHI PHADKE / New Delhi

Television journalists were seen fighting with each other to get hold of a smoke canister lying on the ground soon after Delhi Police detained protestors who threw them inside and outside Parliament. A video of the incident of journalists trying to snatch the canister away from each other is doing the rounds on social media. In the video, the journalists are seen pushing each other to get hold of the smoke canister lying on the ground. Even as one of the journalist is holding the smoke canister and trying to speak about the breach in the Parliament's security that was reported earlier today, two others, including a lady, were seen trying to snatch the canister and the mike that the former was holding. The journalists ended up making a laughing stock of themselves with bystanders



making fun of the entire sequence of events. To add to their embarrassment, the entire incident was seen on live TV. "We used to fight like this in birthday parties during cake distribution, but we were kids and these are adults... allegedly," one person said on X. "Indian media is fighting for smoke canisters," wrote another on the microblogging site. One post on X raised a pertinent point: "Shouldn't the canister be secured as EVIDENCE?? shouldn't it be used for Forensic analysis!?"



Union Home Minister Amit Shah pays floral tribute to the fallen jawans who lost their lives in the 2001 Parliament attack on the 22nd anniversary in New Delhi on Wednesday. Vice President Jagdeep Thakur and Lok Speaker Om Birla are also seen

Oppn MPs seek answers from Shah Security in new Parliament building inadequate, say lawmakers

PTI / NEW DELHI

Several opposition MPs on Wednesday demanded an explanation from Home Minister Amit Shah after two visitors jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber from the visitors' gallery and opened canisters that emitted coloured smoke, triggering panic among the members. Several opposition MPs also alleged that security arrangements in the new Parliament building is not sufficient and needs to be addressed immediately. TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee said the home minister should resign as he failed to ensure the safety of Parliament. "Amit Shah should resign immediately. There is no security planning. The gallery is right above us..." he said. "If Parliament security can be breached this way, how can the country be secure?" he asked. He said the incident could have been more serious and questioned the Union Home Ministry's functioning. "It could have been a repeat of the 2001 incident. What is the intelligence department of the home ministry doing? Nothing. The home minister is giving big speeches and cannot even maintain security in Parliament," Banerjee said. Hanuman Beniwal, among the MPs who caught the intruders, said it should be investigated who endorsed the visitors' passes for them. "Over 150 MPs were present during the Zero Hour ... They (intruders) tried to come to the speaker's chair. They had something in their shoes. They said, 'We are protesting, we do not have any (other)



purpose"...," he said. "They thought they will become heroes ... we taught them a lesson," the MP from Rajasthan said. Congress MP Shashi Tharoor said the incident raises questions on security, adding they have learnt that a ruling party MP endorsed the intruders' passes. "It raises a number of questions. They were brought in by a ruling party MP, so we need to find out more details. Despite existing security precautions, they were able to smuggle in smoke pistols that were used to fire yellow smoke, which created panic among some members," he said, adding, "People feel the arrangements in new Parliament building for security are not satisfactory than the old Parliament building. We have to see what can be done to modify those urgently." MP NK Premchandran, meanwhile, said the security lapse was very serious as there was a threat by Sikhs for Justice chief Gurbatwant Singh Pannun to attack Parliament. "It is an attack on Indian democracy. It is a great lapse on part of the home ministry. Two weeks ago, a threat was there from Khalistani Pannun. Security men say they had ratified the threat and said 'we are on alert'. It is unfortunate on the same day (as the 2001 attack) this incident happened ... It is a great security lapse," the

MP from Kerala said. Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi said she raised concerns over security during the last session as well but those were ignored. Congress leader Jairam Ramesh too demanded answers from the government and a statement from Home Minister Amit Shah in both houses of Parliament, saying does the incident "not prove that necessary precautions were not taken". "INDIA parties walked out of the Rajya Sabha this afternoon on the issue of the extraordinary events in the Lok Sabha today and the refusal of the Home Minister to make a statement on the matter, especially after such a huge breach of security on the very same day Parliament was attacked 22 years ago," Jairam said in a post on X. Congress MP Gurjeet Singh Auja, who caught hold of the two men said, "...he had something in his hand which was emitting yellow-coloured smoke. I snatched it away and continued throwing it outside...This is a

Today we are learning there are more than 130 vacancies of security officer in Parliament. Mahua Moitra was expelled for sharing Parliament login with an outsider, but today three MPs helped these people (accused) get passes. We have sought details of MPs who got them passes. Is this not a security lapse? This is an issue of national security and we want to see what action is taken against those who helped these people get visitor passes... We will meet at (Congress chief Mallikarjun) Kharge ji's residence and will discuss the matter. —**SUDIP BANDYOPADHYAY, Trinamool MP**

major security breach..." It was a serious security, said the former officer on special duty of the Parliament Security V Purushotham Rao said, adding, this kind of incident could have been avoided had the recommendations of a committee headed by then Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha, appointed after the 2001 Parliament attack incident, been implemented. Rao said he shot one of the five assailants who attacked Parliament in 2001 and claimed that one of the recommendations made by the committee was to install a bulletproof glass in the visitors gallery of Parliament. "The standard operating procedures (SOP) have not been followed. I am not supposed to criticise anybody, but this is a lapse. This is a serious lapse. The SOP the standard operating procedures have not been followed correctly," he said.

Sharma to be sworn in as Raj CM tomorrow

JAIPUR: Bhajan Lal Sharma, the newly elected leader of the BJP legislative party in Rajasthan, will be sworn in as the 14th Chief Minister on December 15 in a grand oath-taking ceremony at the historic Albert Hall in Jaipur. His deputies Diya Kumari and Prem Chand Bairava will also take oath. Party president CP Joshi said PM Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president JP Nadda will also attend the ceremony. Invitations are being sent to chief ministers and deputy CMs of BJP-ruled states to attend the grand ceremony. The names for the council of ministers are yet to be finalised. Sources said 10-15 ministers may be sworn in with the CM and deputy CMs. There can be 30 ministers, so now 27 seats are available in the Council of Ministers of the State and lobbying for the posts has already started. "It is expected this time, the council of ministers will have young and fresh faces as a new and a comparatively young CM is taking over as the head of the state," said a party leader. —**Manish Godha**

Plans afoot to form cabinet in MP Mohan Yadav sworn in as Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / BHOPAL

The exercise to form the cabinet has begun after Mohan Yadav was sworn in as Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday. The party organisation has begun to select the names for ministerial berth for the cabinet. The central leadership of the party in Delhi has also begun to mull over the names of probable ministerial candidates. According to sources, the central leadership will make a formula which will be



implemented in three states. Some new faces will be inducted into the ministry along with some senior leaders. A few senior leaders may be kept out of the ministry this time. The ministers, who may be kept out, will be decided by the central leadership.

The ministry will be expanded keeping in mind the Lok Sabha election. Legislators will be inducted into the ministry on the basis of caste equations. They said for formation of ministry, focus will be on caste equations. A few supporters of Jyotiraditya Scindia and former ministers may be deprived of a cabinet berth. Among the supporters of Scindia, only Praduman Singh Tomar, Manoj Choudhary and Tulsiram Silawat may be inducted.

Sai takes oath as C'garh CM Vishnu Deo is first tribal Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh

AVDRESH MALLICK / RAIPUR

Vishnu Deo Sai, former Union minister of state for steel, labour, and employment, was on Wednesday sworn in as the first tribal chief Minister of Chhattisgarh. Former MP Arun Sao and Vijay Sharma also took oath as deputy CMs at Raipur's Science College ground. The historic ceremony, attended by PM Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and other BJP chief ministers, was held at 4 pm. Gover-



nor Biswabhusan Harichandan administered the oath. Political analysts noted that the BJP's appointment of two Deputy CMs aimed to bal-

ance the caste equation and align with its Hindutva agenda. Former CM Bhupesh Baghel and ex-dy CM TS Singh Deo shared the stage.

NEW DELHI: Congress MP Karti Chidambaram has not deposited before ED for questioning in a money laundering probe linked to alleged irregularities in the issuance of visas to 263 Chinese nationals in

2011 and dubbed the case "most bogus". The 52-year-old legislator from Sivaganga in Tamil Nadu was summoned by the agency to appear this week at its office here.



Assam plans crash course for Foreigners' Tribunals judges

IAN S / Guwahati

The Assam government has planned to conduct a special course for judges of the Foreigners' Tribunals (FT) in the state after an affidavit was filed before the Guwahati High Court by the state Home Department.

The affidavit said that in about 85 per cent of cases that are referred to FTs, the petitioners were declared citizens later.

An FT is a quasi-judicial body, and a member of the Tribunal has a designation similar to that of a judge.

The Tribunal hears the cases of suspected illegal immigrants and passes orders about their citizenship.



A senior state government official said: "Following the High Court order, which said that FT orders were approved without adequate consideration and justification, the matter was discussed internally. "We believe that the court's identified

predicament may be resolved with the aid of a crash course. Because the FT members are also senior individuals, the department official will soon meet with the law university staff to finalise a schedule for the course and the length of the unique course."

The high court bench voiced concern that individuals may have been labelled as foreigners in several instances without providing justification or doing a thorough analysis of the documentation in existence.

The court also stated that it was possible for foreigners to have been mistakenly identified as Indians by the tribunals.

ODISHA CASH HAUL

I-T dept deploys ground scanning radar in Ranchi

PTI / Ranchi

The Income-Tax department has deployed a ground scanning radar machine at Congress MP Dhiraj Sahu's house in Ranchi as part of its ongoing searches against an Odisha-based distillery firm owned by the leader's family and linked entities in which it has made a record cash haul of Rs 351 crore, official sources said on Wednesday.

The device with a laptop screen on top was wheeled in at a location in the Jharkhand capital late Tuesday night as the tax department suspected presence of some items beneath the

ground surface.

The premise is the joint family house of Sahu and is being guarded by a contingent of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF).

The radar device was deployed to check beneath the surface, the sources told PTI.

I-T raids houses of ex-MLA of TMC Sohrab Ali

Income Tax officials on Wednesday raided nine places in the Asansol and Raniganj areas of West Bengal's Paschim Bardhaman district, including residences of former TMC MLA Sohrab Ali and iron scrap dealer Mohammad Imtiaz Ali.

Will take call on urgent listing of Mahua's plea: CJI

PTI / New Delhi

Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud on Wednesday assured the counsel for Trinamool Congress leader Mahua Moitra he will take a call on the request for urgent listing of her plea challenging her expulsion from the Lok Sabha even as her nemesis Nishikant Dubey, the BJP MP from Jharkhand whose complaint led to her ouster, approached the court seeking impleadment in the matter.

The TMC leader had moved the apex court on Monday against her expulsion.

"Since the entire genesis of the instant petition arises from the complaint dated October 15, 2023 made by the applicant (Dubey) herein, therefore, it is just and proper and is in the interest of justice that the applicant be impleaded as a necessary party," Dubey said in the application he filed in the top court.

JD (U) convenes national executive meet on Dec 29

DHEERAJ KUMAR / Patna

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar-led JD (U) will convene a meeting of the party's national executive in New Delhi on December 29 to discuss strategy for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Besides Nitish, senior party leaders and members of the national executive will attend the meeting, informed

JD (U) national general secretary and MLC Afaque Ahmed Khan.

The meet assumes significance as it will be held after INDIA's conclave in which major issues like seat sharing and fielding one common opposition candidate against a BJP candidate on maximum number of seats in the 2024 Lok Sabha election are likely to be discussed.

Kerala files suit against Centre's interference into state finances

ANI / New Delhi

The Kerala government has approached the Supreme Court against the Centre's alleged interference in the state's finances, and said that such interference hampers the state's ability to fulfil commitments in its annual budgets.

In a suit filed by the Kerala government, it stated that the state government deals with the executive power conferred on the plaintiff state under Article 293 of the Constitution of India to borrow on the security or guarantee of the consolidated fund of the state in alignment with the fiscal autonomy

of the plaintiff state as guaranteed and enshrined in the Constitution.

Kerala government said the Centre, through the Ministry of Finance (Public Finance-State Division) sought to interfere with the finances of the state by imposing a Net Borrowing Ceiling on the State.

3 held with 5.4K kg poppy husk, ₹1.25 cr drug money

RAJESH MOUDGIL / Chandigarh

The Punjab police on Wednesday claimed to have nabbed three drug traffickers and recovered 5,400 kg poppy husk, Rs 1.25 crore cash, two .32 pistols and six live cartridges, beside impounding the truck they were carrying the contraband in, from a rural area in Ludhiana district.

Acting on intel, a police

team set up a special checkpoint on Bharawal-Gorsian Makhan link road in Ludhiana and stopped the truck

PUNJAB DIARY carrying the consignment, which was to be delivered in Jagraon.

According to police, on checking the truck, as many as 270 plastic bags containing 20 kg each (total 5,400 kg) pop-

py husk, two indigenous pistols .32 bore along with 6 live cartridges and drug money worth 1.25 crore, fake number plates and police uniform were recovered.

The three persons in the truck were arrested and identified as Avtar Singh alias Tari, 40, Harjinder Singh alias Rindi, also 40, and Kamalpreet Singh, 25, trio residents of Moga.

3 dead, over 30 injured after overhead tank collapses in WB

ARITRA SINGHA / Kolkata

A woman and two men died while over 30 passengers were seriously injured after an overhead water tank collapsed during the busy hours at Burdwan station in West Bengal on Wednesday.

The police with help of GRP and RPF started rescue work and sent the injured people to Burdwan Medical College.

An eyewitness blamed 'lack of maintenance' for the calamity. "The condition of the tank was not properly checked. The incident happened on platform 2 when after a sudden noise passengers started running to save their lives," said the eyewitness. An injured passenger, whose daughter's leg got fractured, said that water used to run down from the tank and no action was taken.

Notorious gangster hurt in police encounter while trying to flee

RAJESH MOUDGIL / Chandigarh

Notorious gangster Karanjit Singh, alias Jassa Happaowal, an accused in at least six murder cases, including the sensational double-murder of a mother and daughter, suffered bullet injuries on his legs while attempting to escape from police custody in Zirakpur area, near here on Wednesday.

Director General of Police, Punjab, Gaurav Yadav, said that Happaowal is one of the main shooters of the gang run by foreign-based gangster Rajesh Kumar, alias Sonu Khatri, and terrorist Harvinder Rinda. He was arrested from the outskirts of Jalandhar on November 30. Subsequently, Jassa was brought on a production warrant in a Metro Plaza firing case

wherein he along with his two associates attempted to eliminate one person on August 21.

DGP Yadav said that following his disclosures, a police team was taking Happaowal to the area near Hotel Midtown in Peermuchalla, Zirakpur town, district Mohali, where he claimed to have concealed a Chinese pistol. "On reaching the location, he tried to escape," he said.

RASHMI SHARMA / Lucknow

The consecration of Lord Ram in the grand temple being constructed in Ayodhya will be performed by a team of 50 priests from Varanasi.

The team of priests will be led by Acharya Pandit Laxmikant Mathuranath Dixit, who hails from the family of Pandit Ganga Ram Bhatt. Bhatt had performed the coro-

nation of Chhatrapati Shivaji in the year 1674. According to Jai Dixit, son of Pandit Laxmikant Mathuranath, their family had come to Varanasi when Shivaji came here. Pandit Ganga Bhatt was mesmerized with the spirituality of this holy city and decided to stay here. Since then, the family of Pandit Bhatt has been living at Ram Ghat on the banks of river Ganga in



Varanasi. "We are 11th generation of Pandit Ganga Bhatt and it is a matter of pride for us to perform rituals of consecration at Ram Mandir," he

said.

According to him, Acharya Mathuranath will train the other members of the team before the consecration. While the training would be done in Varanasi, the priests coming from other parts of the country are to be given proper instructions in Ayodhya a day before the ceremony begins.

As per the plan, 50 priests

from Varanasi will perform all rituals during the consecration ceremony at Ayodhya on January 22. They would be assisted by 71 more Brahmins from the other parts of the country. The entire ceremony will be performed under the leadership of 88-year-old Acharya Pandit Laxmikant Mathuranath Dixit. The team from Varanasi will leave for Ayodhya on January 16.

FROM FRONT PAGE

HOLY SMOKE!

(Neelam (22), it is claimed, hails from Haryana; Amod hails from Navkund Zari village in Chakur taluka of Latur district.). They were both heard shouting 'tanashahi nahi chalegi' when they were nabbed and Neelam denied having any political agenda. It is ironical that the breach has happened at a time the entire security apparatus ought to have been firing on all cylinders; more so, in view of the threat from US-based Khalistani terrorist Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, to attack Parliament on or before December 13. Opposition leader Mallikarjun Kharge said in the Rajya Sabha that the security breach was a very serious matter. He demanded that the Home Minister should come to both the Houses and give a statement. Kharge noted that December 13 is observed as a Martyr's Day, when the House pays homage to the brave security personnel who thwarted the attack on Parliament 22 years ago.

"We hope that the government will take this very seriously and we demand a thorough investigation into the entire incident," Kharge said.

The Speaker immediately adjourned the House, but the Opposition forced him in the post-lunch session to first discuss the incident. At 4 PM, the Speaker shared concern of the members and said no visitors' passes will be issued until the security lapses are checked. Full body scanners are also being put in place. "The entire matter is being investigated thoroughly," the Speaker reassured the House. He also called a meeting of MPs later in the day to address their concerns.

Rajya Sabha chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar, however, refused to adjourn the House and continued with the ongoing discussion on a Bill for a tribal university. In protest, the Opposition boycotted the Rajya Sabha.

The Parliament security handed over to the intruders to Parliament House Police Station where they were being interrogated by Delhi Police and the Intelligence Bureau. Trinamool Congress reacted on X with sardonic comment: New India, new Parliament, and new legislations. But same old security breaches.

Gang of 6, all identified

Neelam Devi is a teacher and studying for competitive exams. According to Neelam's brother, she was involved in the controversial farmers' protest of 2020 against the

government's three farm laws, but is not linked to any political party. Manoranjan D, 35, is a resident of Mysore, Karnataka. He is a Bachelor of Engineering in Computer Science from Vivekanand University in Bengaluru.

A fountain pen can't...

Anyone who wants to visit the Parliament first puts a request in the name of the Member of Parliament from his constituency. In general, the MPs, in whose names the passes are issued, check their antecedents and vouch for their security clearance. The visitors are then made to clear stringent security checks by the guards and electronic machines deployed at the entrance of Parliament. Incidentally, a joint secretary is responsible for the entire security paraphernalia, including metal floor detectors.

Nations agree on shift...

"In a just, orderly and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade, to achieve net zero emission by 2050." It is the first time fossil fuels have been addressed in the climate talks. "Humanity has finally done what it's long, long overdue," said Wopke Hoekstra, the European commissioner for climate action. "Thirty years — 30 years! — which have been spent to arrive at the beginning of the end of fossil fuels."

The new deal is not legally binding and can't, on its own, force any country to act. Yet many of the politicians, environmentalists and business leaders gathered in Dubai hoped it would send a message to investors and policymakers that the shift away from fossil fuels was unstoppable. Over the next two years, each nation is supposed to submit a detailed, formal plan for how it intends to curb greenhouse gas emissions through 2035. Wednesday's agreement is meant to guide those plans. Many financial issues need to be sorted over the next two years at upcoming climate conferences in Azerbaijan and Brazil. Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav said India has already initiated a set of actions to restrict temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to preindustrial levels.

THE LATUR CONNECT

Shinde, who has a BA degree, belongs to the Scheduled Caste community, according to a Maharashtra police official. His parents work on a farm, while his two brothers are daily wage labourers. One of his brothers works in Panvel near Mumbai.

Shinde told his family that he is going to Delhi for the army recruitment drive. As he had gone for such recruitment drives in the past, his parents did not suspect anything was amiss.

The police are trying to ascertain how he reached Parliament and what was his connect with the other accused.

ED team in UAE to...

The ED crackdown on the illegal betting racket run online by Mahadev Book led to the unearthing of a Rs 15,000 crore money laundering scam. ED has already frozen assets to the tune of Rs 417 crore linked to the scam.

Forensic audits and analysis of the financial statement of angadiyas (cash courier) led the ED sleuths to alleged payments of Rs 508 crore to the then Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel by the promoters of Mahadev Book app.

The ED probe revealed the Uppal and Chandrakar duo operated a complex web of money laundering and hawala transactions on the Mahadev Book betting platform run from Dubai. The duo offered franchise to known associates on a 70-30 profit ratio, to enroll new users, create IDs, and launder money using a network of Benami bank accounts generating Rs 200 crore daily on every match. Last month the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) had banned Mahadev Book app and 22 other illegal betting apps and websites.

5 doctors, 4 dancers...

The police arrested four women, five doctors, a pharmacist, and a resort worker. The arrested individuals include Vishal Suresh Shirke (36 years old, Pasarni), a hotel owner; Krushna Prashadkol (31 years old, from Madhya Pradesh), a waiter; Ranjit Tatyasaheb Kale (43 years old), a doctor residing in Bazar Patangan Dahiawadi, Taluka Man, District Satara; Nilesh Narayan Sanmukh (39 years old), a doctor from Lakshmi Market, Miraj, Taluka Miraj, District Sangli; Praveen Shantaram Said (40 years old), a pharmacist from Aldia, Mahalunge Padle, Pune, Taluka Mulshi, District Pune; Manoj Vilas Sawant (40 years old), a doctor from Jaywant Nagar, Dahiawadi, Taluka Man, District Satara; Mahesh Bajirao Salunkhe (40 years old), a doctor from Malkapur Karad, Taluka Karad, District Satara; Rahul Baban Waghmode (31 years old), a doctor from Gondawale, Taluka Man, District Satara; and Hanumant Madhukar Khade (65 years old), a resident of Dahiawadi Taluka Man, District Satara.

Kerala Gov says CM has no shame; Vijayan calls Khan an opportunist

PTI / New Delhi/Kottayam (Kerala)

The ongoing row between the ruling Left in Kerala and the Governor heated up further on Wednesday with Arif Mohammed Khan alleging the CM and ministers have "no shame" and Pinarayi Vijayan hitting back by saying that Khan has been termed "opportunistic" by people in the past.

Earlier in the morning, Khan continued his scathing attack on Vijayan and his cabinet by

alleging that "they have absolutely no shame".

He was referring to the alleged criticism against him from the Left government ministers over nominations by him to the senate of certain universities in the state.

Khan, while speaking to reporters in Delhi in the morning, questioned the purpose behind the LDF government's outreach programme, Nava Kerala Sadas, by asking "is it for fun?"

Arbitration clause in unstamped agreements enforceable: SC

PTI / New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday ruled the arbitration clause in an unstamped or insufficiently stamped agreement between parties is enforceable as such a defect is curable and does not render the contract invalid.

The verdict by a seven-judge constitution bench, having significant and far reaching consequences for

corporate and other agreements containing arbitration clauses to resolve disputes between contracting parties, overruled a judgment delivered in April this year.

The court, in the case titled M/s N N Global Mercantile Pvt Ltd vs M/s Indo Unique Flame Ltd. And Ors, had by majority of 3:2 held that insufficiently stamped agreements having arbitration clauses are not enforceable.

Parl clears bill to repeal 76 outdated laws

PTI / New Delhi

Parliament on Wednesday passed a bill to repeal 76 redundant and obsolete laws with the government saying the move is part of its continuing efforts to improve the ease of living and doing business.

The Repealing and Amending Bill, 2023 was cleared in Rajya Sabha with a voice vote. Lok Sabha had cleared the legislation in July. In December last year, the government introduced the Bill to cull 65 old laws. But the bill could not come up for discussion in subsequent sessions.

CAF jawan killed in Naxal attack

PTI / Narayanpur

A Chhattisgarh Armed Force (CAF) jawan was killed and another one injured when Naxals attacked a team of security men and triggered a blast of an improvised explosive device (IED) in Narayanpur district of Chhattisgarh on Wednesday. The incident occurred in Aamdai Ghati iron ore mine area under Chhote Dongar police station.

IN SHORT >>

Govt staff to get salaries on Dec 22

PANAJI: On account of the festive season, the State government has announced to release the salaries of its employees and pensioners for the current month on December 22. According to an order issued by the Finance department, it is said that the disbursement of pay and allowances of Gazetted and Non Gazetted employees, pension of the pensioners and freedom fighters will be released on December 22.

Razing of shed near Cuncolim IDC stayed

MARGAO: In an interesting development ahead of the planned demolition of the shed erected by Ms Global Ipsaat Pvt. Ltd outside the Cuncolim Industrial estate, the Administrative Tribunal has stayed the demolition/removal of the shed in question scheduled on Thursday morning.

Trucks, JCBs attached in illegal hill cutting

MARGAO: In a raid conducted late Tuesday night, the Cuncolim police has attached 16 trucks and two JCB machines from Hodden area in Balli village on the allegations of illegal hill cutting.

Calls to promote govt schemes to students

PANAJI: The Social Welfare Department has requested the Directorates of Higher Education and Technical Education to issue circulars to all its institutes to encourage students in the reserved category to avail the Central and State-sponsored schemes.

2 minors nabbed in Caranzalem assault

PANAJI: Two minors, aged 15 and 17, aspiring to become criminals, were on Wednesday apprehended in connection with the near-fatal assault on criminal Suryakant Kambl alias Surya, on Monday evening.

Implement policies for benefit of artists, sportspersons: LoP

MARGAO: Asserting the Goa Cultural Policy 2007 & Goa Sports Policy 2009 were initiated by the Congress Government to encourage local talent in the field of Art & Culture and Sports, Leader of Opposition Yuri Alemao has said the BJP government has failed to implement both the policies since 2012.

WEATHER >>

Max:	32 C
Min:	24 C
Humidity:	64%

TIDES

Low:	05:32	17:26
High:	10:33	----

Goa to roll out green carpet to the world, Energy Week 2024 in Betul

35K ATTENDEES, 350 EXHIBITORS AND 400 SPEAKERS, 4000 DELEGATES FROM 100 NATIONS EXPECTED

THE GOAN I NETWORK

PANAJI
Goa is set to host the second edition of India Energy Week (IEW) from February 6 to 9, 2024.
The four-day event, organised by the Federation of Indian Petroleum Industry (FIPI), under the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, will take place on the grounds of ONGC's Institute of Petroleum Safety, Health, and Environment Management (IPSHEM) campus in Betul, which is

A sorry state of DPC meets: In 2020 basic quorum was 'manufactured'

SHORT OF 2, MEMBERS WERE URGENTLY SENT MESSAGES TO TURN UP FOR MEETING

THE GOAN I NETWORK

MARGAO

As the meeting of constitutionally-mandated District Planning Committee (DPC) for South Goa was reduced to a farce for want of quorum after the MLAs played truant, a similar situation had virtually derailed the DPC when the panel had its meeting around four years ago on January 28 in 2020.

The only difference between the January 28, 2020 meeting of the DPC and the meeting held on Wednesday was that the 2020 meeting could take place after the members "manufactured" the quorum by sending SOS to the members to rush to the conference hall of the district Collectorate.

In fact, inquiries by The Goan have revealed that DPC in 2020 had to literally hunt for members to turn up for

36 panchayats, all South Goa civic bodies have not sent devpt plans to DPC

MARGAO: The District Planning Committee (DPC) for South Goa may have set in motion the process to consolidate the plans received from the Zilla Panchayat, Panchayats and the Municipalities into a draft-district Development plan before sending the same to the government.

The draft-development plan revealed that the DPC received around 2,500 development plans from the Panchayat bodies and the Zilla Panchayat estimated around Rs 147 crore.

The fact, however, remains that of the 89 village Panchayats in South Goa, around 36 Panchayats have till date not submitted their development plans to the DPC. That's not all. Not a single Municipality Council in the jurisdiction of the South Goa district have submitted their development plans to the DPC till date, raising serious questions whether the draft-DPC would reflect the ground reality sans plans received from all the 89 Panchayats and the eight Municipal bodies.

DPC Chairperson Suvarna Tendulkar, however, pointed out that though all the 89 Panchayats and the Municipal bodies have not submitted their development plans, the draft-district plan would be forwarded to the government only after receiving the plans from the local bodies.

the meeting to form the basic quorum and save the day for the DPC. For, of the 20 MLAs

from South Goa, Fatora MLA Vijai Sardesai was the first to walk into the meeting hall,

Shirodkar lone municipal chief from South Goa to attend meeting

MARGAO: Margao Civic Chief Damu Shirodkar was the lone Municipal Chairperson from South Goa, who was conspicuous by his presence at the District Planning Committee (DPC) meeting on Wednesday.

He, however, had no idea what the District Planning Committee (DPC) is all about. For, none of the eight Municipal bodies in the South Goa jurisdiction, including the Margao Municipal Council, have submitted the annual Development Plans for consideration of the DPC.

When The Goan questioned him over the

delay by the MMC in submitting the development plan to the DPC, Damu had no answer, saying he would find out from the Municipal officials, over the ground reality.

When his attention was drawn to the fact that the every Municipal Council is required to prepare an annual Development Plan every year and submit the same to the DPC for consideration, the MMC Chairperson said he is unaware of the Municipal provision, but assured to check out with the officials back in the civic body.

followed by then Sanguem MLA Prasad Gaonkar. Sources said the DPC meeting still could not commence as it was short of two members. It was at this stage, a phone call was made to Curtorim MLA Regi-

naldo Lourenco to rush to the district Collectorate for the meeting.

No doubt, Reginaldo came rushing to the Collectorate, but the meeting still could not proceed as the DPC was

still short of one member to constitute the quorum. It was only after then Power Minister Nilesh Cabral made his presence felt at the meeting hall that the quorum was complied with and the DPC got

Arambol hotel owner gets 90 more days for demolition

THE GOAN I NETWORK

PANAJI

The Bombay High Court at Goa has granted Ashok Kandhari, the proponent of the Arambol four-storey illegal hotel an additional 90 days to demolish his structure on condition that he deposits Rs 45-lakh with the court towards demolition charges of the structure which the High Court said was without prejudice to action Kandhari may be liable to face for breach of undertakings given to the Court.

Kandhari had earlier given an undertaking to the High Court that he would have his four-storey illegal hotel demolished by December 13.

The High Court order came on an application filed by Kandhari who approached the High Court seeking an additional six months to demolish his structure after his special leave petition against the High Court's order was dismissed by the Supreme Court.

On Wednesday, Kandhari, who is present in the Court, undertook to deposit a sum of Rs 45 lakh within twenty days from today without giving any excuses – equivalent to the estimate produced by the Advocate General for the demolition of the building.

▶ read more on [thegoan.net](#)

Ministers, MLAs play truant at South Goa DPC meeting

ZP CHIEF POSTPONES MEET FOR LACK OF QUORUM

THE GOAN I NETWORK

MARGAO

The long-delayed meeting of the Constitutionally-mandated District Planning Committee (DPC) of South Goa scheduled on Wednesday to transact the business of approving the draft-district Development Plan 2024-25 was called off for want of quorum after the Ministers and MLAs from South district played truant.

With none of the 20 MLAs, including Ministers, turning up for the meeting at the Matanhy Saldanha Administrative Complex in the South district Collectorate, Chairperson of the South Goa Zilla Panchayat, Suvarna Tendulkar, who heads the DPC, announced postponement of the meeting. Curchorem MLA Nilesh Cabral made his presence felt at the meeting hall only after the meeting was called off.

The meeting was scheduled at 11 am on Wednesday, but the conference hall in the Collectorate saw the presence of only 10 of the 40 DPC members, including the Chairperson of the Margao Municipal Council, Damu Shirodkar. The MLAs, including the Ministers were conspicuous by their



The conference hall in the district Collectorate, South Goa which played host to the District Planning Committee (DPC) meeting with most of the chairs empty. Santosh Mirajkar

ON PAGE 2

- A sorry state of DPC meets: In 2020 basic quorum was 'manufactured'
- 36 p'yats, all civic bodies have not sent development plans to DPC
- ZP members-turned-MLAs do not turn up for meet
- Panchayat Raj activist slams absence of elected representatives

absence. Social Welfare Minister, Subhash Phal Dessai, who represents Sanguem in the Legislative Assembly, had deputed his Officer on Special Duty (OSD) for the meeting.

The meeting rules provides for the presence of 4/5th of

the total members of the panel to form the quorum. As it turned out, however, only 10 members turned up for the meeting when a total of 16 members were required to

▶ read more on [thegoan.net](#)

ISRO chairman in Goa, unveils plans for developing own support system for 2025 Gaganyaan mission

THE GOAN I NETWORK

PANAJI

After failing to get required knowledge support from other countries, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has decided to indigenously develop their own environmental control and life support system (ECLSS) for the upcoming human space flight mission Gaganyaan, which is expected to be launched in 2025.

Addressing the 5th edition of Manohar Parrikar Vidyan Mahotsav 2023 at Dona Paula, ISRO Chairman S Somanath said that the organisation has decided to indigenously develop the ECLSS.



Health Minister Vishwajit Rane felicitating ISRO Chairman S Somanath during the 5th edition of Manohar Parrikar Vidyan Mahotsav 2023 at Dona Paula, on Wednesday. Narayan Pissurlenkar

"We have no experience in developing an environmental control life support system. We were only designing rockets and satellites. We thought

that this knowledge would come from other nations, but unfortunately, after so much discussion, nobody is willing to give it to us," he said adding

ISRO CHAIRMAN SPEAKS...

- We have no experience in developing an environmental control life support system. We were only designing rockets and satellites
- We thought that this knowledge would come from other nations, but unfortunately, after so much discussion, nobody

"We are going to develop it in India using the knowledge we have and the industries that we have".
The ISRO chairman ex-

- is willing to give it to us
- We are going to develop it in India using the knowledge we have and the industries that we have
- When we send humans to space through our Gaganyaan programme, I think the amount of skill and confidence that we need to have has to be higher

plained that India has been into knowledge-building design capability development
▶ read more on [thegoan.net](#)



Glowing Conifer a cultural delight

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / AHMEDABAD

A magnificent Christmas tree at a hotel stands not only as a festive marvel but also as a celebration of Gujarat's rich cultural tapestry.

Hanging from the top of the hotel's imposing step-well architecture, the 23-foot-tall 'Glowing Conifer' is a stunning testament to the creativity and artistry of the region.

This unique Christmas installation is adorned with over 300 vibrantly coloured umbrellas, each showcasing the exquisite embroidery of Kutch, a renowned centre for

this traditional art form. The intricate patterns and vibrant hues of the umbrellas come alive under the warm glow of fairy lights, creating a mesmerizing spectacle that captures the essence of Gujarat's vibrant culture.

Adding to the festive aura are classic Christmas ornaments that adorn the tree, seamlessly blending the celebratory spirit with the local heritage. By showcasing the unique artistry of Kutch embroidery, the Glowing Conifer serves as a bridge between Christmas traditions and the cultural heritage of Gujarat.

MPs, MLAs seek withdrawal of ban on onion export

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / AHMEDABAD

Gujarat's Members of Parliament (MPs) and MLAs have jointly appealed to the Union Agriculture Minister and the Chief Minister of Gujarat to revoke the ban on onion exports, citing adverse effects on the domestic market and the agricultural community.

A delegation comprising BJP MPs Ramesh Dhaduk, Mohan Kundariya, and Rajesh Chudasama recently met with Union Agriculture Minister Arjun Munda and submitted a memorandum swaying that onion exports should be allowed. They highlighted the stark decline in onion prices post the ban announcement, emphasizing that farmers were receiving Rs400-600 for 20 kilograms a week ago, whereas prices have now plummeted to Rs100-200 for the same quantity.

The delegation underscored India's substantial onion production, which rose from 317 lakh tons in 2021-22 to 318 lakh tons in 2022-23, with Gujarat contributing 22.51 lakh tonnes. They



The MPs said the ban had halted onion trading in major Agricultural Produce Market Cooperatives, adversely affecting farmers

stressed the high demand for red and white onions from Gujarat in international markets. MPs further stated that the ban had halted onion trading in major Agricultural Produce Market Cooperatives, adversely affecting farmers.

In a separate initiative, Congress Leader and MLA Amit Chavda penned a letter to Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, urging his intervention in reviewing the onion export ban. Chavda highlighted the

AAP MLA resigns; to join BJP

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / GANDHINAGAR & SURAT

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Bhupat Bhayani from Visavadar constituency resigned from both the party and the Assembly on Wednesday.

Bhayani's resignation comes amid a controversy surrounding a viral video that surfaced shortly after his election victory in 2022. The footage that is purportedly of a CCTV camera at a hotel in Kadodara, Surat, shows Bhayani entering the hotel with an unidentified woman. Subsequent reports identified the woman as married and the video allegedly depicts her husband confronting Bhayani and the woman in their hotel room. Bhayani is seen leaving the hotel with his face covered in an attempt to conceal his identity.

The viral video sparked intense discussions within political circles in Gujarat, raising questions about Bhayani's conduct and casting a shadow over AAP's image.



Bhayani, who defeated the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate in the 2022 elections, has said he has resigned from AAP to serve the people and contribute to the development of the state and the nation under the BJP banner. He also spoke about his long-standing association with the BJP, having worked for the party for 22 years before joining AAP.

This sudden shift has sparked speculation of a potential exodus from AAP, with rumours swirling about two to three more MLAs considering similar moves. However, AAP MLA Sud-

Bhupat Bhayani, who defeated the BJP candidate in the 2022 elections, has said he has resigned from AAP to serve the people and contribute to the development of the state and the nation under the BJP banner

hir Vaghani has firmly dismissed such claims, pledging his allegiance to the party, while AAP's Botad MLA Umesh Makwana has said he has no intention of resigning and has expressed confidence in the loyalty of the other four MLAs.

AAP state unit president Ishudan Gadhvi confirmed that the party's MLAs are facing immense pressure. Gadhvi condemned the BJP's alleged tactics of using its political clout to lure and threaten opposition MLAs, terming it a cowardly act. The party's national joint secretary, Gopal Italia, echoed these

concerns, accusing the BJP of abusing its power and disrespecting democracy.

The Congress also weighed in on the matter, with spokesperson Manish Doshi calling Bhayani's return to the BJP a "Gharwapsi" and criticising the ruling party's alleged disregard for the people's mandate.

The developments come amid reports of three independent MLAs from North and Central Gujarat extending their support to the BJP, further strengthening the ruling party's position. Whether these MLAs will formally join the BJP is yet to be seen, but their support solidifies the BJP's dominance in the state.

Byelections for the Visavadar constituency are likely to be held along with the Lok Sabha elections, offering a fresh opportunity for parties to test their political mettle. The coming months will be crucial in determining the long-term impact of this political upheaval on the state's political landscape.

10 men fall ill after gas leak



FPJ NEWS SERVICE / SURAT

Ten individuals, including four children, were shifted to the New Civil Hospital (NCH) with complaints of breathlessness, vomiting, sore throat, and severe coughing, following the leak of poisonous gas behind the Rahul Raj shopping mall in Piprod.

The victims, who are labourers residing in makeshift tents and employed at nearby construction sites, were directly impacted by the mysterious gas mixture that pervaded the area since late on Tuesday night.

The incident sparked concern among residents of the area and authorities. Sources speculated on the nature of the toxic gas, signalling a potential health hazard for

those residing and working in the area.

Promptly responding to the emergency, teams from the Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB), the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL), and Surat police rushed to the scene to conduct investigations into the presence of the hazardous gas.

The FSL team is yet to identify the source of the gas leak, intensifying concerns about the wellbeing of the affected individuals.

The incident prompted suspicions that hazardous chemical waste might have been improperly disposed of in the open, leading to the noxious gas permeating the air and affecting the health of the local laborers and their families.

Fake cop rapes woman in Rajkot

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / RAJKOT

Devraj Gohel, posing as an officer of the Udaipur Crime Branch, deceived and sexually assaulted a woman multiple times after promising her a job within the Udaipur Local Crime Branch police station.

Initially apprehended by Rajkot police for arson at a private firm, Gohel targeted the office due to a fallout with a woman employed there, who had severed ties with him. Seeking revenge, he set fire to the establishment.

However, a twist emerged when the victim, a woman associated with the accused, filed a rape complaint at a different police station. Investigation based on her complaint and the accused's phone number revealed Gohel's simultaneous custody in another case. Subsequently, he faced rearrest for the rape charges.

The victim encountered Gohel months ago at an Aadhaar Card Center, where he falsely presented himself as a Udaipur police officer. Using this pretense, he offered her a writing position under him at the Udaipur Local Crime Branch, establishing a rapport with her.

Exploiting this trust, Gohel took her to R-World cinema's couple box and sexually assaulted her. Subsequently, under the guise of official business, he manipulated her into signing forms at the Udaipur court. Gradually, he subjected her to repeated assaults and coerced her into silence, threatening imprisonment or worse if she disclosed their relationship.

Upon discovering the deceit and realizing Gohel was not a law enforcement officer, the victim reported the ordeal to the police.

SMC chief accountant held for taking bribe

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / SURAT

The chief accountant of the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) and his peon were apprehended by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) during a covert operation in which they were caught red-handed accepting a bribe of Rs2.50 lakh from a contractor.

The contractor, who had applied to retrieve the security deposit for a job, was coerced by Tejas Prakashchandra Aariwala, the chief accountant, and his peon, Bhikhu Patel, to pay Rs2.50 lakh for expediting the approval of the sanctioned amount, according to reports.

The contractor alerted the ACB, who laid a meticulously planned trap.

The contractor, acting in cooperation with the ACB, engaged with the peon to hand over the bribe at a pre-designated location. Subse-



The contractor alerted the ACB, who laid a well-planned trap

quently, the complainant ensured a conversation between Patel and Aariwala over phone as confirmation of the illicit transaction.

ACB sleuths moved in and conducted a raid at the SMC headquarters in Mughal-sarai, Surat, on Tuesday, leading to the arrest of the chief accountant.

The incident has prompted calls for stringent measures to curb such malpractices and ensure transparent governance.

3 held for SIM card racket

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / SURAT

A clandestine operation involving the sale of pre-activated SIM cards has been dismantled by the Surat city police, resulting in the arrest of three individuals, one of whom is employed at VI company. Authorities seized a cache of 84 pre-activated SIM cards from the arrested suspects.

The Crime Branch team gathered intel on Vijay Govindbhai Rathod, a resident of Navjeevan Society in Surat, employed as an agent at a mobile service provider. Rathod allegedly engaged in the unauthorized sale of pre-activated SIM cards to Vikas Vaghela and Mitesh Boricha without requisite documentation.

The trio had convened beneath the foot overbridge near Adajan Busport, Rander, when the police, acting on received information, conducted a raid. Vijay Govindbhai Rathore, Vikas Rajeshbhai Vaghela, and Mitesh Ma-



heshbhai Boricha were apprehended, and the police confiscated 14 pre-activated and 70 non-active SIM cards, along with 4 mobile phones valued at Rs 45,770.

Further investigation revealed that 12 pre-activated SIM cards were provided by Vijay Rathore, the agent, to an individual named Rudra from Sayan. Additionally, 10 pre-activated SIM cards were intended for another individual, Jay, both of whom are wanted by the police.

Rathod confessed to financial hardship, citing the sale of SIM cards to earn addition-

al commissions. The allure of higher prices for pre-activated SIM cards led him to collect Aadhaar card details from customers, using a company application. This involved logging into the application through the customer's ID and password, uploading their photo in the online Customer Application Form, activating the SIM cards.

The police investigation continues to unearth the extent of this illicit operation, shedding light on the exploitation of customer information for unauthorized SIM card activation.

Teenager locked up by mother for 6 months in Deesa town

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / AHMEDABAD

The Deesa town police, along with the District Child Protection team, intervened to rescue a 13-year-old boy who had been confined within his house by his mother for six months.

The teenager, experiencing mental trauma, will undergo initial treatment before being transferred to Gandhinagar for further care.

The police revealed that Mukesh Tatariya had deserted his wife and son. Overwhelmed by fear and the possibility of her son abandoning her as well, the mother succumbed to depression. Since June, she had resorted to locking her son in a room, serving meals through a window but refraining from opening the door, driven by an intense fear of loneliness if her son were to leave her.



Shocking details emerged of the boy being denied access to basic facilities, including using the toilet, compelling him to attend to his needs within the confines of the room.

The situation came to light earlier this month when neighborhood children discovered their friend's plight and sought assistance from the non-governmental organization, Seven Star Foundation.

After negotiations, the mother agreed to release her son, marking the end of a six-month confinement. The teenager received his first bath and haircut in this period of freedom. Tragically, a few days later, the mother once again locked her son in the room.

Prompted by this, the NGO engaged the District Child Protection office and local authorities, ultimately securing the boy's release.

Court grants stay in PSP projects case

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / SURAT

The Gujarat High Court on Wednesday issued a stay on proceedings regarding the dispute between PSP Projects Limited and the Surat Diamond Bourse till December 27.

This has come as a relief to the bourse members who are awaiting the inauguration by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 17.

Lalji Patel, chairman of Dharmannandan Diamonds, confirmed that the court has granted a stay on the claim of Rs538 crore raised by PSP Projects Limited.

Previously, a court had directed the Surat Diamond Bourse to deposit Rs100 crore in a bank account against PSP



Projects Limited's claim for outstanding dues amounting to Rs 538 crore.

Expressing satisfaction with the court's decision, Lalji Patel, overseeing the Surat Diamond Bourse construction, stated, "We are pleased with the stay granted by the Surat court in the PSP Project case. We are prepared with all necessary documents and will present our case on

December 27."

Patel emphasized the Surat Diamond Bourse's significance as the world's largest office building, representing a source of pride for both Gujarat and India. He reassured the institution's 4,200 members of the SDB's steadfast commitment to integrity and resolution of the matter.

PSP Projects Limited, an Ahmedabad-based construction giant, has rebutted the claims made by the Surat Diamond Bourse committee. Contesting assertions of 98 per cent payment settlement, leaving a mere 2 per cent outstanding, PSP Projects Limited has submitted a comprehensive 1000-page dossier to the court.

LAST WORD

Power sector gets boost of ₹16,663 cr

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / AHMEDABAD

The Central Government has earmarked Rs16,663 crore spanning five years for Gujarat's power sector under the revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS).

This initiative is designed to instil financial discipline in distribution sectors and fortify infrastructure to ensure uninterrupted power supply, Union Minister RK Singh said in the Rajya Sabha on December 12.

The nationwide allocation stands at Rs3,03,758 crore with a Gross Budgetary Support (GBS) of Rs97,631 crore

for the five-year period.

Specifically for Gujarat, plans include deploying approximately 19.79 crore pre-paid smart meters, of which 1.648 crore will be installed in the state. In the initial phase, 60.09 lakh smart meters are slated for installation, followed by an additional 1.05 crore in the subsequent phase.

Responding to Rajya Sabha MP Parimal Nathwani's inquiry about Power Ministry schemes since 2018, Singh outlined goals, achievements, and financial allocations for various initiatives. The RDSS also encompasses deploying about 52



lakh Distribution Transformer (DT) smart meters and 1.88 lakh feeder smart meters, with Gujarat set to incorporate 3,00,487 DT

smart meters and 5,229 feeder smart meters.

These smart metering strategies aim to enhance energy accounting accuracy, identify high-loss areas, and streamline operations. Approved Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) totalling Rs. 1,21,778 crore for Loss Reduction (LR) works and Rs. 1,30,474 crore for smart metering across India were highlighted in Singh's statement.

Of the total RDSS sanctioned amount, Rs5,897.22 crore has been disbursed following scheme guidelines, including Rs308 crore for Gujarat in the last two years and

the ongoing year.

Singh emphasized the continuation of RDSS until FY 2025-26, targeting a reduction in AT&C losses to 12-15 per cent nationwide and the elimination of ACS-ARR gaps by 2024-25.

These measures intend to bolster DISCOMs' financial viability and enhance the power sector. Notably, initiatives under RDSS have already reduced DISCOMs' AT&C losses from 22.32 percent in FY2021 to 16.44 percent in FY2022, concurrently narrowing the ACS-ARR gap from Rs0.69/kWh to Rs0.15/kWh in the same period.

Praja Bhavan allotted as official residence of Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka

HYDERABAD: The residential building at Mahatma Jyothiba Phule Praja Bhavan, Begumpet, has been allotted to Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu as his official residential accommodation. Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari issued orders to this effect on Wednesday. With Chief Minister

Revanth Reddy reportedly preferring to stay in his own residence in Jubilee Hills, the Praja Bhavan has been allotted to the Deputy Chief Minister. The Chief Secretary has directed the officials concerned to hand over the possession of the Praja Bhavan building to private secretary of the Deputy Chief Minister.



BHUMATA TO REPLACE DHARANI

FPJ BUREAU/HYDERABAD

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Wednesday instructed Chief Commissioner of Land Administration (CCLA) Naveen Mittal to come out with a detailed report on Dharani Portal, technical hitches and how the entire portal is conceived and implemented. The Chief Minister is upset that among the complaints he has been receiving as part of Praja Vaani, a majority of them with regard to Dharani Portal. There were also several allegations made against the portal and the way the previous government misused it to benefit the then CM KCR, his family members and friends. The CM during his poll campaign had made several allegations against the misuse of the Dharani portal.

The CM held a review meeting on Dharani and other related issues, in which deputy CM Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, Ministers P Srinivas Reddy and Damodar

There were also several allegations made against the portal and the way the previous government misused it to benefit the then CM KCR, his family members and friends. The CM during his poll campaign had made several allegations against the misuse of the Dharani portal

Rajanarsimha attended. Chief Secretary Shanta Kumari, CCLA Naveen Mittal and other senior officials from the Revenue department attended the meeting. The CM did not hide his ire on Dharani Portal and the acts of omissions and commission made by the previous BRS government. He wanted Naveen Mittal to come with a detailed report on all the aspects of Dharani including how the Portal work is outsources and how

CM reviews Metro works

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy also reviewed the on going works of the Hyderabad Metro Rail with the officials concerned. The CM inquired on how the alignment of the metro route from Rayadurg to Shamshabad was planned. There were allegations that those having proximity to the then BRS government have purchased lands on the proposed Metro rail route from Rayadurg to Shamshabad. It is expected that the route alignment of the Metro may be changed and thorough probe may be ordered.

the entire tender process took place.

The Chief Minister and his government are bent upon doing away with Dharani portal and online land transactions. In its place, Bhumata, will be introduced which will be transparent and user friendly. While allowing the online land transactions, there will be scope for manual transactions. The Chief Minister wants an error free and hassle free land transactions. The Chief Minister also wanted to know how registrations of lands,

which are prohibited were registered. How lands restricted under the Act, are registered middle of the night utilising Dharani.

As promised during the election campaign, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy is all set to replace Dharani Portal which is bogged down with many problems and controversies and replace it with more people's friendly, state-of-the-art Bhumata Under the Bhumata Portal, lands will be registered on line as well as manually.



Assembly sessions to resume from today

FPJ BUREAU/HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Assembly sessions will resume from Thursday.

The first session of the Telangana Assembly, which begun on December 9 with the swearing-in ceremony of the newly-elected MLAs, will elect the new Speaker on Thursday.

Senior Congress MLA Gad-dam Prasad Kumar was the lone person who filed his nominations for the post of Telangana Assembly Speaker.

Kumar's election as the Speaker may be a formality as no candidate from the Opposition parties has filed the nomination papers for the post of Speaker.

AIMIM MLA Akbaruddin Owaisi, who was appointed as the pro tem Speaker, will handle the House till the new Speaker is announced.

The number of days of conducting Assembly sessions will be decided in the BAC meeting. According to the information received so far, Governor Dr.Tamilisai Soundarajan will address both the Houses on December 15. A motion of thanks for the Governor's speech will be discussed separately in the Legislative Assembly and the Council on December 16. There are possibilities of holding Assembly sessions on December 17 as well.



Srinivas Reddy takes charge as New CP

FPJ BUREAU/HYDERABAD

The newly appointed Hyderabad police commissioner Kothakota Srinivas Reddy took charge today as CP. He took charge at the Command Control Centre on Road No. 12 of Banjara Hills in the city. Srinivas Reddy had earlier worked in Greyhounds and Octopus. Srinivas Reddy is known as a straightforward officer.

Speaking on the occasion, He said that they would make Hyderabad as a drug-free city. He also thanked CM Revanth Reddy for believing in his capabilities and entrusting him with the responsibility of the CP. He said that the media would be a bridge between the people and the state government and asked the media to convey public opinion to them through their outlets. Stating that it is important for the police to respond swiftly

It is important for the police to respond swiftly in case of any incident, he said that they would work more through SHE teams to prevent harassment and ragging of women.

In case of any incident, he said that they would work more through SHE teams to prevent harassment and ragging of women.

Stating that the telangana government has directed to make Hyderabad a drug-free city along with the state of Telangana, he said that they would coordinate with the Commissioners of Hyderabad, Cyberabad and Rachakonda and move forward towards achieving it.

On this occasion, he issued a serious warning to the drug gangs. "The drug gangs should leave Hyderabad and Telangana. Otherwise, strict action will be taken," he said.

Stating that they have found that drugs were being consumed in the film industry, he asked the industry to stop it while issuing warning that strict action will be taken if it did not stop it. He said that meetings would be held soon with the elders of the film industry and awareness would be created. "There is surveillance on pubs and restaurants and friendly policing has been mocked these days. Being friendly with everyone is also not possible," he said. He made it clear that they would be friendly with those who respect the law and added that strict action would be taken if the laws are violated.

Criminal case filed against Malla Reddy

FPJ BUREAU/HYDERABAD

A case has been registered against former minister and BRS party MLA Ch. Mallareddy Shamirpet police station. The complaint was lodged with an allegation that Mallareddy had encroached 42 acres of land belonging to tribals. The Police registered a case on the complaint against Mallareddy under prevention of atrocities against SC, ST Act and started investigation against the former minister. The victims complained that the accused illegally registered the tribal lands overnight during the time of the recent assembly elections. In the past too, there were accusations of land grabbing against Mallareddy. Cases have also been registered in this regard. It is worth noting that after the defeat of the BRS party.



I will always be with the party activists: Harish

FPJ BUREAU/HYDERABAD

Former minister Harish Rao today said that did not know half performance except performance. Speaking at the BRS party's Gratitude Meeting held at Narsapur in Medak district under the leadership of MLA Sunitha Lakshma Reddy, he said, "If cases had been filed in the housing scam soon after the BRS government came to power, half of the Congress party leaders would have been in jail. KCR focussed on development of the state instead of creating problems," he said.

He also raised the issue of the serious security breach in Parliament and expressed his anguish over the lack of security in the parliament. "How can the central government protect the people if it does not protect the Parliament?" he asked. An inquiry should be conducted into this and security should be tightened, he demanded.

He said that he was bowing his head before the people of Narsapur for ensuring the victory of their party MLA



candidate Sunitha Lakshma Reddy in the recent assembly elections. "Losing power is just a speed breaker. It is the BRS party that will ultimately reach its destination," he said. Rao said that He would always be available for the party activists and added that he would be in front of them within two hours of making a phone call if there is any issue. "We have done a lot of development work during the BRS regime. Let's work hard in the upcoming local body elections. The leaders of the ruling party will mentally disturb our party workers but the workers should not lose courage," he said.

Ayodhya Reddy thanks CM



Journalist Ayodhya Reddy, who is appointed as CPRO to CM, met Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy in his residence and thanked him.

MoU between NIRD&PR and GBNIHE

FPJ BUREAU/HYDERABAD

With the purpose of prioritizing Rural Development Activities and promoting sustainable development practices, the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD & PR), Hyderabad and GB Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment (GBNIHE) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Wednesday.

The MoU was signed by Registrar Manoj Kumar (NIRDPR) and Dr. Ravindra S Gavali, Centre Head (NIRDPR), in the presence and guidance of Dr. G Narendra Kumar, IAS, Director General (NIRDPR). School Heads, Dr. Kesava Rao and Dr. Kathiresan were also present. From NIHE, Prof. Sunil Nautiyal, Director (NIHE), Dr. Rakesh Kumar Singh (Administrative Officer), Dr. Jagadish Chandra and other senior officials of GBNIHE joined online.

The primary purpose of having this agreement is to focus on different collaborative activities by sharing each other strengths to mainstream farm-based livelihood strategies and value chain development through program convergence and integration with National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) initiatives, use the combined efforts of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) to stabilize gram panchayats. To revitalize the idea of rural tourism and generate new business opportunities, technology transfer through rural technology complexes for uplifting the rural people in all aspects of life



Strengthening transition to the renewable energy sources g) Development and promotion of horticulture in the agriculture sector.

such as capacity building, employment generation and livelihood options, to stabilize and advance gram panchayats through Spirngshed Management and Village Disaster Management Plans in the Himalayan areas. Strengthening transition to the renewable energy sources g) Development and promotion of horticulture in the agriculture sector.

Speaking on occasion, Dr. G. Narendra Kumar IAS, emphasized that the collaboration between the two institutions is essential in promoting agriculture-based livelihood activities through value chain development and setting up of micro-enterprises. The Director General also emphasized that this will contribute to the task of creating a network of centers of excellence in rural development. He opined that this collaboration will facilitate the process of dissemination of research findings through action research projects and capacity building of senior government functionaries.



CS reviews arrangements for President's visit

FPJ BUREAU/HYDERABAD

Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari has instructed the officials to ensure proper coordination and make elaborate arrangements in a befitting manner in connection with the visit of the President of India Draupadi Murmu to Hyderabad.

The Chief Secretary held a meeting with the officials of various departments at the Secretariat here on Wednesday and took stock of the arrangements being made in connection with the visit of the President.

The President will visit Hyderabad on December 18 as part of her annual visit to the city. She will be in the city for five days and leave on December 23.

The Police department was told to make adequate security, traffic and bandobust

The Chief Secretary held a meeting with the officials of various departments at the Secretariat here on Wednesday and took stock of the arrangements being made in connection with the visit of the President.

The health, R&B, municipal, energy and other line departments were also directed to make fool-proof arrangements as per the blue book.

DGP Ravi Gupta, Special Chief Secretary Sunil Sharma, Secretary GAD Seshadri, Secretary Health Rizvi, senior police officers and senior officials of line departments attended the meeting.

CPI(M) urges govt to extend bus services to villages

FPJ BUREAU/HYDERABAD

Expressing pleasure at the introduction of free bus travel scheme to all the women of the state, CPM state committee meeting today urged the state government to extend TSRTC bus services to all villages of the state. It also said that the production of Identity cards should not become an obstacle for the women to travel free in the buses.

The committee passed a resolution to this effect at its state committee meeting held at the state party headquarters MB Bhavan in Hyderabad under the chairmanship of Cherupalli Seetharamulu. Party Politburo members BV Raghavulu and A Vijayaraghavan from the central committee also took



part in the meeting. In its resolution, the party said that The newly formed Telangana state government had provided free travel facility to the women in RTC buses and added that Aarogyasri scheme limit had been increased to Rs 10 lakh. "It is heartening to note that two of the six guarantees were implemented

immediately after the formation of the new government. But since around 4,000 villages in the state still do not have the RTC bus facility, rural poor women are unlikely to avail this facility.

With the free bus travel facility restricted to Palle velugu, passenger buses and express buses, the free travel facility will be available in a limited to the women travelling long distances.

Guntur Kaaram melodious second single "Oh My Baby", Out Now!

Reigning Superstar Mahesh Babu and Wizard of Words Trivikram Srinivas have delivered cult classics like Athadu and Khaleja. Now, the most awaited combination has come together for blockbuster production house Haarika & Hassine Creations. Suryadevara Radhakrishna (Chinna Babu) has brought together this combination for their prestigious production Guntur Kaaram.

Fans of Superstar Mahesh have been eagerly waiting to watch the film on big screens in theatres. The first teaser of the movie has become viral and fans loved new massy look of Mahesh Babu. Team has released first single, "Dum Masala" on 11th November and it became one of the Top Chartbusters in Tel-

Now the makers have released melodious soundtrack, "Oh My Baby", as second single. S Thaman has composed the music album for the film. He is extremely happy with "Dum Masala" reception and he expressed great confidence on this melody too.

ugu albums. Now the makers have released melodious soundtrack, "Oh My Baby", as second single. S Thaman has composed the music album for the film. He is extremely happy with "Dum Masala" reception and he expressed great confidence on this melody too.

The combinations of Trivikram Srinivas and Mahesh Babu, Trivikram and S Thaman have delivered chartbuster albums. Now, Guntur Kaaram is also expected to be a huge chartbuster. Delivering on the huge

expectations, "Oh My Baby" song is also set to become huge chartbuster. Team has stated that the song will deliver a feel of drinking blistering coffee with a blissful melody on a winter morning.

The song has been crooned by one of the most talented singers, Shilpa Rao. Lyrics for this soulful melody have been written by 'Saraswati Putra' Ramajogayya Sastry. Shilpa Rao's soulful rendition has added a remarkable distinction to the song. Combined with Ramjo, her rendition has created a magic. Listeners are

praising the song and her vocals highly along with lyrics by the senior most lyricist.

The theme of food items based metaphorical comparison in both the songs has made fans and viewers wait for Trivikram Srinivas and Superstar Mahesh Babu's unique magic on screen, once again. Stunning beauty and highly talented young actress Sreeleela is playing leading lady role in the movie.

Meenakshi Chaudhary is playing another important female lead role. Ramyakraishnan, Prakash Raj and several others have been cast in supporting roles. Manoj Paramahansa is handling cinematography for the film. A.S. Prakash is handling Production design while National Award winning editor, Navin Nooli is editing the film.





THOUGHT FOR THE DAY: When you go in search of honey you must expect to be stung by bees.

— JOSEPH JOUBERT



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Caste, the new political currency

Caste was a dominant factor in the selection — after the election — of the chief ministers for Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. A tribal leader for Chhattisgarh, an OBC Yadav for Madhya Pradesh and a Brahmin for Rajasthan. There was similar accommodation for other electorally important castes in the selection of two deputy chief ministers for the three states. Thus, the BJP has sought to cover all its flanks, now that the I.N.D.I.A alliance has latched on to caste as a survival strategy. Fully alive to the fact that Rahul Gandhi is now fixated on caste as a tool to push the BJP on the wrong foot, the trio of BJP CMs seek to pre-empt his electoral pitch ahead of the 2024 parliamentary poll. The tribals and OBCs constitute a major component of the BJP vote. The demand for a country-wide caste census does not reflect a sudden burst of love for the OBCs. It is merely another desperate ploy by the Opposition to try and wean a part of the OBC vote away from Modi, an OBC himself. By appointing a Yadav as chief minister in Madhya Pradesh the BJP has sought to signal to the most dominant section among the OBC bloc that its interests are safe with the party. If in the process the saffron party is able to groom its own Yadav leader in order to challenge Akhilesh Yadav in UP and Laloo Yadav in Bihar, it stands to blunt their caste appeal.

For sure, the fragmentation of voters on caste lines signals a certain regression. How it is healthy for a progressive polity while the fragmentation into two major large blocs, Hindu and Muslim, is regressive is hard to explain. Hitherto the Congress party was deadset against making caste the currency of electoral politics. But a much diminished party under Rahul Gandhi has abandoned the age-old abnegation of caste as a determinant of popular appeal, and embraced it with a missionary zeal. The other day while trying to counter Amit Shah's criticism of Nehru for the Kashmir problem the Gandhi scion totally out of context raised the demand for a caste survey. A couple of days earlier, the leader of the Opposition, Mallikarjun Kharge, blamed Deputy Chief Minister of Karnataka D K Shivakumar for keeping the report of the caste survey in the state under wraps. The Congress president went on to say that the upper castes from all parties join hands when it comes to opposing a caste census. That Kharge should openly air differences within the Karnataka government over the caste survey underlines the wider divisions in society over granting primacy to caste yet again for further augmentation of reservations in government jobs and government-controlled educational institutions. The Karnataka caste survey was undertaken by the previous Siddharamiah government in 2015. Its report was yet to be released. Shivakumar argues that it was not conducted “scientifically”, leaving out a large percentage of households uncovered. Kharge and others, in favour of releasing the findings of the survey, suggest that the upper castes such as Vokkaligas and Lingayats fear that the survey would reduce their weightage in the caste calculus and, thus, in the state polity.

Meanwhile, the apex court sooner or later will be called upon to take note of the flagrant violation of its order setting the maximum limit on the scale of reservations at 50%. In a number of States reservations already exceed far above the half-way mark. The only country-wide caste survey was conducted in 1931. Conducting another would inevitably sharpen caste conflicts. For the time being the BJP may have avoided the concerted pressure from the Opposition parties to order a caste census, but it may be forced to take a call should the issue gain further traction. Its choice of chief ministers and deputy chief ministers in the three North Indian states acknowledges the pressure building up in the polity for a caste census.

FPJ Archives

INDIA 75 YEARS AGO
DECEMBER 14, 1948



NO LINGUISTIC DIVISION OF INDIA

DHAR COMMISSION REPORT ON REDISTRIBUTION

New Delhi, December 13. A clear and unambiguous 'No' has been given to protagonists of linguistic division of India by the Linguistic Provinces Commission which has published its unanimous verdict today. The report recommends against the formation of linguistic provinces at present but is of the opinion that when the Indian State have been completely integrated and the country fully stabilised, some of the provinces should be reformed on an administrative basis.

Sex, spies, standoffs and the price Indians pay

Field Notes

★ Sujan Dutta



'Babe, babeee' wears a white shirt rolled to the elbows, black cap and khaki pants at the podium he shares with a powerful man.

Months later he is compromised. He was besotted with a Pakistani intelligence operative pretending to be a patriotic Indian woman, according to the Maharashtra Police.

She promised him intimate trysts. They addressed each other as 'babe' and 'babeee' in the transcripts of emails and messages the police have released. He gave out state secrets about missiles and drones.

Sex, sax, sangh and shenanigans are the highlights in spygames that mark 2023 out as the year of the dirty trickster for India.

A court in Pune has rejected the bail application of Dr Pradeep More-shwar Kurulkar, 'Outstanding Scientist' of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) who headed one of the agency's laboratories.

In the normal course of things, Kurulkar would have retired last month when he turned 60 years unless he was given an extension.

The electrical engineer and designer of missile launchpads is by his own admission an associate of the

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh with whose head, Mohan Bhagwat, he has shared the podium in praise of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and for whom he played the saxophone for more than a decade. His family, he has said in an interview on YouTube, has been with the RSS for three generations.

The videos of the programmes were released by the Congress spokesperson Pawan Khara at a press conference in New Delhi in May, shortly after his arrest. Kurulkar's lawyer has pleaded in court that the information he exchanged was not classified and was available in the public domain.

A month-and-a-half after Kurulkar's arrest on May 3, Hardeep Singh Nijjar was shot in a parking lot in Canada on June 18. Nijjar's is the classic story of "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter".

He was wanted by Indian authorities. They had put out a red corner notice for him through the Interpol in 2016 for his association with Khalistani organisations that were banned by Indian law.

In Canada he was viewed as a human rights activist. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) had warned that there was a threat to his life. After his killing videos showing Nijjar firing a machine gun at what looks like a range have surfaced.

India-Canada relations nosedived after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau practically accused New Delhi of carrying out a hit job

in Canadian territory. He said in his Parliament that he was "pursuing credible allegations of a potential link" between Indian agents and the killing of Nijjar.

The Indian response has been largely derisive of Canada and barely took into account that Ottawa was a member of the "Five Eyes", the informal forum of intelligence exchange between the US, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

A self-hurting ban on Indian visas for Canadian nationals — there is a large Indian diaspora in the North American country — that was imposed immediately after Trudeau's statement was quietly withdrawn

The image of an India gone rogue risks the lives of ordinary citizens like the eight former Indian Navy sailors and officers who are now incarcerated in Qatar

last month.

Between the ban and its withdrawal though, New Delhi was non-plussed by the US. An indictment of the US Department of Justice has alleged that an Indian intelligence agent hired Nikhil Gupta, who faced cases in Gujarat, to hire an American to assassinate Gurbatwar Singh Pannun. Pannun has been an accomplice of Nijjar.

Pannun is also a Khalistani activist, a US citizen. His house near Chandigarh was attached by the Indian state. In a comical turn of events the hitman hired by Gupta turned out to be an American undercover agent himself. The allegations

against India are so serious that the US' Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) chief Christopher Wray visited New Delhi this week to meet with heads of Indian intelligence agencies.

The loudmouthed Pannun has often been viewed as a crank, making recorded calls to Indians and threatening them. He has little or no traction in Punjab, where Sikhs are in a majority, since the troubles of the mid-1980s. The Indian official attention to Pannun has amplified his voice more than an ignore would.

But the US DoJ indictment, coming after Canada's charges, has

been taken far more seriously in New Delhi than Ottawa's. The easy reason for this is that the US has the muscle that Canada does not. A more grounded reason is that any messing with the 'Five Eyes' would have consequences with each member backing up the other.

Shooting through glasswork has not helped New Delhi stave off the shards. Inevitably, even as cheerleaders celebrate a larger-than-life image of "unknown persons" bumping off terrorists in foreign lands, it is ordinary Indians who often shoulder the brunt.

In the face-off with Canada, the ban on visas hurt Indians and per-

Men are equally appearance-conscious, too

Outlook

★ Sumit Paul



We tend to think that men and women have different priorities, perceptions and proclivities. That may be correct in terms of the responses and approaches to situations and circumstances by both the genders. But the fact remains that there are certain common tendencies that are natural as well as embedded in men as well as women. After all, the human spirit is the same and is not restricted by gender or geography. — Noam Chomsky

There's a new as well as interesting finding every day. A few months ago, there was a novel discovery by a team of British researchers that men were much more conscious than women about their looks. In fact, women being acutely appearance-conscious is a myth! They cited examples from the archives of history to the modern era with a view to buttressing their point.

It is a documented fact that Alexander the Great — despite his cavalier life and about whom the British historian Dawson said, "Man forever on horseback" — was extremely appearance-conscious. If ever he managed to get time, he'd undergo pedicures and like Cleopatra of Rome, would bathe in a swimming pool filled with the milk of donkeys. Don-

key's milk is said to have a skin-soothing agent. Even Arnold Toynbee wrote about Alexander's obsession with looks in his seminal essay 'The Greeks'.

Roman emperor Julius Caesar had a retinue of servants who would apply different concoctions to his face as anti-ageing potions of that era. Brutus even made fun of it. A day before Caesar's marriage to Brutus' mother (yes, he married, rather seduced his friend's mother!), a bevy of women beautified him the whole day!

The eccentric Roman emperor Nero would drink the water of a particular cascade in Anteen, said to have the properties to give a fresh glow to the face.

Even the epicurean Greeks and Roman emperors, however, were never as fussy and fastidious about their looks as were the kings and emperors of the subcontinent. Mughals were flag-bearers in this sphere.

It is said that except for Humayun (he never had time for luxuries as he was always on the run) and Aurangzeb's saintly brother Dara Shikoh (he was too erudite to be affected by something as mundane as one's looks), all Mughal emperors were exceedingly conscious of their appearance.

Babar was worried that the sweltering heat of the sub-continent was scorching and blackening his central Asian fair complexion. Babar advised his male as well as female friends not to get exposed to wretched Indian summer in his *Tuzuk-e-Babri*, originally written in Chagatai, a variant of Turkish. Ja-



Even the epicurean Greeks and Roman emperors, however, were never as fussy and fastidious about their looks as were the kings and emperors of the subcontinent

hangir would eat ten pomegranates to enhance the glow of his already rosy cheeks. When Abul Fazl mentioned this rather derogatory fact in his Persian Magnum Opus *Aaine-Akbari*, Jahangir was livid.

Jahangir's father, the great Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar, would walk through the lanes of Meena Bazar as the only man to be there and take beauty massages from beautiful women.

Abul Fazl, though almost a sycophant of Akbar, resented this particular pastime of the great emperor

and condemned this in his letters to Faizi, one of the nine gems in the court of Akbar. One can see and read the Persian letters at The India House, London.

Even stern and austere-looking Aurangzeb devoted time to bettering his humdrum looks. He had an eternally oldish face, according to Khafiz Khan, the court historian of the Mughals.

Today's actors are in no way lagging behind on this count. Their endorsement of various beauty products for men is sure enough proof of

men's vanity, not to mention parlours and boutiques meant specially for men.

But the question is: Does such an over-refined and sissy man really look desirable? If we say that a woman gains more by remaining a woman, then isn't the same applicable to a man also? It's the rugged and handsome appearance of a man that makes a woman go weak at the knees.

When Mumtaz Mahal first saw Shahjahan, he was sniffing a rose in a la-di-da manner. The sight of a robust-looking man inhale the aroma of a rose irritated her no end and she sent a Persian couplet to Shahjahan, which read, "*Ina mardam shuasta shamsheer ne ast / Gul-o-ghuncha na shadibam dast-e-marda nast*," (In the hands of a man, it's the sword that looks beautiful, not a flower or a bud).

Allama Iqbal took a swipe at such sissy characters and wrote, "*Vaaz mein farma diya kal aapne yah saaf saaf / Parda aakhir kis se ho jab mard hi zan ho gaye?*" (Yesterday, you made it clear in your sermon that why should women wear a hijab when all men have become so womanish?)

By the way, the great Chilean poet and Nobel laureate Pablo Neruda used to make fun of a former prime minister of India and would call him "sissy" and "effeminate" because of the latter's fondness for roses! You may have guessed it right.

Sumit Paul is a regular contributor to the world's premier publications and portals in several languages

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Cyber crime and child safety

The most glaring area of concern with child safety and protection is the fact that children are gradually becoming more vulnerable to cybercrimes and allied threats to online security of the younger generation, the NCRB Report 2022 reveals. The fear that the Covid pandemic may have left children far more exposed to various online education and other entertainment platforms, which in effect tended to increase risks for children manifested at multiple levels, has been borne out by the current NCRB data. While keeping children away from the online platforms is certainly not an option, we must have more stringent mechanisms to track down offenders and sanitise the space for the younger generation.

Tauqueer Rahmani, Mumbai

Fist of fury

Student activists and Youth Congress members reportedly hurled shoes at Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's

convoy recently. An enraged Vijayan warned that if the protesters continued with actions like throwing things, the government would take necessary steps against them. But who will take action against the parliamentarians and state legislators who throw things at the Speaker and Opposition members, and thus bring the august institutions to disrepute? Rules are applicable to one and all.

PG Menon, Chennai

Nero fiddling?

This refers to the postponement of the Formula 4 Race. First of all, when the Chennai city is reeling under the after effects of Cyclone Michuung, we do not know why the state government is still so keen to focus their energy on conducting the Formula 4, that too spending crores to relay the roads, etc.

Chennaiites are suffering from want of essential items and electricity, but the government's keenness to hold the race is like Roman emperor Nero fiddling while the city burnt. Anyway, this cyclone too has unmasked this government's failures to tackle the cyclone and its aftermath, proving that they too are no different from the previous government.

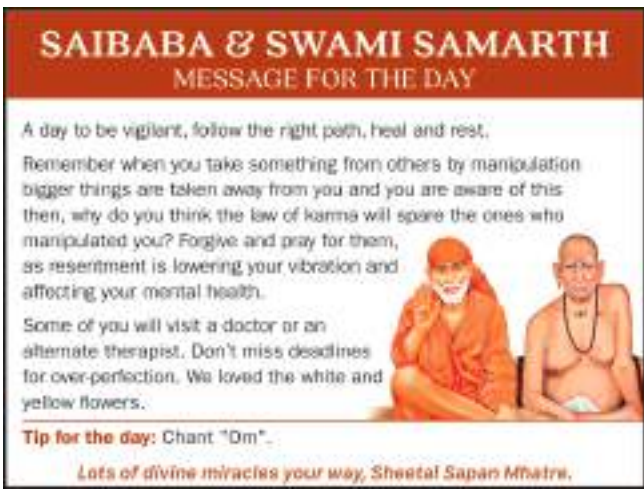
N Mahadevan, Chennai

'Party above all' is BJP's USP

Not too far back infighting in top echelons had been rife even in the BJP peaking in 2013, post the Vajapayee era. The RSS was forced to anoint outsider Modi as the poll icon of 2014. Since then the Sangh collective has effectively managed internal cross currents to an extent that party discipline has attained primacy over individual prominence. The BJP has thus come to acquire as its USP the induction of fresh faces into its front-rung leadership. This week, in its familiar modus operandi, the old guard in all the three states have yielded to leading party functionaries in each state. In the selection of the CMs in the instant case, caste and sectoral considerations may well have been in play but their capacity to deliver the party's agenda seems to have counted far more.

R Narayanan, Navi Mumbai

Dear reader, We are eager to know your opinions, comments and suggestions. Write to letters@fpj.co.in with the title of the letter in the subject line. Using snail mail? Send your letters to The Free Press Journal, Free Press House, Free Press Marg, 215 Nariman Point, Mumbai 400021.



GLOBAL BULLETIN

'Make in India, Make for the World'

Washington: The Indian envoy to the US, Taranjit Singh Sandhu, expressed delight on Tuesday as he attended the launch of the first made-in-India bicycles in a Walmart store in America. Taking to X, Sandhu said, "Make in India, Make for the World! Delighted to witness the launch of Walmart in the US first made-in India bicycles, manufactured by #HeroCycles #Ludhiana." Earlier, Walmart announced that the first India-made bicycles are hitting select stores in the U.S. just in time for the holidays. Hero Ecotech Ltd., one of India's foremost manufacturers and exporters of bicycles, has designed a "cruiser-style" bike for Walmart carrying the Concord brand available in both adult-sized men's and women's versions adding to the company's growing bicycle offerings.

Afghan envoy: Edu of women is vital

Kabul: Afghanistan's permanent representative to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva, Nasir Ahmad Andisha emphasised the importance of women's education, work and participation in the society, on the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), TOLO News reported. TOLO News is an Afghan news channel broadcasting from Kabul. In the statement of the UDHR conference, the international community was asked to take necessary measures in the area of human rights violations, especially women's rights in Afghanistan.

Argentina devalues currency by 50%

Buenos Aires: Argentina on Tuesday announced a sharp devaluation of its currency and cuts to energy and transportation subsidies as part of shock adjustments new President Javier Milei says are needed to deal with an economic "emergency." Economy Minister Luis Caputo said in a televised message the Argentine peso will be devalued by 50% from 400 to the US dollar to 800 pesos to the dollar. "For few months, we're going to be worse than before," he said, two days after the libertarian Milei was sworn in as president of the second largest economy in South America.

ISRAEL FLOODING TUNNELS: US

Malicious soldiers new pain for Israel

AP / JERUSALEM



Israeli soldiers briefed before being sent to the Gaza on Wednesday

10 Israeli soldiers killed in ambush

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on Wednesday said that 10 soldiers were killed in an ambush in northern Gaza, the highest single-day fatalities since the ground offensive was launched in the Hamas-controlled enclave on October 27. With this, the total number of Israeli troopers killed in the operation has increased to 115.

not commented on the report, reports CNN.

Earlier this month, Israel's army had said that it destroyed at least 500 tunnel shafts in Gaza and located more than 800 around the Hamas-controlled enclave.

The military said last week

that many of the tunnel shafts "were located in civilian areas" and inside civilian structures.

In 2021, Hamas claimed to have built 500 km worth of tunnels under Gaza, though it is unclear if that figure was accurate or posturing.

Pakistan SC allows trial of civilians by military courts

PTI / ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Supreme Court Wednesday allowed trial of civilians by the military courts, conditionally suspending its October 23 unanimous ruling in which it had nullified military trials of civilians.

A six-member Supreme Court bench with a majority of 5-1 announced its verdict on a set of intra-court appeals (ICAs) challenging its previous order. Justice Musarrat Hilali, the only woman judge on the bench, dissented from it.

During the hearing, Attorney General Mansoor Awan urged the court to conditionally allow the military trials of civilian suspects to be resumed.

Accepting the plea, the court allowed that trials of civilians would continue. However, the military courts would not issue a final ver-

dict against the suspect.

It further stated that the final ruling would be conditional upon the Supreme Court's orders.

On October 23, a five-member SC bench had declared that trying civilians in military courts for their alleged role in attacks on army installations after the arrest of ex-premier Imran Khan's arrest on May 9 was ultra vires the Constitution.

The caretaker federal government as well as the provincial ones in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab and the defence ministry had moved ICA before the SC against its judgment.

The verdict allows the military authorities to conduct the trial of over one hundred civilians who were handed over to the military authorities for their involvement in the attacks on the military installation on May 9.

Thai MP sentenced to six yrs for defaming monarchy

AP / BANGKOK

A court in Thailand convicted and sentenced Wednesday a recently elected lawmaker to six years in prison for defaming the monarchy under a controversial law that guards the royal institution.

Rukchanok Srinork arrived at the court building in the capital, Bangkok, while her fellow lawmakers were convening in Parliament.

"I submitted a request to postpone (the hearing) because today the new parliament convenes for its first session, but the court refused. So I came to hear the verdict," she told reporters, standing next to her party leader who was there to lend support.

She was charged over two posts she allegedly shared two years ago on social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter: A tweet that reportedly defamed the monarchy over links to a coronavirus vaccine and a retweet of an anti-monarchy

quote by 18th-century French philosopher Denis Diderot.

Rukchanok was sentenced to three years on each count under Article 112 of Thailand's Criminal Code which protects the monarchy, known as lese majeste. She was also convicted under the Computer Crime Act, whose



broad provisions covering online activities have been criticised as a threat to freedom of expression.

She has appealed the sentence and applied for bail. If denied, she will lose her lawmaker status.

The parliamentarian had denied she posted the tweets, calling the case against her "weak." The plaintiff reportedly provided screenshots of

the posts, but the police couldn't find the links.

Rukchanok, 29, won a seat in May's general election, part of a shock victory for the progressive Move Forward Party that shook Thai politics. The win did not translate into power due to the party being ultimately out-manuevered by powerful conservative forces. She was initially a defender of the conservative establishment before switching sides and joining the progressive movement.

The monarchy and the laws that protect it have come under pressure in the last few years. In 2020, tens of thousands – predominantly young people – marched in several Thai cities, demanding constitutional reform and the abolition of the commonly named "112 law".

The government's response was an unprecedented slew of prosecutions.

In 2021, pro-democracy activists launched a campaign calling for repealing the law.

'Russia has lost 87% troops, 2/3rd tanks'

AGENCIES / WASHINGTON

Russia has reportedly faced staggering losses, with an 87% reduction in its active-duty ground troops and a two-thirds decrease in its pre-invasion tanks, according to a declassified US intelligence assessment shared with Congress. Despite the significant setbacks in manpower and equipment, Russian President Vladimir Putin is determined to press on as the war nears its two-year mark early next year. US officials caution that Ukraine remains vulnerable, despite Russian losses. A Ukrainian counteroffensive, eagerly anticipated, has stalled, and it's unlikely that Kyiv will make substantial gains in the coming months, according to the assessment sent to Capitol Hill on Monday.

The report reveals that Russia, facing recruitment challenges, has resorted to re-

laxing standards and utilising Soviet-era stockpiles of older equipment to sustain its war effort. However, the conflict has dealt a severe blow to Russia's efforts to modernise its ground forces, setting them back 15 years. Out of the 360,000 troops initially deployed to Ukraine, including both contract and conscript personnel, Russia has suffered a loss of 315,000 on the battlefield. Additionally, 2,200 out of 3,500 tanks, and about 4,400 out of 13,600 infantry fighting vehicles and armored personnel carriers have been destroyed, reflecting a 32% loss rate.

The assessment states, "As of late Nov, Russia lost over a quarter of its pre-invasion stockpiles of ground forces equipment." This significant reduction in military capabilities has hampered Russian offensive operations, leading to a lack of major gains in Ukraine since early 2022.

Biden announces \$200M for Ukraine

ANI / WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden and his Ukrainian counterpart **Volodymyr Zelenskyy**, met at the White House on Tuesday (local time). Biden called on the Congress to pass supplemental funding to Ukraine before they take break for holidays, ABC News reported.

Seated in the Oval Office alongside Zelenskyy, Biden said, "Congress needs to pass supplemental funding to Ukraine before they break for holiday recess, before they give [Vladimir] Putin the greatest Christmas gift they can possibly give him." "And because we've seen what happens when dictators don't pay the price for the damage and the death and the destruction they cause. They keep going, when no price is paid," he added, according to ABC News report.

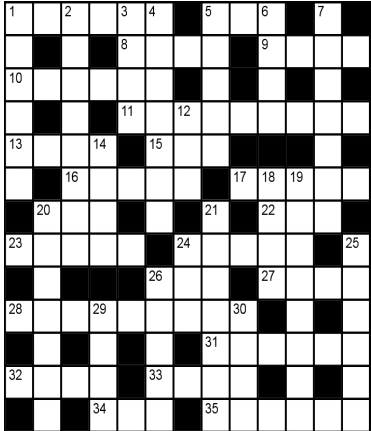
The aid package requested by the White House has stalled on Capitol Hill as Republicans call for changes in border security and immigration policy in exchange for the passage of funding for Ukraine, according to ABC News report.

Zelenskyy also urged Congressional leaders to allow the passage of funding for Ukraine. However, Republican lawmakers emerged from the closed-door talks seemingly undeterred by tying the aid to significant border changes.

Biden also announced a \$200 million military package under the Presidential Drawdown Authority. Zelenskyy thanked the US and other partners for their support and called it a "special day" for Ukraine, with almost 600,000 soldiers now fighting in the ongoing war against Russia.

Crossword # 985

Across
1 Divine beverage (6)
5 Empty space (3)
8 Tart (4)
9 Junkie (4)
10 Emblem (6)
11 Boxing category (9)
13 Wild ox of Celebes (4)
15 Male person (3)
16 Exclusive story (5)
17 Church sections (5)
20 A fixed charge (3)
22 An angry dispute (3)
23 Dizzy (5)
24 In the _____ of : at the heart of ? (5)
26 _____ a call: visit ? (3)
27 Competent (4)
28 Repealed (9)
31 Freshest (6)
32 Crack (4)
33 Forearm bone (4)
34 Antiquity (3)
35 Strain (6)

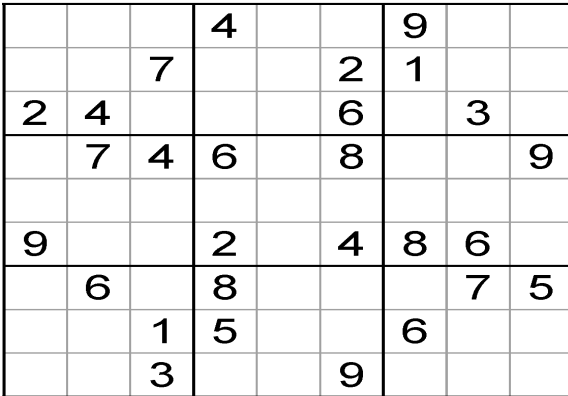


Down
1 Capital of the Bahamas (6)
2 Serene (8)
3 From (2,2)
4 Pickled herring fillet (7)
5 Become larger (5)
6 Hungarian sheepdog (4)
7 Invoke evil upon (7)
12 A shrill bark (3)
14 Got a perfect score
18 Malay boat (4)
19 Mexican hat (8)
20 Telling minor falsehoods (7)
21 Senior member (7)
24 Exclamation of contempt (3)
25 Seven for music (6)
26 Sham (5)
29 Easy stride (4)
30 Unable to hear (4)

Solution
25 Septer, 26 Pseud, 29 Lope, 30 Deal.
12 Vap, 14 Aced, 18 Prow, 20 Fibbing, 21 Doyenne, 24 Bah.
Down: 1 Nessus, 2 Composed, 3 As of, 4 Rollmopst, 5 Grown, 6 Pull, 7 Beshrew, 8 Tarts, 9 Junkies, 10 Emblem, 11 Bantamweight, 13 Aurochs, 15 Male, 16 Scoop, 17 Apes, 20 Fee, 22 Row, 23 Giddy, 24 Bosom, 26 Ray, 27 Able, 28 Abolished, 31 Newest, 32 Snap, 33 Ulna, 34 Eid, 35 Effort.

FPJ - SUDOKU - 87

Level: Hard



WHAT TO DO: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Every puzzle has only one correct solution.



YOUR DAY

By Vinayak Vishwas Karandikar



ARIES: Today is the day to study, enjoy family life. Expect expenditure on entertainment, business and vehicle. People in event management, automobiles, art and entertainment will get success. Picnic with family is indicated. Some of you suffer from skin or kidney problems.



LIBRA: Physical or mental stress and loss is indicated, so take care. Expect expenditure for business, health, premium. People from entertainment, art, pubs and lodging will be benefited. Married people may experience disputes. Some of you Kidney problems indicated.



TAURUS: Today is the day for travel, take care of health. Expect expenditure on medical bills and travel. People in fields like art and banking will be benefited. Dispute with younger sibling or spouse is indicated. Some people may have eye problems.



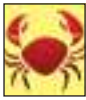
SCORPIO: Today is the day for expenditure, travel and business. Expect expenditure for luxury, beauty products and entertainment. People in fields like art and entertainment will be benefited. Long journey, picnic or tour with family is indicated.



GEMINI: Today is the day to enjoy and travel. Expect expenditure for luxury items, vehicle and beauty products. People in arts, entertainment and tourism will be benefited. Picnic or long journey with family is indicated. Some people may suffer from eye problems.



SAGITTARIUS: Today you may get your stuck money back. Expect expenditure for health, medical treatment, premiums. People from entertainment, automobiles and art will get success. Relationships may see some twists and turns. So avoid disputes. Some people may suffer from stomach pain.



CANCER: A day to be with family, study and enjoy. Expect expenditure for house, vehicle and education. People in fields like automobiles, art and education will be benefited. You will enjoy decorating your house or enjoy party at home. diabetes is indicated.



CAPRICORN: Today is the day for enjoyment and business. Expect expenditure for business, children and entertainment. People in arts, entertainment and sports will get success. Married and love life will be romantic. Some of you may suffer from knee problems.



LEO: Today is the day for travel, expenditure and enjoyment. Expect expenditure for business, travel and communication. People in fields like tourism, advertising and art will be benefited. Long journey or picnic is indicated. Some people may suffer from knee pain.



AQUARIUS: Today is the day to study and travel. Expect expenditure for education, interior decoration vehicle and travel. People in fields like art, education and interior decoration will be benefited. Enjoyment and party is expected in house. indigestion health problem.



VIRGO: Today is the day to earn, travel and study. Expect expenditure for education, travel and entertainment. People in fields like entertainment, art and tourism will be benefited. Fun time with family is indicated. People may suffer from throat pain.



PISCES: Today loss is indicated, so act wisely. Expect expenditure for children, premiums and maintenance. People in fields like liquor shops, bars and pubs will be benefited today. Family dispute is indicated, so try to avoid it. Some people may suffer from back pain.

Pope wants to simplify papal last rites

PREFERS TO BE BURIED OUTSIDE VATICAN

AP / ROME

Pope Francis says he wants to be buried in the Rome basilica of St. Mary Major, not in the grottoes of the Vatican like other popes, so he can be near his favourite icon of the Madonna.

Francis, who turns 87 on Sunday, also said he never thought about resigning this year despite a series of health scares. He said he has a trip confirmed to Belgium next year and visits under consideration to Polynesia and his native Argentina.

"It is true that all journeys are now rethought," Francis told N+ of Mexican broadcaster Televisa. "If they're close by, they can be done. If they're farther away they are rethought. There are limits."

It was Francis' first interview since his latest bout of acute bronchitis, which forced the cancellation of a trip this month to Dubai to participate in the UN climate conference.

Francis, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, appeared in good form and said he was now recovered and feeling fine.

While the job of pope is for life, Francis reconfirmed the possibility of resignation and said he has to prepare for any possibility. "I ask the Lord to say enough, at some point, but when he wants me to," he said.

Francis has already said if he retires, as Pope Benedict XVI did in 2013, he would want to live outside the Vatican somewhere in Rome in a residence for retired priests. Francis has long emphasised his role as bishop of Rome and has a particular devotion



to an icon of the Virgin Mary on display in the St. Mary Major basilica near Rome's main train station.

After every trip, for example, Francis goes to the basilica to pray before the Salus populi Romani (Salvation of the people of Rome), a Byzantine-style painting that features an image of Mary, holding the infant Jesus who in turn is holding a jewelled golden book.

"It's my great devotion," Francis said, adding that he

had already decided he wanted to be buried nearby in the basilica. "The place is already prepared."

Francis had two bouts of bronchitis this year and was hospitalised for nine days in June to repair an abdominal hernia and have intestinal scar tissue removed. He has been using a wheelchair and cane for over a year due to strained knee ligaments.

Many popes are buried in tombs in the grottos underneath St. Peter's Basilica or in side chapels of the basilica itself, including all of Francis' recent predecessors.

On travel, Francis confirmed that a trip to his native Argentina was "pending" and that the country's new president, Javier Milei, had invited him. Francis has been dogged by questions during his entire 10-year papacy about why he hasn't returned home.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Shrimati. Kamalabai Hukamraj Mehta of a member of the Byculla Service Industries Premises Co-operative Society Ltd, having address at Dadoji Konddev Cross Marg, Byculla, Mumbai – 400 027., and holding Unit No. B-103 in the building of the society, died on 15.09.2013 without making any nomination. The society hereby invites claims or objections from the heir or heirs or other claimant or claimants* objector or objectors to the transfer of the said shares and interest of the deceased member in the capital/Property of the society within a period of 15 days from the publication of this notice, with copies of such documents and other proofs in support of his/her*their*claims*objections for transfer of shares and interest of the deceased member in the capital / Property of the society. if no claims*objections are received within the period prescribed above, the society, shall be free to deal with the shares and interest of the deceased member in the capital / property of the society in such manner as is provided under the bye-laws of the society. The claims* objections if any, received by the society for transfer of shares and interest of the deceased member in the capital / property of the society shall be dealt with in the manner provided under the bye-laws of the society. A copy of the registered bye-laws of the society is available for inspection by the claimants*objectors, in the office of the society* with the Secretary of the society between 10:00 AM to 06:00 PM, from the date of publication of the notice till the date of expiry of its period.

Place: Mumbai
Date : 14/12/2023

For and on behalf of
The Byculla Service Industries
Premises Co-op Society Ltd.
Hon. Secretary

Turkish referee leaves hospital after attack by club president

Ankara (Turkey): A Turkish referee was discharged Wednesday from a hospital where he was treated for a facial fracture after being punched by the president of a top-flight soccer club. The attack led to the Turkish

Football Federation suspending all league games. MKE Ankaragucu president Faruk Koca attacked Halil Umur Meler on the pitch after the final whistle of a 1-1 draw in a Super game against Caykur Rizespor on Monday. —AP



MUKESH KUMAR

3 Overs

0 Maiden

34 Runs

2 Wickets

11.33 Econ



PTI / Johannesburg

The Indian bowlers will come under sharp scrutiny in the team's effort to merge the immediate task of series-levelling and the distant target of finding an ideal combination for next year's T20 World Cup during the third and final match against South Africa here on Thursday.

The second T20I against the Proteas was a microcosm of the struggles this next-line Indian bowlers have gone through more often than not over the last three weeks.

The left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh and his right-arm colleague Mukesh Kumar were carted around by South African opener Reeza Hendricks, leaking 15.50 and 11.33 runs per over and they needed to regroup in a day's time.

Of course, rain and dew made their task a bit tough at Port Elizabeth but the pair lacked the imagination or control while bowling in a rather unfavourable environment.

The non-availability of

As India seek series-levelling win over SA in 3rd T20I

pacer Deepak Chahar for personal reasons only have added to the bowling woes.

Arshdeep and Mukesh are the bowlers the management trusts to produce forceful efforts in the absence of seniors like Jasprit Bumrah.

But this reserve bench hasn't been able to vindicate that faith so far, many times finding themselves in deep waters.

In fact, the 4-1 scoreline in the recent home T20I series victory over Australia has cleverly papered over some flaws in this bowling unit.

Arshdeep Singh had bowled a brilliant last over in the fifth T20I at Bengaluru at Aussies but that apart the pacer struggled to find his range in the series where he conceded 10.68 runs per over across four matches for as many wickets.

Mukesh seemed to have added a couple of yards of pace but

the seamer was also largely unable to stop the flow of runs, and against the Australians he took four wickets from four matches but went for 9.12 runs per over.

The second T20I at Gqeberha (formerly Port Elizabeth) was a mere continuation of their travail and they need to pull their act together tomorrow to prevent a series loss in the early part of a tough tour.

With just four T20Is remaining ahead of the T20 World Cup, it is also imperative for them to keep themselves in the mix before the selectors turn

their eyes elsewhere.

Ravindra Jadeja, who played a T20I after a hiatus of one year and four months, too was unimpressive at St George's Park and the Indian vice-captain will be looking for a better outing here.

But then there is always another side to the coin. Rinku Singh continued to impress while making his first fifty in this format and he would be eager to finish on the winning side this time.

Suryakumar scored another fifty, and it was also a statement that the Indian captaincy sits lightly on him.

He would like to guide his side to a series-equalling tri-

umph with his bat and leadership skills.

On that note, India will also expect a quick start from their openers Shubman Gill and Yashasvi Jaiswal - unless Ruturaj Gaikwad recovers from his illness to return to pole position - something that has been central to India's white ball template under head coach Rahul Dravid.

TURNING POINT WAS MIDDLE-OVER SPELLS

South African spinners Tabraiz Shamsi and Aiden Markram used better bowling conditions to the fullest to emerge game-changers for South Africa during their five-wicket victory over India in the rain-affected second T20 International, reckoned Indian batter Tilak Varma. While Varma revived the Indian innings after initial jitters with 29 off 20 balls, off-spinner Markram (1/29 in 3 overs) and left-arm wrist spinner Shamsi (1/18 in 4 overs) gave away only 47 runs between them, taking two vital wickets in the back-10 which stopped India from reaching 200.

Kaur champions the cause
A push for more women's cricket Tests

PTI / Navi Mumbai

With an unapologetic eagerness to witness an expanded stage for women's cricket, Captain Harmanpreet Kaur unabashedly expressed her longing for more Tests in the women's cricket domain.

In a candid admission, she emphasised that India must spearhead the movement towards increased Test matches through consistent, standout performances.

Breaking a hiatus of almost

nine years, India is set to host a Test match against England at the DY Patil Stadium—a momentous occasion marking the return of Test cricket to Indian shores since November 2014 when India faced South Africa in Mysore. As the team gears up for this historic encounter, Kaur's rallying cry resonates, echoing the need for a more prominent and regular presence of Test cricket in the women's game.

"Talking about women's cricket, it is improving day-by-day in India.

We need to use Powerplay more effectively: Suryakumar Yadav

PTI / Gqeberha (South Africa)

In a crucial moment ahead of the third T20I clash against South Africa, Captain Suryakumar Yadav highlights the pivotal role of mastering the Powerplay segment. Facing the challenge at St. George's Park, India faced an early setback, losing openers Shubman Gill and Yashasvi Jaiswal for

55 India scored in power play 5.5 overs

42 South Africa scored in just 2.5 overs

zero, leaving the team at 6 for two in just two overs.

The captain's emphasis on an effective Powerplay becomes the focal point as India aims to level the series with strategic batting in the upcoming encounter. It was in stark contrast to South Africa's start to their chase of a revised target of 152 in 15 overs, as the hosts scored 42 in just 2.5 overs.

"The message was loud and clear. They (SA openers) batted beautifully in the first five-six overs. That's the brand of cricket we were talking about. But we are really looking forward to the third T20I," Suryakumar said at the post-match presentation ceremony.

The message was loud and clear. They (SA openers) batted beautifully in the first five-six overs. That's the brand of cricket we were talking about. But we are really looking forward to the third T20I

— Suryakumar Yadav, Indian skipper



Journey of resilience, gratitude

AAYUSHMAN VISHWANATHAN
Mumbai

Team India's skipper, Rohit Sharma, shares his candid thoughts on the devastating loss to Australia in the 2023 World Cup final, revealing the emotional rollercoaster he experienced in the aftermath.

In an exclusive interview with Mumbai Indians' official Twitter handle, Rohit reflects on the team's journey, expresses gratitude for the unwavering support, and looks ahead to future challenges with renewed determination.

Despite winning 10 consecutive matches and being favourites to lift the crown, India faced a formidable Australia in the final. The Men in Blue had convincingly defeated Australia in the group-stage fixture, but the five-time champions brought their A-game, securing their 6th title.

In the emotional video, Rohit credited his friends and family for providing support during the tough days after the fixture. He expressed gratitude for their efforts in keeping things light around him, acknowledging that it was not easy to move on from the loss.



Indian skipper Rohit Sharma opens up on World Cup heartbreak

Reflecting on his performance, Rohit, the second-highest run-getter of the World Cup with over 550 runs, highlighted the outstanding contributions of Virat Kohli, who amassed 765 runs, breaking multiple records. Despite the disappointment of not reaching the finish line, Rohit expressed pride in the team's exceptional performance throughout the tournament.

The captain admitted that taking a vacation was crucial to help him distance himself from the defeat. He mentioned the overwhelming support from fans and how people appreciated the team's

efforts during the campaign. Despite the disappointment, Rohit thanked the fans for not directing their anger towards the players.

Looking ahead, Rohit acknowledged the fans' support as motivation to go harder after the ultimate prize in the upcoming T20 World Cup. He expressed gratitude for the pure love from fans and emphasised how it encourages the team to regroup and strive for success once again.

As the aggressive opening batter, Rohit is expected to lead India in the 2024 T20 World Cup in the West Indies and USA.

KHAWAJA VOWS TO FIGHT

ROHAN SEN / Mumbai

Australia opener Usman Khawaja has broken his silence on the controversy surrounding his shoes ahead of the first Test against Pakistan in Perth which starts on December 14.

Khawaja wore shoes which read "Freedom is a human right" and "All lives are equal" while training with his teammates ahead of the first Test against Pakistan which starts on December 14.

He was planning to wear the shoes on the first day of the Perth Test but he has been

disallowed from doing so by the ICC.

Khawaja therefore, released a video in which he spoke about what he believes in and what he thinks of the ICC's guidelines regarding political statements being

KHAWAJA NOT TO WEAR THE SHOES

Australian captain Pat Cummins has confirmed that opener Usman Khawaja will not wear shoes supporting Palestine during the 1st Test against Pakistan in Perth, starting on December 14.

made by cricketers on the field.

"I won't say much, I don't need to. What I do want is everyone who did get offended somehow just to ask yourself these questions.

"Is freedom not for everyone? Are all lives not equal?"

"To me personally, it doesn't matter what race, religion or culture you are... Let's be honest about it, if me saying 'all lives are equal' as a result of the people being offended, to the point that they are calling me up and telling me off. Isn't that the bigger problem?"



According to the ICC's Code of Conduct, players and team officials are not permitted to wear, display or otherwise convey messages through arm bands or other items affixed to clothing or equipment unless approved in advance by the player or team official's board.

Russell does it for Windies

Comeback man's all-round performance seals hosts four-wicket win over England

AGENCIES / Barbados

West Indies bowling all-rounder **Andre Russell's** masterclass helped the Caribbeans seal a four-wicket against England in the first T20I match at Kensington Oval in on Wednesday. After winning the toss, the West Indies decided to field first. Following that the host dominated the game from the very first moment.

The opening duo of Philip Salt (40 runs from 20 balls) and Jos Buttler (38 runs from 31 balls) were the only standout batters for the Eng-

lish side in the game. Their contribution helped the away side to 171 runs in the first inning.

Apart from them, Liam Livingstone (27 runs from 19 balls), Will Jacks (17 runs from 9 balls) and Ben Duckett (14 runs from 12 balls) were the other batters who helped England keep going in Barbados in the first inning.

Russell led the West Indies bowling attack after he scalped three wickets and gave only 19 runs. Meanwhile, Alzarri Joseph also picked three wickets but he gifted 54 runs in his 3.3-over spell.



EUROPEAN DREAMS SHATTERED

Manchester United and Sevilla bow out of Champions League disappointingly

AP / Paris

In a night of dashed hopes and formidable challenges, both Manchester United and Sevilla faced the bitter taste of elimination from the Champions League on Tuesday.

The once-mighty United, a three-time winner of the prestigious tournament, found themselves on the wrong side of a 1-0 defeat to six-time champions Bayern Munich, sealing their fate at the bottom of Group A.

Simultaneously, Sevilla, too, succumbed to the harsh reality of their group stage journey, as the elusive Europa League spot slipped through their fingers. Join us as we unravel the twists and turns of a fateful European night that left two football powerhouses grappling with the harsh reality of early exits. Instead, unheralded Danish side Copenhagen qualified in second place after beating Turkish team Galatasaray

1-0 at home.

Galatasaray finished third to qualify for the Europa League knockout round playoff above last-place United - which sustained 4-3 losses at Bayern and Copenhagen and conceded 15 goals in six games. It is only the fourth time a Premier League team has finished bottom of its Champions League group.

SCORELINE

1 Bayern Munich

0 Man UnitedEcon

Earlier on, defending Europa League champion Sevilla - which has won the Europa League seven times - lost 2-1 at Lens to finish bottom of Group B as the French team finished third.

After winger Kingsley Coman neatly scored Bayern's goal in the 71st minute, the away fans goaded United's supporters with

Manchester United's injury list

Harry Maguire and Luke Shaw were injured as Manchester United was eliminated from the Champions League on Tuesday. Maguire left the game in the first half of the 1-0 defeat to Bayern Munich at Old Trafford and Shaw went off at half-time. United manager Erik ten Hag later said it would take 24 hours to assess both players, as he prepares for Sunday's Premier League game at Liverpool. Maguire appeared to injure his groin and was replaced by Jonny Evans in the 40th minute after signalling he could not play on. The England center back pulled up unchallenged and looked in discomfort as he clutched the inside of his left leg.

a rendition of "Football's Coming Home" - a popular English soccer chant coined at the 1996 European Championship, where England lost to Germany in the semifinals - followed by "Auf Wiedersehen!" (So Long!).

Ten Hag saw burly central defender Harry Maguire limping off near the end of the first half after appearing to injure his groin. United was punished when striker Harry Kane set up Coman as Bayern cut through a static defense with ease.

Italian champion Napoli advanced to the last 16 after beating Portuguese side Braga 2-0 at home to finish second in Group C, which had already been won by Real Madrid.

African player of the year Victor Osimhen, who last season helped Napoli to its first Italian league title in 33 years, got Napoli's second goal to continue his return to form.

Last year's Champions League runner-up Inter Milan and Spanish club Real Sociedad had already qualified from Group D and drew 0-0 in Italy, meaning Sociedad topped the group on goal difference.



Michael Jordan headlines inaugural class for Chicago Bulls Ring of Honour

Chicago: Michael Jordan, Scottie Pippen and Dennis Rodman are the headliners for the inaugural class for the Chicago Bulls' Ring of Honour. The Bulls unveiled their plans for the Ring of Honour on

Tuesday. The first class includes 13 men and the 1995-96 team, which went 72-10 and won the NBA title. The franchise plans to honor the group with a couple of events in January.

SPORTS CAFE

Ultimate Kho Kho announces Season 2

New Delhi: Hosts and defending champions Odisha Juggernauts will take on Rajasthan Warriors in the lung opener of the Ultimate Kho Kho Season 2 which will kick off at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium in Cuttack, Odisha, from December 24, 2023. Meanwhile, runners-up in the inaugural season, Telugu Yoddhas aim to go one step further as they face Mumbai Khiladis in their Season 2 opener in the second match of the day. Both teams will clash twice during the 30-match league stage, scheduled to be played between December 24 and January 9.

FIFA announces goalkeeper finalists

Geneva: The International Federation of Football Association (FIFA) announced the finalists of the Best Women's Goalkeeper and Best Men's Goalkeeper awards. The Best of FIFA Football Awards in 2023 will be held on January 15, 2024 in London. Mackenzie Arnold of Australia, Catalina Coll of Spain and Mary Earps of England are the finalists for the Best FIFA Women's Goalkeeper award, while Yassine Bounou of Morocco, Thibaut Courtois of Belgium and Ederson of Brazil are the finalists of the men's awards. FIFA will announce more finalists for The Best FIFA Football Awards 2023 soon. These announcements will include the finalists for The Best FIFA Women's Coach, The Best FIFA Men's Coach, The Best FIFA Women's Player, The Best FIFA Men's Player, and the FIFA Puskas Award.

MCFC coach happy over the outcome

Margao: After Mumbai City FC's goalless draw against FC Goa in the Indian Super League (ISL) at Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Margao on Tuesday, the Islanders' head coach Petr Kratky said that he was happy with just one point in the game. Speaking at the post-match presentation, Kratky accepted that they wanted to win against FC Goa but they are still happy with just one game. He added that they need to improve in a few areas and apart from that he was happy with the game since they managed to keep a clean sheet. "Obviously, we want to win, but considering how the game looked, I'm very happy with the point. But again, I want to win. So, I was a little bit disappointed. But considering how the game went, we need to improve in some areas to score more goals. But overall, I'm happy (that) in (my) first game, we didn't concede a goal and kept a clean sheet. I'm very pleased," Kratky said as quoted by ISL's official website.

CEO Golf Cup from Dec 22

Pune: The CEO Clubs India is set to redefine networking dynamics for entrepreneurs in Pune with its first-ever annual golf event, 'CEO Golf Cup' scheduled for December 22 at Oxford Golf Resort. Sponsored by Table Space, Mercedes, the event is poised to host over 100 avid golfers hailing from diverse industries including manufacturing, civil, media, and more.

Lema takes charge of Mexico's Pumas

Mexico City: Gustavo Lema has been named manager of Pumas UNAM for the 2024 Liga MX season, the Mexico City club said. The 55-year-old Argentine replaces Antonio Mohamed, who tendered his resignation after Sunday's defeat to Tigres UANL in the semifinals of the Liga MX Apertura tournament. "I am very appreciative and committed to this," Lema told reporters. "I'm grateful for the generosity of Antonio because he was the one who pushed me to get to where I am today and to challenge myself."

Barbosa to prove doubters wrong

Rio De Janeiro: Striker Gabriel Barbosa has revealed he is unhappy at Flamengo after losing his regular starting berth with the Rio de Janeiro club. The 27-year-old has been relegated to bit-part roles since former Brazil manager Tite replaced Jorge Sampaoli in the Flamengo dugout in October.

RUSHIKESH BAMNE / MUMBAI

The left-arm spin duo of Arnav Lad (4/64) and Advait Dhore (4/45) orchestrated a mesmerising performance on the concluding day of the Harris Shield Cricket Tournament (Under 16) Final.

Their magical spell propelled Swami Vivekanand International School (SVIS) from Borivali to secure the title once again, triumphing over General Education Academy from Chembur by a commanding 76 runs in the final showdown at the iconic Brabourne Stadium, CCI, Mumbai.

It was in the year 2007 under Skipper Siddesh Lad, the school had won the title, and it is back in their school showcase after 16 years.

This victory marks SVIS's consecutive success, as last year, SVIS from Kandivali clinched the prestigious tournament. Earlier this year, SVIS from Borivali had also claimed the Giles Shield (Under 14) title.

Notably, many players who featured in the Giles Shield at the beginning of the year transitioned to the Harris Shield, continuing their winning streak. Arjun Lotlikar led both teams, and the prize distribution ceremony saw



Jubilant Swami Vivekanand school boys celebrate after the match

the esteemed presence of India's former cricketer Dilip Vengsarkar and Cricket Club of India President Madhumati Lele.

At the conclusion of day 2, SVIS started their second inning at 1 run without loss, and they posted a formidable score of 219 runs in 40 overs,

with Yash Jambhulkar shining with a half-century.

Having secured a 23-run lead in the first inning, SVIS set a target of 243 runs in 40

PIC: SALMAN ANSARI

SVIS regain Harris Shield after 16 yrs

Overcome the stubborn General Education Academy, Chembur by 76 runs

Best Batsman of Final Match- Vedant Nirmal (SVIS)

2. Best Bowler of Finals Anuj Kore (GEA)

3. Best Fielder of Finals Rohan Patil (GEA)

4. All Rounder Yash Jambhulkar (SVIS)

Overall Tournament Awards sponsored by Fancod

1.	Best All-rounder	Shubham Palai (333 runs in 4 matches) of Springfield School
2.	Best Batter	Ayush Shinde (272 runs) General Education
3.	Best Bowler	Arnav Lad of Swami Vivekanand
4.	Best Fielder	Mohd. Arman Khan of Springfield School

overs against GEA. However, GEA managed to muster only 166 runs, losing 9 wickets in the process. Despite the resilient efforts of Rohan Patil (63) and Aayush Shinde (54), victory eluded them.

Nadim Menon, the cricket secretary of MSSA, deserves commendation for his dedicated efforts in steering the entire tournament since day-one. Currently, he's also overseeing another prestigious championship, the Giles Shield, which is currently taking place in the city.

Key Notes:

Arjun Lotlikar joins the elite ranks as only the second SVIS captain to secure both the Harris and Giles Shield titles, a feat previously accomplished by Siddesh Lad.

General Education Academy made a remarkable debut in the Harris Shield tournament and advanced all the way to the final.

The best coach award was given to Aniket Surve from General Education Academy, Chembur.

Paes, Amritraj in Intl Tennis Hall of Fame

Become the first Asian men to be inducted into the Hall of Fame

PTI / NEW DELHI

Former doubles world No. 1 Leander Paes and broadcaster and promoter Vijay Amritraj of India have become the first Asian men to be inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame.

Besides the duo, renowned journalist and writer Richard Evans have also been elected in the Ultimate Honour in Tennis.

Paes, an 18-time Grand Slam champion in doubles and mixed doubles, has been selected in the player category, while Amritraj and United Kingdom's Evans are inductees in the contributor



category, which is considered for election every two years.

The contributor category recognises true pioneers, visionary leaders, or individuals/groups who have made a transcendent impact on the sport.

The Class of 2024 will be officially inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame on Saturday in New-

port, Rhode Island.

Paes, Amritraj and Evans will join an elite group of 264 inductees from 27 nations - with India set to become the 28th nation represented in the Hall of Fame.

"It has been my life's honour to play for my country for over three decades in a sport that has given and taught me everything. This acknowledg-

ment is indeed the ultimate accolade for every tennis player. Induction into the International Tennis Hall of Fame belongs not just to me, but to our billion-plus Indians," Paes said.

"Receiving this honour culminates a professional journey of a lifetime, standing on the shoulders of greats and sets the tone for other youngsters in Asia and around the world."

During his three-decade career, Paes topped the world rankings in doubles and won 18 Grand Slam titles. With eight doubles Grand Slam titles and 10 in mixed doubles, he is one of only three men in tennis history to capture a career Grand Slam in both disciplines.

Paes is tied with his former partner, Hall of Famer Martina Navratilova, for the most mixed doubles major titles in history.

Gohil shines in CFCI's 2-0 victory

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / MUMBAI

CFCI (Community Football Club of India) came good in the second half, scoring two goals during this period to hand ICL Youngstars FC a 2-0 defeat in a Super Division match of the Mumbai Football Association (MFA) League 2023-2024 and played at the Neville D'Souza ground, Bandra on Wednesday morning.

After a barren first session CFCI's dashing striker Khush Gohil scored twice in a span of five minutes to secure the win. Gohil found success when he struck the first goal in the 58th minute and was again on target scoring the second goal in the 63rd

minute to complete the winning tally.

Result

Super Div: CFCI Under-23: 2 (Khush Gohil 2) bt ICL Youngstars FC 0

Aquatics meet

The GMAAA (Greater Mumbai Amateur Aquatic Association) annual Inter-school and junior college swimming championships will be held at Borivali's Mandpeshwar Civic Federation's swimming pool at Gymkhana Road, Prem Nagar on Saturday (Dec 16 \$ 17). All the city and suburban schools are expected to participate in this 2-day competition. For further details GMAAA Joint Secretary Kishore Shetty (98200 95537) may be contacted.

Enhancing your space with red earth ceramics

RIA MUKHERJEE

In the dynamic field of interior design, styles may evolve over time, but certain enduring elements persist in captivating and igniting inspiration. One such trend that has been making waves in the design community is the use of red earth ceramics. With its rich, warm tones and earthy allure, Red earth ceramics bring a sense of grounded sophistication to any space. In this article, we will explore the beauty of this trend and provide tips on how to seamlessly incorporate it into your home decor.

The charm of red earth ceramics: Red earth ceramics draw inspiration from the natural hues found in the earth, reflecting warm terracotta tones and rustic charm. This trend is characterized by handmade ceramic pieces that boast a range of textures, from smooth to slightly rugged, creating a tactile and visually appealing experience. The warmth of these ceramics adds a cozy, welcoming ambience to any room, making them a perfect choice for those seeking a harmonious and earthy aesthetic.



Incorporating Red Earth ceramics into your home:

Feature pieces: Use red earth ceramics as statement pieces to create focal points within a room. Large, handcrafted vases, bowls, or sculptures can serve as eye-catching centerpieces on coffee tables, dining tables, or shelves. The organic shapes and warm hues will instantly draw attention and infuse your space with a touch of artistic elegance.

Wall accents: Consider incorporating red earth ceramics into your wall decor. Arrange a collection of small ceramic plates or bowls in a visually appealing pattern, creating a unique and personalized art installation. This can be an excellent way to showcase the craftsmanship and individuality of each piece while adding depth and texture to your walls.

Functional decor: Red earth ceramics are not just for show; they can also serve practical purposes. Invest in functional pieces like handmade mugs, dinnerware, or plant pots in the warm, earthy tones of Red Earth Ceramics. These items not only contribute to the overall aesthetic but also enhance the daily rituals of living.

Textile companions: Pair red earth ceramics with textiles that complement their warmth. Consider incorporating throw pillows, blankets, or rugs in natural fibers like linen or jute, which will enhance the cozy, earth-inspired atmosphere of the space.

Mix and match: Red earth ceramics play well with a variety of styles. Experiment with mixing these ceramics with modern, minimalist, or bohemian decor to create a unique and eclectic look. It allows for endless possibilities, making it easy to integrate them into existing design schemes.



Red earth ceramics bring a timeless and grounding quality to interior decor, inviting a sense of warmth and authenticity into your home. By strategically incorporating these handmade treasures, you can achieve a space that not only reflects your personal style but also connects with the natural beauty of the earth. Embrace the Red Earth Ceramics trend and let its rich hues transform your comfort and style.

NEETA SENACHA

Amidst a plethora of exceptional skincare ingredients such as retinol and vitamin C, niacinamide stands out due to its remarkable versatility in addressing a wide array of skincare concerns and catering to various skin types. Also known as Vitamin B3, niacinamide is a potent ingredient that offers a multitude of benefits for your skin. Let's delve into the wonders of niacinamide and discover how it can become your skin's new best friend.

What is niacinamide?

Niacinamide is the water-soluble form of Vitamin B3, a crucial nutrient that plays a vital role in maintaining overall skin health. Found in various foods and available as a topical skincare ingredient, Niacinamide has gained popularity for its diverse range of benefits.



Who is it for?

Niacinamide is suitable for virtually all skin types, making it an inclusive and versatile ingredient. Whether you have sensitive, acne-prone, dry, or mature skin, incorporating Niacinamide into your routine can bring about positive changes.

Layering: Niacinamide's compatibility with other potent ingredients like peptides, hyaluronic acid, AHAs, BHA, and antioxidants opens up a realm of possibilities for strategic layering. Whether applied in the morning or at night, before or after other serums for a tailored skincare routine.

Sunscreen is a must: While Niacinamide provides some defense against UV damage, it is imperative to prioritize daily sunscreen application. This additional layer of protection is crucial for maximizing the benefits of Niacinamide.

Niacinamide: The best friend for your skin

Benefits of niacinamide for skin:

Balances oil production:

Niacinamide helps regulate the production of sebum, the skin's natural oil. This is a game-changer for those with oily or combination skin, as it aids in controlling excess oil and preventing clogged pores, ultimately reducing the risk of acne breakouts.

Reduces redness and inflammation:

Known for its anti-inflammatory properties, Niacinamide is effective in calming irritated and red skin. Whether dealing with occasional redness or conditions like rosacea, incorporating Niacinamide into your skincare routine can help soothe and alleviate discomfort.



Minimizes fine lines and wrinkles:

This wonder ingredient stimulates collagen production, promoting skin elasticity and reducing the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles. Regular use of Niacinamide can contribute to a smoother and more youthful complexion.

Diminishes hyperpigmentation:

Say goodbye to dark spots and uneven skin tone. Niacinamide inhibits the transfer of pigment within the skin, making it an excellent ally in fading hyperpigmentation, sunspots, and other forms of discoloration.

Strengthens the skin barrier:

Niacinamide enhances the skin's natural barrier function by boosting the production of ceramides and fatty acids. A robust skin barrier is essential for retaining moisture, preventing water loss, and protecting against environmental aggressors.

How to use niacinamide:

Choose the right product: Opt for products such as serums, creams, or moisturizers specifically formulated with this powerhouse ingredient. These targeted formulations seamlessly blend into your existing regimen.

Start slow: Begin with a lower concentration of Niacinamide and gradually increase it over time. This methodical approach helps minimize the risk of potential reactions and ensures a smooth transition into your skincare routine.

Sunscreen is a must: While Niacinamide provides some defense against UV damage, it is imperative to prioritize daily sunscreen application. This additional layer of protection is crucial for maximizing the benefits of Niacinamide.

Niacinamide helps with:

Refining pores: Niacinamide emerges as a formidable solution in the battle against enlarged pores. By regulating sebum production and promoting skin elasticity, this vitamin contributes to the tightening of pores. This effect not only enhances the overall texture of the skin but also reduces the appearance of enlarged pores, providing a smoother and more refined complexion.

Banishing dullness: Say farewell to lackluster skin with Niacinamide's dynamic ability to combat dullness. Through encouraging a healthy cell turnover rate, this potent vitamin ensures that tired and dull layers are replaced with fresh, radiant skin. Incorporating Niacinamide into your skincare routine becomes a powerful strategy for banishing dullness, leaving you with a revitalized complexion.

Side effects of niacinamide:

Niacinamide, while widely tolerated and known for its soothing benefits that contribute to skin health, can cause a flushing effect on the skin for some individuals.

It's important to note that a temporary flushing sensation may occur in some individuals using niacinamide, either topically or through supplements. This brief redness or warmth on the skin is generally harmless and fades over time, but individuals experiencing prolonged discomfort should seek guidance from a skincare professional.



How long should you wait to drink water after eating?

SAKHI PANDEY

The first thing we tend to reach out for once we're done with our food is water. It's such a compulsory habit for most of us, that we can't seem to gulp our food down, feeling an unquenchable thirst. Although water is great, a proven elixir of life and should be consumed as often as possible, there are certain particular times we should avoid consuming it. One of them is directly after we have had our food. It might seem a little impossible to follow this rule at first, but it gets easier as we start making it a routine. After reading all this, there might be one question lingering at the back of your head, the only thing that will drive you into taking the decision to not drink water directly after consuming food, and that is "Why?"



Why avoid water right after meals?

Avoid drinking water immediately after eating, as it disrupts the three-stage digestion process – before, during, and after meals. Wait at least 30 minutes after dinner to allow for proper digestion. Consuming water right after eating can upset the fluid-solid balance in digestion, leading to increased hunger, calorie intake, and bloating.

Maintaining a 30-minute gap between eating and drinking allows the body to progress to the next stage of digestion without interference. Drinking water directly after meals dilutes essential digestive juices and enzymes, leading to higher acidity levels, heartburn, and decreased nutrient absorption.

The habit of post-meal water consumption negatively impacts digestion, nutrient absorption, and food quality. Water's cooling effect on food can contribute to obesity by disrupting digestion and causing the storage of undigested food as fat, leading to increased insulin levels and the risk of diabetes and obesity. Apart from obesity and diabetes, gulping down water directly after food also increases the uric acid levels, LDL cholesterol, VLDL and triglycerides.

LDL (Low-density lipoproteins):

This is also known as bad cholesterol. As mentioned above, the undigested food in our body is converted into fat leading to an increase in the levels of bad cholesterol in the body. Moreover, elevated LDL makes blood flow difficult, increasing blood pressure and risking heart attacks if it occurs regularly.

Uric acid:

An increase in the uric acid levels leads to knee pains, shoulder pains and even pain in one's wrist joints. It also leads to swelling up of ankles, elbows, wrists and so on.

VLDL (Very low-density lipoproteins):

VLDL is worse than LDL. VLDL in our body increases due to improper digestion and if prolonged or the level of VLDL increases, it could be life-threatening.

Triglycerides:

Undigested food due to consuming water directly after meals leads to an increase in the levels of triglycerides. Triglycerides are basically the main components of natural fats and oils. Therefore, high triglyceride levels may lead to heart risks and extremely high levels could even stop the blood supply to the brain or the heart completely.

In conclusion, while water remains an indispensable element for our well-being, it's crucial to consider the timing of consumption. Drinking ice-cold water post-meals can impair digestion, posing risks to heart health, diabetes, and obesity. Prioritizing the digestive system's well-being over immediate hydration, we recommend waiting 30 minutes before and after meals to drink water.

This small adjustment contributes significantly to overall health, ensuring the harmony of our digestive processes. So, hydrate wisely, giving your body the time it needs for optimal digestion and, consequently, a healthier and happier life.

SYEDA FARAH NOOR

The moment we hear the word "snacking" the only thought that comes to our mind is about the extra weight gain. This is something that we all have been assuming wrong since generations. Resisting the urge to eat a cheese burger, chocolates or candies can be curbed with a sudden snacking break. This makes a lot of difference in your overall metabolism in the long run. Nutrition is the key to a healthy lifestyle. By being healthy you can keep diseases at bay, stay away from heart diseases and also have a good overall health. Remember, eating healthy food is very important. Choosing healthy snacks is important during snack time as compared to any mealtime. Healthy snacks can add fibre and nutrients to your diet without adding on those extra calories. Therefore, make sure you choose the right types of snacks. In this article, we are here to share some of the strange healthy snacking benefits that we all must learn. Learn about these healthy benefits and make a difference in your overall health.

Health benefits of snacking

Binge control

If consumption of a small fruit or vegetable helps to keep you away from the extra servings then you need to be thankful for the snacks that you had just before your meal. This is one of the easiest ways to cut down on your calories.

Extra energy and nutrients

With the fast foods easily available, we miss out on the actual nutrients that our body needs and we consume unhealthy foods. Having some healthy nutritious and fibrous snacks helps the body to regain energy.

Controls hunger pangs

Snacking in between meals can help you control your hunger pangs. It helps to keep your hunger level down to a minimum and avoids the feeling of being deprived of food.

Controls insulin level

This might shock you and it is quite a tricky one, as it totally depends on the snack that you are eating. Eating snacks that have low sugar content does lower and maintain the blood sugar level.

Acts as brain booster

Eating more of protein-rich snacks acts as a brain booster, as it helps to keep the brain more active by fueling it with more energy. It also helps to increase the concentration level. This is one of the strangest health benefits of snacking.

Snacks as fuel

Opting for healthier snacks, fruits, veggies and nuts help to keep the body running smoothly. The less healthy snacks that you choose may be great in taste due to the sugar content, but once the rush of sugar is gone, you might feel cranky and irritated. Therefore, opt for healthy snacking instead.



JANHAVI PATEL

White spots on the skin can occur for a variety of reasons. Most of them occur due to loss of pigmentation as you age. A lot of these are not harmful and can be treated at home. But if you do have a mole that changes shape, colour, texture or size every day or every once in a while, you should definitely consider getting it checked.

What gives colour to our cells?

Our skin gets its colour from a group of naturally occurring pigments collectively called melanin, which is produced in cells called melanocytes. Melanin is produced by the oxidation of tyrosine, an amino acid, and then followed by polymerization. This process is called melanogenesis.

Melanin is an absorbent of UV radiation; it can dissipate up to 99% of the radiation. UV radiation is what onsets melanogenesis in humans, causing the skin to darken in colour. Because of this property it is said that melanin protects cells in our body from UV damage, reducing risks of cancer. Though the study is ongoing, it is said that more the melanin, the

darker the tone of skin, the lesser is the chance of acquiring any form of skin cancer.

Melanin is present in the skin, brain cells, inner ear, retina of the eye, hair and in the adrenal gland. Melanocytes are found in the basal layer of the epidermis of the skin. Though the amount of these cells is more or less the same in all individuals, the synthesis of melanin differs.

This difference in synthesis of melanin is what determines the colour of the skin of an individual. In some individuals there's no synthesis of melanin at all; this condition is called albinism. In this condition, the skin of the individual is paper white and there is no colour in the eyebrows, eyelashes, eyes and the hair on the head. A group of melanocytes in a cluster give rise to moles, age spots, freckles and other spots on the skin. Sometimes there can be a reduction of melanin production causing white spots; this is called hypopigmentation. Due to age and many other factors, these melanocytes sometimes get damaged or disintegrate altogether. This can be seen in all age groups. Though the white spots that appear on older women's skin is caused by one condition - Idiopathic guttate hypomelanosis.

Idiopathic guttate hypomelanosis: Understanding white spots on the skin



What is idiopathic guttate hypomelanosis?

Idiopathic guttate hypomelanosis is a condition that causes flat, white spots of the size 2-5 mm going up to 10 mm, called macules to appear on the skin as you age. Idiopathic means "cause in unknown", guttate means "like a teardrop" and hypomelanosis refers to the loss of pigmentation, or the white colour of the spots that appear. It is known to affect people with a light skin colour

more than the ones who have a concentrated amount of melanin. These spots can appear in any part of the body that has been exposed to the sun. Women are more prone to acquiring this condition than men, especially those above the age of 40. Sometimes, idiopathic guttate hypomelanosis is confused with vitiligo, where the melanocytes die or don't produce melanin anymore.

What causes idiopathic guttate hypomelanosis?

The causes of idiopathic guttate hypomelanosis can be speculated. The three most popular speculations being -

Age: Occurrences of idiopathic guttate hypomelanosis have been recorded in a higher number with older age. It's considered to be similar to greying of hair. It's unavoidable for many. With age, the number of melanocytes reduces in the epidermis, giving rise to this condition. These spots are first spotted on the legs before they start showing up on the other areas.

Exposure to the sun: It has also been debated to be caused by sun damage. Excessive exposure to the sun can not only cause your skin to darken but after a threshold these white discolourations start to appear.

Non-sun related: seborrheic keratosis - This is a non-cancerous skin tumor that originates from the keratinocytes that are present on the upper layer of the skin. These could cause the onset of idiopathic guttate hypomelanosis.



How can IGH be treated?

Speaking very bluntly, there is no treatment for this ageing ailment. As we know, it's like greying of your hair, inevitable. Also, treatment is not required because these white spots are completely harmless.

Laser treatment: Laser treatment can be used for permanent removal of this type of discolouration. Though laser treatment has a set of side effects that you need to make yourself aware of before you opt for it.

Phototherapy: Treatment with light.

Makeup: If you're very conscious about these spots and don't want to undergo any medical treatment, then makeup is the solution. Though this could help cover the spots on the face only, until you have the patience to cover all the spots on your body.

Cryotherapy: Liquid nitrogen is used here to freeze tissues at a cellular level.

Chemical peels: Like phenol and trichloroacetic acid peels.

Microdermabrasion: A minimal abrasion instrument is used to sand your skin.

Retinoids: Like tretinoin cream.



Home remedies for IGH

There are also some home remedies that can be tried, though the results are not definite.

Cabbage: Incorporate cabbage in your diet. Apply or drink cabbage juice. It's known to help this condition.

Walnuts and figs: These two have a lot of antioxidants that help fight sun damage.

Ginger juice: Drink or apply ginger juice with a few drops of lemon juice to the spots directly.

There's no reason to worry about these white spots on your skin. Idiopathic guttate hypomelanosis is completely harmless. So it does not affect your health in any way, and is inevitable as we age.

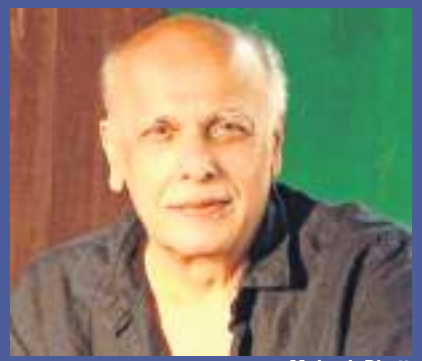
**Actor
Andre
braucher
dies at 61**



Actor Andre Braucher, who starred in TV shows like Brooklyn Nine-Nine and Homicide: Life on the Street, passed away at the age of 61. Braucher's publicist Jennifer Allen confirmed the news of his death to Variety, a US-based media outlet. He was known for his role as Captain Raymond Holt on the police procedural comedy show 'Brooklyn Nine-Nine' which he played from 2013 until 2021. His character's stoic and no-nonsense personality made him an instant fan favorite of the show, especially when paired with Andy Samberg's hotshot Det. Jake Peralta in a scene. He also won a lead actor Emmy for his role as Detective Frank Pembleton in the show 'Homicide: Life on the Street', and another Emmy Award for miniseries or movie for his performance in Thief, reports suggest. Born in Chicago, Braucher graduated from Stanford University, and then attended Juilliard School in the drama division. — ANI

PAPA Bhatt reacts to the success of Ranbir's *Animal* and Alia's big win at the National Awards

A PERIOD TO REMEMBER



Mahesh Bhatt

LIPIKA VARMA

Shri KS Rama Rao and Mahesh Bhatt share a memorable association while Mahesh Bhatt had directed *Criminal* which was produced by Shri KS Rama Rao. *Criminal* (1994) starred Nagarjuna, Ramya Krishna and Manisha Koirala and was shot simultaneously in Telugu and Hindi languages. The two recently met during the trailer launch of a film titled *Shantala*.

It is a period film set to release on December 15, 2023. Produced by Dr Irrinki Suresh under the direction Seshu Peddiredy. The film stars debutante Ashlesha Thakur and Nihal Kodhaty.

Talking about the film, KS Rama Rao says, "Actually, my friend in Ohio, America had this idea. The content has Carnatic music that is also part of the story. I decided to back this period film as we felt we could present it with a difference."

Mahesh Bhatt, who has always been vocal about women empowerment comes forward in support of the women empowerment story of this tribal girl in *Shantala*. "KS Rama Rao has come from Hyderabad and we met after 30 long years. He has contributed a lot



KS Rama Rao

to my life. Seshu used to be my assistant 30 years back. It's an opportunity for me to attend this trailer release. It's an intriguing female empowerment story. This is a story of a tribal woman, who has been looking forward to fulfil her dreams."

"I am of the opinion that until a man joins hands in the fight of women attaining freedom and fulfilling her dreams she will not be able to achieve her aim. The emancipation of a man [with the support of the woman empowerment. This film is being made in all the languages. This indeed is a great thing as it will reach all the audiences," he further states.

After playing a child artist in *The Family Man*, Ashlesha Thakur is all excited to be associated with this film. She shares, "I got the opportunity as they loved my performance in *The Family Man*. They approached me and told me there is a part which is about a girl who comes from different era Seshu sir believed in me and felt I could do justice to the story. We did some workshops which helped me in learning the rhythm of the story. This is the story of those girls, who through their dancing skill cherish to gain empowerment. I took it as a huge responsi-

bility and tried to do justice to my job."

While praising her capabilities, Bhatt tells, "When I saw her dancing, I realised that Seshu has taken longer shots and cut the shots frequently. Choreographers usually cut shots so as to make the artist feel comfortable. This child does it in one whole breath. She was dancing on the hot ground and continued to dance even though she had to dance bare feet. This generation has the audacity to do their best and face the compelling challenges yet come out successful."

Nihal Kodhaty shares, "My parents used to watch Bhatt *saab*'s films when they were in love. And when they came to know that Bhatt *saab* is going to be present at the trailer launch, they were so happy. I would like to reveal in the presence of Bhatt *saab* that my parents got married because they watched your films."



Ranbir in *Animal*

Meanwhile...

"Box office is also important. According to me, since the dawn of time this discussion has been going on that whether the movie should only cater to aesthetic needs or make money? Well, it will go on till movies are made. I think the intent with which you start making movies is very important. I personally feel that if you achieve both, creative plus box office success, then your motto is achieved, but that's a rare phenomenon," says Mahesh Bhatt. "I can't speak about my kids praising your own face won't look nice. But yes, if the world is saying so, then it feels great. Indeed, Alia has made me proud but with the latest success of *Animal*, Ranbir is making me prouder. Alia has indeed made me proud with the kind of films she has chosen to be part of. Yes, Alia winning the National Award which is the most prestigious award has brought in loads of proud moments in the family," he adds.



Alia and Ranbir at the National Awards ceremony

Round-up 2023

The actor had three big releases—*Anek*, *Doctor G* and *An Action Hero* in 2022



Ayushmann at IAA INDIAA Awards 2023

CJ DESK

Ayushmann Khurrana, who was recognised again as one of the most influential people in the world by a prestigious magazine feels that 2023 is a milestone year. The actor also delivered a 100-crore theatrical hit, *Dream Girl 2* and is appointed UNICEF's National Ambassador for India this year.

An elated Ayushmann says, "Professionally, 2023 was very special and it gave me a lot of love and respect. To be awarded by the prestigious magazine again for my cinematic choices was really humbling. I proudly represented India and Indian cinema globally at an event that the entire world watched. For me, that's a massive personal milestone."

"I have always tried to do my bit to give back and use my voice to support the rights of children in particular. It was amazing to be appointed as the UNICEF National Am-

bassador this year and grow within this organisation that is aiding and transforming the lives of millions worldwide," he adds.

"Nothing tastes sweeter than box office success and I'm glad that *Dream Girl 2* gave me a theatrical hit that I will cherish forever. As actors, we live and die every Friday and I am glad that I could rejoice the Friday of *Dream Girl 2*'s release. I have always felt happy to contribute towards my industry and I am glad that *Dream Girl 2* became a resounding success story. I have to thank my producer Ekta Kapoor, my director Raaj Shaandilyaa for giving me a franchise that has only given all of us a lot of love and appreciation," he further states.

On September 1st, the actor also won the title of The Most Disruptive Brand in the Entertainment Industry at IAA INDIAA Awards 2023.

K3G turns 22!

■ Riding on the success of *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (1998), this was Karan Johar's second directorial.

■ The iconic pairing of Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol was the major highlight of the film.

Here's why *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* that released on December 14, 2001 was a huge success.

■ Karan considered Rani Mukerji's cameo as his lucky charm.

■ The music album of the film was one of the most saleable ones across audio/video formats.

■ Kareena Kapoor Khan's famous character Poo was a rage amongst youth

■ The film garnered enough buzz pre-release for its marketing campaign, stylish outfits etc.

■ It was also learnt that Abhishek Bachchan also shot for the film but owing to the longer runtime, Karan decided to chop off the part from in the final cut.



A still from *Dream Girl 2*



SAGARIKA CHOUDHARY

Actor Siddhant Karnick has had quite an eventful year, first with *Made In Heaven* and now, *Animal*. He played the evil brother-in-law to Ranbir

Kapoor in *Animal*, and has caught the eyes of the audiences and critics alike with his performance in the blockbuster.

Now, in a candid chat with *The Free Press Journal*, Siddhant reveals that he has been basking in all the love and appreciation ever since *Animal* hit the theatres. "I am being called 'the jiji' one should never have' and that's kind of funny. People are saying, 'I hated you, but you were so good', and that is the best compliment an actor can get," he gushes.

Animal released on December 1 and it sparked a massive debate amongst cinegoers, with the majority of the population slamming the makers and calling the film misogynist. However, Siddhant opines that the fact that the film has managed to create a buzz is a huge success in itself.

"The more people talk about it, the better. It's our job as storytellers to make people react and that can be in any way—good, bad or ugly—and that's beyond my control. But the fact that people are talking about it and it is brewing conversations is successful enough for me," he says.

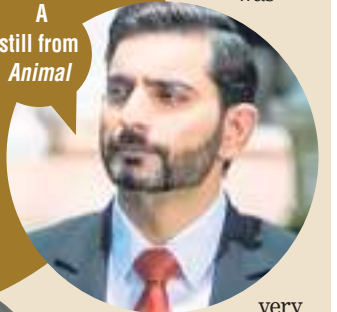
Reacting to the audience's opinion that *Animal* glorified the dark and toxic character played by Ranbir, Siddhant explains, "I think more than glorifying, the film has put across a dark character in a very stylised format. We are not saying that there is glory in being dark and we are not asking people to be like the character. It is a stylised film and, therefore, even the darkness, along with the other traits

of the character, are stylised and that's just the genre of the film."

In *Animal*, Ranbir can be proudly seen calling himself an 'alpha male' while wooing Rashmika Mandanna. However, Siddhant believes that the entire concept of alpha male is redundant now. "It started off during the cavemen days, but today, we live in a civilised society, where instead of one of the partners being alpha, it is about an equal relationship. But in the film, it was

Not so JIJAJI

A still from *Animal*



very important to establish the concept because it then defines how Ranbir's character and his mental state is," he states.

When quizzed about the reaction of the women in his life after watching *Animal*, Siddhant quips, "I think somewhere along the line that cliché is true that women like the bad boys because I've been getting that extra smile every now and again before and after a conversation post *Animal*."

The one thing that was common for Siddhant with both his projects this year—*Made In Heaven* and *Animal*—was his portrayal of negative characters, and he reveals that he wishes to do more of it in future.

"I enjoy playing a layered character, and to be honest, I have often seen that the good characters don't have many shades to show, whereas the villainous ones are a lot more layered, and that is something I am attracted to. I love being versatile, and bad roles just give me more versatility and more meat in the characters I play," he shares.

PICS: VARINDER CHAWLA

CAUGHT ON CAM

Neetu Kapoor opts for casuals at the Mumbai International airport

Tara Sutaria looks stunning in an all-black attire

Celebs were snapped as they were out and about in Mumbai

Karishma Tanna poses for our shutterbugs outside her gym



Rohan Bopanna and Gul Panag at an event while launching the new range of shoes

Surveen Chawla is all smiles at a film production office in Bandra

MUMBAI SCHOOLS SURVEY 2023

Welcome to a world of endless possibilities, where dreams become reality and ordinary becomes extraordinary. Get ready to experience the grandeur of the 2nd edition of the highly anticipated Mumbai Schools Survey 2023, brought to you by Mumbai's favourite newspaper, The Free Press Journal. Experience the excitement and joy of a truly unforgettable event, where schools from far and wide came together to participate in our exclusive survey. Experience the vibrant atmosphere at The Gallery, located within the prestigious Four Seasons Hotel at Worli. The venue was alive with an infectious energy, as laughter and cheer filled the air. Esteemed principals, teachers, and other respected academicians mingled and engaged in lively conversations, while eagerly accepting their well-deserved accolades and prizes. Introducing to you: a dazzling showcase of four pages filled to the brim with glitz, glamour and endless fun!

EXPERIENCE THE AWE-INSPIRING TRIUMPHS OF THE SCHOOLS THAT EMERGED VICTORIOUS



Branding Manager, Mr. Vikas Ahuja (third from left) of Mainadevi Bajaj International School



Director Principal, Ms. Debika Chatterji (fourth from left) of JBCN International School, Borivali



Executive Director, Ms. A. Katial (third from left) of Veer Bhagat Singh International School



General Manager, Ms. Farida Lokhandwala (third from left) & Sr. Academic Manager, Ms. Zahara Husain (fourth from left) of Podar Prep



Head of Dept. High School, Ms. Rachna (fourth from left) of Shishuvan English Medium School



Head of School, JVLR Campus, Dr. Paul Ducharme (fifth from left) of Oberoi International School



Principal, Ms. Fauzia Ansari (third from left) of Anjuman-I-Islam's Begum Sharifa Kalsekar Girls' English High School



Principal, Mr. Davi Sanchez Netto (second from left) and Deputy Principal Primary, Ms. Neelu Kalro (third from left) of JBCN International School, Parel



Principal, Mrs. Beena Anilkumar Menon (third from left) of B.P.M. High School, Khar West



Principal, Mrs. Ishita Chowdhury (fourth from left) of Pawar Public School, Dombivli



Principal, Mrs. Suma Das (fourth from left) and Coordinator, Mrs. Kawaljeet Kaur Bhardwaj (third from left) of Pawar Public School, Bhandup



Principal, Ms. Ajita Gupta (second from left) of Lodha World School, Talaja



Principal Director, Dr. Radhika Vakharia (fourth from left) of OES International School, Andheri



Principal, Dr. Beena Nayaken (third from left) of The Universal School



Deputy Principal Secondary, Ms. Mousumi Basu (third from left) and Principal Primary, Ms. Sharana Saxena (fourth from left) of JBCN International School, Oshiwara



Director, Mrs. Jean M Gomes (third from left) & Principal, Ms. Savvy Mendonca (fourth from left) of C.E.S.'s Michael High School



Incharge of Social Media, Mr. Vikas Ahuja (second from left) of Ramniwas Bajaj English High School



Vice Principal, Ms. Kanchan Gupta (third from left) of Lilavatibai Podar High School



UNPARALLELED LEADERSHIP: MUMBAI POLICE COMMISSIONER

Introducing the esteemed **Mr. Vivek Phansalkar**, the distinguished Mumbai Police Commissioner, who graced the Mumbai Schools Survey 2023 as our esteemed Chief Guest. Prepare to be captivated by his powerful words as he delves deep into the dark underbelly of drug abuse, shedding light on the menacing grip it holds on our society.

Education, like health, is an important social sector in which we need to work and invest if the society has to achieve some good standards that can be compared internationally.

Having said that, let me take this opportunity to tell you what Mumbai Police have been doing over the past one and a half years. We took cyber initiatives with The Free Press Journal and handled the auto rickshaw and taxiwalla issues as well. I would like to tell you that under the guidance of the current Chief Minister of Maharashtra Shri Eknath Shinde and the Deputy Chief Minister, who also is the Home Minister, Shri Devendra Fadnis, we launched in Mumbai what we call a 'war on drugs'.

The drug menace has been there for quite some time and especially among schoolchildren. I am sure teachers, directors and principals who are sitting here must have encountered a lot of kids in their school who don't seem normal. They are probably easy prey to drugs. So, in our war on drugs, let me tell you, that in the last one and a half years, we have had some action taken by the anti-narcotics cell of the Mumbai Police and also the police stations. You will be surprised that in the last one year, we have registered as many as 1,268 cases. These figures are till 31st October 2023. We have also arrested 1,558 accused. They were in possession of various drugs like ganja and MD, cocaine, heroin and LSD.

Codeine-based cough syrups also are becoming a major menace. We tied up with the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation and identified school areas where there was a possibility of paan, masala, gutka etc. being sold. So, in the last six months, my office tells me that we have shut down more than 2,400 paan shops and tapris, and other places that have been selling these things. You will be happy to note that last year we registered 2,428 cases including a case where eight kilos of MD was seized. The market price was Rs. 4,856 crores! We pursued it to its logical

end and found manufacturing units outside Mumbai and successfully destroyed these facilities.

Even this year, if you have been reading the Free Press Journal, you might have read that very recently at Sakli Naka station, we got hold of a person with 10mg of narcotic material MD. One investigation led to another. We tried to cut through their supply chain. We arrested 20-odd people and our probe led us to a place in Nashik where Rs. 325 crores worth of narcotics was seized.

The need is for a campaign where students, teachers, parents and every member of society have to be an equal partner and an equal participant. Because, you know, if the demand goes down, the supply also automatically goes down. We are trying to attack the supply chain. We are trying to arrest the peddlers and curb availability on the street.

I am told that, in the last six months, the cost of this material has tripled, which means that the availability is less and the credit goes to Mumbai Police's relentless efforts.

We try to connect to more than 7,000 municipal schools. The first person who comes to know that something is going wrong with a student is his friend in the class and then the teachers. Now, this is a problem of values. We are not instilling enough values. This covering up for others is not friendship. Exposing and helping the kid to move away from the drug habit is friendship. So, it is incumbent upon the teachers and the parents to inculcate good values.

These are the boys and girls who are going to be responsible citizens of our country tomorrow. They will hold higher positions. And in turn, take the country to dizzying heights. But it should start at the beginning in schools and at homes. You can't push everything on some other agency. I am aware that these days everyone is working at home. They spare less time and attention to their kids and try to compensate for that by giving them

some more money, mobile etc., at a very early age. All this is not necessary. We grew up without mobiles. My first mobile, I think came in 2000 or 2001. And it was almost not used because the outgoing call price was Rs.16 a minute and the incoming was Rs.4 a minute!

And even now, I use it only for official messages and official work. I hardly have time to go through TikTok messages and such other messages that go viral. You must be following the Twitter handle of Mumbai Police, and if you are not, you must as it's one of the most popular handles. We try to add a bit of humour and bring some spice into otherwise dull lives.

I would also like to tell you that women's safety and the girl child's safety are one of our highest priorities. Crime against women in Mumbai has gone down by 5% this year. We ensure that every woman in the city can travel to between home and workplace safely at any hour of the night. I also appeal to all mothers to bring up their children with good values.

We will have to train all of our boys to be very respectful towards girls, and not just their sisters, mothers and relatives, but every girl and boy in the world. I hope that the 96 schools here take up this initiative of educating the boys and the boys' mothers in particular. You have these parent-teacher associations. You will be able to do that. You will be able to invite all the mothers to these parent-teacher association meetings and emphasize bringing up the boys properly. It is very, very important.

You know, I was brought up by my grandmother, and whatever I am today is because of her. We have undertaken a drive against gutka and e-cigarettes. You know, e-cigarettes have become a bigger kind of a craze and you will be happy to know that we have seized close to 38,873 such e-cigarettes.

Congratulations to all the schools that were surveyed. Congratulations to all the schools that are going to win the awards. And, more congratulations to those who didn't win.

Technology and children: How much is too much?

Our distinguished jury met to explore and discuss the benefits and drawbacks of technology in relation to children. The conclusion reached by the panelists was that technology can be beneficial provided it is utilized in a responsible manner.



LAJWANTI D'SOUZA (HOST)

Threw open a discussion on Tech and Kids: Is technology a good occurrence, a bad influence, an awful awakening or simply bold and ugly. At the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, technology was an essential part of existence; nevertheless, its pros and cons are still hotly debated. Speakers on our panel elaborated on the topic.

LINA ASHAR

We look for the problem as always being external to ourselves. And it's not that technology is good or bad, it's the use of technology. The solution is to find out what is causing anxiety in kids, and what is causing a sense of emotional disconnection in kids. One cannot socially interact using technology so I think we need to go back to the root cause of why kids are addicted to technology. If you tell them what happens to their brains when they're over-gaming and releasing all that dopamine, and then when their brain needs to come into homeostasis it releases all the stress, anxiety & unhappy hormones. We're all born to survive. We just need to be able to tell our kids the best way that they're born to survive.

BASANTI ROY

Online learning has to be there but how much? Proper thought should be given to it. It should facilitate the teaching and learning as it plays an important supporting role. Online courses which are there for children should not be there. The Maharashtra government has also banned the use of mobile in school as there are psychological issues that comes with it.

HENRY MENEZES

Today we're talking about technology in sports and education which have the dark sides and the other side of it. Same goes with technology as well, we have to bring in some discipline if we have to get into school at the least because it's a mode of education, not of getting the kids astray. I think if you don't have a gadget in the hand of the kids for more than two hours, they'll start having psychological difficulties if we don't curb and discipline that. I don't say technology is bad, but I think technology has to be looked at in a very positive way. And if there are rules and regulations to it, teachers, parents and everybody have to get behind this and bring an order to it. Online learning is only going to advance so we have to be prepared for it, pressure will be there but that is what technology does.

ARNAB DEO, ON BEHALF OF SWATI VASUDEVAN

Technology is a great thing for us and we have seen so much being transformed. Khan Academy has free educational content for anyone who wants to use it. One thing we had to deal with was - Is it going to replace the traditional education method? If we have to grow and create an impact we have to go to rural India where the internet is just coming. Rural children were hesitant to use it because of their teachers and then we had a long conversation enforcing the importance of teaching. If the children want to skill up or reach out to more students, technology is an important part. It'll only help in optimizing and personalizing teaching and learning experiences. Responsibility is always there in every sphere but it is about how we are going to use it, as long as our intention is right.

JURY MEMBERS

LINA ASHAR

Founder of Dreamtime Learning School

HIMANSHU RAI

Director of Indian Institute of Management, Indore

HENRY MENEZES

Former Indian Football Team Goalkeeper and a Governing Council Member at the International Sports University

SWATI VASUDEVAN

Country Director of Khan Academy, India

BASANTI ROY

Director at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan

FARIDA LAMBAY

Founder Trustee at Pratham

LAJWANTI D'SOUZA

Consulting Editor with The Free Press Journal

THE FPJ'S HONEST PROMISE

The FPJ promised an amazing celebration, and it was delivered on December 7 at The Four Seasons Hotel—the celebration of outstanding schools, those that are making a difference in Mumbai's educational landscape by teaching the next generation and creating a bright future. What made the FPJ Mumbai Schools Survey 2023 unique was the comprehensive evaluation, surveying, and awarding that took place on the night. The study, which is known for its objectivity, lack of ranks, and free assessment, zeroed in on five critical areas that served as parameters for the survey:

- Learning & Curriculum,
- Sports & Extracurricular Activities,
- Tech-Savvy Teaching,
- Inclusive Classrooms,
- Future Readiness & Upskilling.

The FPJ is quite proud of the survey's approach, which advocates for openness and truthfulness. Instead of relying on assertions, schools were evaluated based on evidence of their integrated initiatives. An esteemed jury panel that consists of the above mentioned people guaranteed expert insights and fair assessments.



Headmistress, Ms. Arwah (third from left) of Podar International School, Mira Road



Principal, Ms. Manisha Xavier (fourth from left) of Bombay Cambridge School, Andheri East



Principal, Mr. Navroz Billimoria (fourth from left) and Director, Somani Group Of Schools, Mr. Dhananjay Somani (third from left) of B.D. Somani International School



Principal, Mrs. Kalyani Arumugam (third from left) of SIES High School



Principal, Mrs. Shuchi Shukla (second from left) of Kanakia International School (IB)



Principal, Ms. Diana Marfatia (third from left) of Bai Avabai Framji Petit Girls' High School



Principal, Ms. Jane Kotian (third from left) of Bombay Scottish School, Powai



Principal, Ms. Parveen Shaikh (third from left) of The Somaia School



Principal, Ms. Poonam Arora (second from left) of Bombay Cambridge International School, Andheri West



Principal, Ms. Radhika Sinha (third from left) of Aditya Birla World Academy



Principal, Ms. Ragini Malhotra (fourth from left) of P.G. Garodia School



Principal, Ms. Sharmila Thakur (second from left) of Orchids The International School, Dombivili



Principal, Ms. Suchita Malakar (third from left) of Podar International School CAIE, Powai



Vice Principal, Mr. Graham Heiden (right) of Christ Church School



Vice Principal, Ms. Sheeba Pavamani (third from left) of Bombay Scottish School, Mahim



Chairman, Mr. Sharookh Contractor (fourth from left) & Vice Principal, Mr. Cyril D'Souza (fifth from left) of Campion School



General Manager, Mr. Rajesh Mistry (second from left) of Nahar International School



Headmistress, Ms. Devipriya Mukherjee (third from left) & Vice Principal, Ms. Anju Chopra (fourth from left) of Billabong High International School, Juhu



Head of the school and Administrator, Ms. Wilma D'Souza (third from left) of DY Patil International School, Nerul



Principal, Dr. Sanjay Roy (third from left) of Greenlawns School, Worli

THEY ALL PASSED WITH FLYING COLOURS



Principal, Ms. Ritu Dubey (second from left) of C.P. Goenka International School, Oshiwara



Principal, Ms. Rupal Desai (fourth from left) of MPS Pratiksha Nagar, CBSE



Principal, Ms. Shashikala (fifth from left), and Academic Co-ordinator MH & MP Zone, Mr. Syed Khan (fourth from left) of Narayana E-Techno School



Principal, Ms. Sheela Maliya (third from left) & Managing Trustee, Ms. Samiksha Bhatt (second from left) of Children's Academy, Ashok Nagar



Principal, Ms. Sunita Massey (third from left) of Jankidevi Public School



Sports Director, Mr. Barrington Serrao (second from left) & Physical Education Teacher, Mr. Nihal Solanki (third from left) of Don Bosco High School, Matunga



Sports Instructor, Mr. Bernard Benevides (third from left) of Beacon High School



Supervisor, Ms. Tamanna Ramchandani (third from left) of Trinity International School



Vice Principal, Ms. Neerja Bhutani (third from left) and IGCSE Coordinator, Ms. Shweta Singh (fourth from left) of OES International School, Vashi



Academic Coordinators, Mr. Elias Coelho (second from left) and Mr. Austine Vaz (third from left) of St. Mary's School, ICSE & ISC



Admin Head, Ms. Parbin Mistry (fourth from left) and Accounts Manager, Mr. Ashish More (third from left) of Manekji Cooper Education Trust School



Headmistress, Mrs. Anshuma Shah (third from left) of The Cathedral and John Connon School



Secondary School Head, Mr. Brian Chanan (third from left) of Dhirubhai Ambani International School



Principal, Dr. Pourushasp Karkaria (third from left) of VIBGYOR High, Goregaon



Principal, Dr. Revathi Srinivasan (third from left) and Admin Head, Mr. Manish Narvekar (fourth from left) of Smt. Sulochanadevi Singhania School



Principal, Mrs. Rakhi Mukherjee (fifth from left) and Vice Principal, Ms. Shubhangi Amonkar (third from left) of Utpal Shanghvi Global School



Principal, Ms. Jayashri S Bhake (third from left) of VIBGYOR High, Malad East



Principal, Ms. Katherine James (third from left) of VIBGYOR High, Kharghar



Principal, Ms. Radhika Rajgarhia (fifth from left) of Ascend International School



Principal, Ms. Sona Mattoo Dhirga (fourth from left) and Secondary School Science Teacher, Ms. Rushali Bhatt (third from left) of Children's Academy, Thakur Complex



Principal, Ms. Sudha Shanbhag (fifth from left), Secondary School Science Teacher, Ms. Rushali Bhatt (third from left), and Managing Trustee, Ms. Samiksha Bhatt (fourth from left) of Children's Academy, Malad



Principal, Sr. Arockiammal Anthony (fourth from left) and Teacher Mr. Elias Correia (third from left) on behalf of St. Stanislaus International School



Principal, Sr. Arockiammal Anthony (third from left) and Vice Principal, Ms. Charmaine Pereira (second from left) of St. Stanislaus High School



Principal, Sr. Flory Fargose (third from left) of St. Anne's High School



Principal, Sr. Thresia Sini (third from left) of St. Xavier's High School, Fort



Vice Principal, Ms. Melita Cutinho (fourth from left) and Activity Supervisor, Ms. Preeti Thackeray (third from left) of N.L. Dalmia High School



Vice Principal, Ms. Shalini Garg (third from left) and Headmistress, Ms. Kusha Sharma (fourth from left) of Reliance Foundation School, Koparkhairane



Vice Principal, Sr. Manisha Parmar (fourth from left) and Senior Teacher, Ms. Shefali Ghiya (third from left) of Villa Theresa High School



Ms. Neerja Bhutani, Vice Principal, OES International School Vashi said, "The experience with FPJ has been truly delightful. The whole process went smoothly, and everything was well-planned."



"Students should enjoy their academics and all activities according to their age," says Principal Ms. Shashikala of Narayana E-Techno School, Thane.



"The best time to be in the field of education is now," says Dr. Revathi Srinivasan, Principal of Smt. Sulochanadevi Singhania School.



Sr. Thresia Sini, Principal of St. Xavier's High School, Fort said, "It was a great opportunity for us to understand our position. This year, there were more schools, which might allow for increased communication with the principals."



Ms. Diana Marfatia, Principal of Bai Avabai Framji Petit Girls' High School said, "I think FPJ is a concise and honest newspaper, especially the school edition. When I'm short on time to read the whole paper, I go through the School Edition to stay informed about what's going on."



Mr. Brian Chanan, Secondary School Head, Dhirubhai Ambani International School said, "It was a privilege to spend time with numerous respected principals and educators. The process may take some time, but it's rewarding and allows us to learn more about ourselves through engaging conversations with people in the education field."

THE FPJ'S EDUCATION INITIATIVES

THE FPJ AND EDUCATION

This newspaper is the bees' knees when it comes to educational news in India. It is the only publication that dedicates a whole page to education articles every single day. On Saturdays, this transforms into a melting pot of worldwide education updates. On top of the poll, The FPJ goes the extra mile to dive deep into the education sector using different methods and putting on quite the show. Our school edition is an effective pocket-sized newspaper meant for children to start their day well-informed with an updated version of the city's, country's and world's happenings.



CONTEST IS OPEN

The Pen to Paper contest is currently on and awaiting entries. This challenge is for teenagers to let their imagination run wild and review anything that tickles their fancy. Last year, we hit the jackpot with a big thumbs up from everyone, and we're expecting lightning to strike twice this year. Principals and instructors, please do ask your pupils to join this competition, as it has the potential to ignite their creative juices, which is rare in today's day and age.

CAREERS AND PATHWAYS

The FPJ has a new outreach program this year that's tailor-made for high school students in grades 9-12. The world of work is a labyrinth of careers and pathways, where individuals navigate through the twists and turns of their professional journeys. We are planning to put together a careers session that's going to be a real eye-opener! We've got some top-notch experts lined up who will spill the beans in all sorts of career domains. A big part of this programme will be a wide question-and-answer session where students can have queries solved by those who know their job. We are currently getting inquiries from specialists who are champing at the bit to hop on the bandwagon with this. This shindig is going to go down in Mumbai, February 2024. If you'd like your students to benefit from this seminar mail us @fpjedu@fpj.co.in

Read more about the annual school survey: <https://school.freepressjournal.in/2023>

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