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# Israel hits Houthis in Yemeni capital

**Cairo:** Israeli airstrikes hit Yemen's capital on Sunday, just days after the Houthi rebels fired a missile toward Israel, the rebels said, the latest Israeli attack targeting the Iranian-backed group.

The Houthi media office said the strikes hit multiple areas across the capital of Sanaa, including a power plant and a gas station. Residents reported hearing loud sounds of explosions in different areas, including close to the presidential palace.

The reported strikes were the first to hit Yemen since a week ago, when Israel said it targeted energy infrastructure it believed was used by the rebels. Israel did not immediately confirm Sunday's attack.

The Iran-backed Houthis have launched missiles and drones toward Israel and targeted ships in the Red Sea for more than 22 months. They say they are carrying out the attacks in solidarity with the Palestinians amid the war in the Gaza Strip.

Sanaa residents told The Associated Press they heard loud explosions close to a closed military academy and the presidential palace. They said they



Smoke billows following Israeli airstrikes in Sanaa, Yemen on Sunday. Pic: AP/PTI

## Four Palestinians shot dead while seeking aid

Deir Al-Balah: Israeli forces shot dead four Palestinian aid-seekers travelling Sunday through a military zone south of Gaza City that is regularly used to reach a food distribution point, a hospital and witnesses said. Gaza City is in famine after 22 months of war, while Israel's military moves ahead with a planned offensive to seize the city, perhaps within days. Israel's defence minister has

warned that the city of hundreds of thousands of people could be destroyed. Al-Awda Hospital and two witnesses told The Associated Press the Palestinians were killed when troops opened fire on a crowd heading to a site run by the Israeli-backed US contractor Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) in the Netzarim corridor area, hundreds of metres from the site.

could see smoke plumes near Sabeen Square, a central gathering place in the capital.

"The sound of explosions were very strong," said Hussein Mohamed, a Yemeni resident, who lives close to the presidential palace.

Ahmed al-Mekhlafy, another resident, also said he felt the sheer force of the strikes. "The house was

rocked, and the windows were shattered," he told the AP over the phone.

Nasruddin Amer, deputy head of the Houthi media office, claimed the Israeli strikes won't deter the rebels, and vowed to continue their attacks on Israel.

"Our military operations supporting Gaza won't stop, God willing, unless the aggression is stopped, and the siege is lifted," he

wrote on social media.

## Counter attack

The strike comes after the Houthis claimed they launched newly equipped missiles toward Israel, including targeting the country's largest airport, on Friday. There was no reported damage or injuries in Israel from that attack. Israel's military said it fragmented mid-air after

several attempts to intercept it.

An Israeli Air Force official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the kind of projectile fired from Yemen towards Israel on Friday night was a new threat. The missile was a cluster munition, he said, a projectile that is supposed to detonate into multiple explosives. It was the first time Houthis had launched a cluster bomb at Israel since it began launching rockets towards Israel in 2023.

The use of cluster bombs makes it harder for Israel to intercept and also represents additional technology provided to the Houthis by Iran, the official said.

The Houthi attacks over the past two years have upended shipping in the Red Sea, through which about USD 1 trillion of goods passes each year. From November 2023 to December 2024, the Houthis targeted more than 100 ships with missiles and drones. The rebels stopped their attacks during a brief ceasefire in the war and later became the target of an intense, weeklong airstrike campaign ordered by US President Donald Trump. -AP



The first look of Lalbaug Cha Raja was revealed on Sunday.

Pic: Rajesh Waradkar

## Justice Pardiwala's orders put SC in bind

By Pawan Kumar Singh

**New Delhi:** In less than a month, three orders passed by a bench headed by Justice Jamsheed Burjor Pardiwala has caught the Supreme Court in a bind, leading Chief Justice B R Gavai to intervene in the matters.

### Observations against Allahabad HC

In the first matter, Justice Pardiwala, who will serve a two-year term as the Chief Justice of India starting May 2028, criticised Allahabad High Court judge Prashant Kumar for allowing criminal proceedings in a civil dispute case, and stripped him of criminal matters till retirement.

Several senior judges of the top court expressed displeasure over the order passed by Justice Pardiwala and conveyed their thoughts to the CJI.

This prompted CJI Gavai to ask Justice Pardiwala to reconsider his observations.

On August 8, Justice Pardiwala deleted his observations, making it clear that the intention was not to embarrass or cast aspersions on



Animal lovers hold placards during a protest at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Sunday. Pic: PTI

Prashant Kumar.

### Order on Stray Dogs

Noting an "extremely grim" situation due to stray dog bites resulting in rabies, particularly among children, a bench led by Justice Pardiwala directed Delhi-NCR authorities to permanently relocate all strays from streets to shelters "at the earliest".

The apex court order faced criticism from dog lovers and several animal welfare organisations, forcing CJI Gavai to transfer the

matter to a three-judge bench led by Justice Vikram Nath.

The Justice Vikram Nath-led bench on August 22 modified the earlier direction prohibiting the release of vaccinated stray dogs from pounds in Delhi-NCR, calling it "too harsh", and ordered the canines to be released post sterilisation and de-worming.

### Ecological imbalance in Himachal Pradesh

A bench of Justices Pardiwala and R Mahadevan on

July 28 flagged the ecological imbalance in Himachal Pradesh and cautioned that the entire state may "vanish into thin air" if the situation did not change.

"We want to impress upon the state government and the Union of India that earning revenue is not everything. Revenue cannot be earned at the cost of environment and ecology," the bench said.

"If things proceed the way they are as on date, the day is not far when the entire state of HP may vanish into thin air from the map of the country. God forbid this doesn't happen," the bench said.

Now this matter has also been taken away from Justice Pardiwala and assigned to a three-judge bench headed by Justice Vikram Nath.

Born on August 12, 1965, in Mumbai, Justice Pardiwala graduated from the JP Arts College in Valsad in 1985.

He obtained a law degree from the KM Law College, Valsad, in 1988.

Born into a family of lawyers, he hails from the native town of Valsad in south Gujarat.

On May 9, 2022, he was elevated as a Judge of the Supreme Court. -PTI

## Integrated Air Defence System

### India conducts maiden flight tests

**New Delhi:** India has "successfully" conducted the maiden flight tests of an integrated air defence weapon system (IADWS) off the coast of Odisha.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), the developer of the platform, and the armed forces on the flight tests.

The indigenous air defence system was flight-tested 1230 hours off the coast of Odisha on Saturday.

The flight tests of the new air defence system came three-and-half months after Operation Sindoor.

IADWS is a multi-layered air defence system consisting of all indigenous quick reaction surface-to-air missiles, very short range air defence system (VSHORADS) missiles and a high power laser based directed energy weapons (DEW) system. -PTI

## After SBI, Bank of India tags RCom, Anil Ambani as 'fraud'

**New Delhi:** After the State Bank of India, Bank of India has classified the loan account of insolvent Reliance Communications as fraudulent and named its former director, tycoon Anil Ambani, citing alleged fund diversion in 2016, according to a regulatory filing.

State-owned Bank of India granted a Rs 700-crore loan in August 2016 to Reliance Communications for its ongoing capital and operational expenditure and repayment of existing liabilities. Half of the sanctioned amount disbursed in October 2016 was invested in a fixed deposit, which was not permitted as per the sanction letter, according to the bank's letter that RCom disclosed in a stock exchange filing.

RCom said it has on August 22 received a letter from Bank of India dated August 8 stating the bank's decision "to classify the loan accounts of the company, Anil Dhirajlal Ambani (promoter and erstwhile director of the company), and Manjari Ashok Kacker as Fraud".

Previously, State Bank of India (SBI) had done the



same in June this year, alleging misappropriation of bank funds by entering into transactions that violated the terms of the loans.

Following a complaint by SBI, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Saturday searched premises linked to Reliance Communications and Ambani's residence.

CBI said it has registered a complaint after the State Bank of India claimed a loss of Rs 2,929.05 crore, resulting from the alleged misappropriation by Reliance Communications and Ambani, the younger sibling of Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani.

Anil Ambani's spokesperson, in a statement, "strongly denied all allegations and charges" and said

he "will duly defend himself".

"The complaint filed by SBI pertains to matters dating back more than 10 years. At the relevant time, Ambani was a non-executive director of the company, with no involvement in the day-to-day management," the spokesperson said.

"It is pertinent to note that SBI, by its own order, has already withdrawn proceedings against five other non-executive directors. Despite this, Ambani has been selectively singled out."

The spokesperson further claimed that the Bank of India classification of RCom's account was "without following the principles of natural justice".

"While a show cause notice was issued to Ambani, the requisite documents were not furnished to him. Bank of India further deprived him of the opportunity of a personal hearing in the matter. These actions are contrary to the RBI regulations issued in July 2024, as well as to well-established law and the judgments of the SC and Bombay HC." -PTI

# From being shy to living India's space dream

**New Delhi:** IAF's Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla grew as a "shy and reserved" person, hearing stories of the 1984 space-flight of Rakesh Sharma in his childhood days.

On Sunday, Shukla, India's second astronaut to travel to space after Sharma, was signing autographs for school students and obliging fellow air warriors queuing up to get clicked with him.

Life, like his recent space sojourn in a spacecraft orbit, has indeed come full circle for Shukla.

The occasion was the fe-

licitation of Shukla and three other chosen Gagan-yaan astronauts by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at the Air Force Auditorium in Subroto Park here.

During the event, Shukla, who goes by the call sign 'Shux', shared his journey of joining the Indian Air Force (IAF) and the experiences and challenges he faced while being part of the Axiom-4 mission to the International Space Station (ISS).

"I grew up as a shy and reserved person. We used to hear stories of the space-flight of Rakesh Sharma in



our childhood days," he said.

Shukla credited the IAF for the transformation it brought in him, saying the

"IAF in general, and cockpit in particular", have been "great teachers" in his life.

Amid all the accolades

and admiration lavishly showered upon him, both on and off the stage, the caring family man in him was evident, as even in the middle of an excited crowd of selfie and autograph hunters, the star astronaut sought to ensure that his wife and little son were close by his side.

Shukla, who is less than two months shy of turning 40, had a humble beginning. Born and raised in Lucknow, he entered the IAF with a complete civilian background.

"Initially, I did not intend to join the defence (force), but I did. I filled up

a form which my friend had bought, and eventually one thing led to another, and I landed up at the NDA (National Defence Academy)," he recalled in his nearly 30-minute address.

Shukla also underlined that the Air Force training "prepares you for anything life throws at you as also to face hardships".

He also described the ex-

20-day space sojourn as part of the Axiom Mission 4.

He met Rajnath Singh on Thursday at the South Block, where they discussed his space journey, the experiments he undertook in orbit, and Gagan-yaan, India's pioneering human spaceflight programme.

The IAF officer also shared some humour-laced anecdotes from his "microgravity challenges" while in the orbit, of objects which got lost as they floated away in the spacecraft.

He also described the ex-

perience of witnessing 16 sunrises and 16 sunsets in a day from the orbit.

Shukla shared a video clip of a night view of the Earth from his spacecraft, which also gave a glimpse of parts of India, saying it is probably "one of the most beautiful sights" one could ever see.

Shukla's space odyssey as part of the commercial mission to the ISS has set the stage for achieving India's own ambitions of human spaceflight - Gagan-yaan - and building the Bharat Antariksha Station soon after. -PTI



# Classrooms deserted, ministers manned

BHARAT GOGAWALE STANDS ACCUSED OF SUPPORTING ILLEGAL TEACHER DEPUTATIONS

By Vivek Bhavsar

**Mumbai:** In a shocking violation of rules, two Zilla Parishad (ZP) teachers from Mahad taluka (Raigad) have been diverted from classrooms to work in the personal office of Shiv Sena's Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) Minister Bharat Gogawale. At a time when rural students in Raigad are already facing an acute shortage of teachers, this illegal deputation has triggered a storm — raising sharp questions about misuse of power, governance failure, and the credibility of the Fadnavis-Shinde-Pawar government.

The controversy centres around two teachers. Dr. Mahendra Gunaji Shirke, an assistant teacher at ZP Kendriya School, Kamble/Birwadi, Mahad, has been serving as a Personal Assistant (PA) in Gogawale's office since December 16, 2024, despite being posted in a landslide-prone rural school. Gogawale later wrote to Rural Development Minister Jaykumar Gore on January 8, 2025, seeking retrospective approval for Shirke's deputation and directing that the order be sanctioned immediately.

But this is not the first time Shirke has been found working in a minister's office. Sources confirm that he had earlier worked as a PA to the then Education



Minister Deepak Kesarkar. Even that deputation, insiders say, was illegal under existing Rural Development Department (RDD) guidelines. Despite his official posting as a primary teacher in Mahad taluka, Shirke has spent years inside ministers' offices rather than classrooms, raising serious questions about how such blatant violations were repeatedly unchecked.

The second case is that of Bhikaji Parshuram Mandhare, a teacher from a school under the Mahad Panchayat Samiti. Gogawale issued another letter on January 20, 2025, instructing Gore to approve Mandhare's appointment in his office "on a loan basis" without delay. Both letters — signed by Gogawale himself — directly pressure the Rural Development Department to sanction orders that are illegal.

No deputation

According to RDD guidelines, teachers cannot be deputed as PAs or staff in

ministers' offices — not even on a loan basis. Their appointment is strictly for educational duties in schools. Despite this, sources reveal that RDD Minister Gore forwarded Gogawale's requests to the Raigad ZP CEO, asking to process the deputations. The CEO, cautious about legality, wrote to the Konkan Divisional Commissioner seeking clarification. Till today, the Commissioner has not responded — leaving the matter hanging in bureaucratic limbo.

The fallout is being felt most by children in Mahad taluka. Dr. Shirke's school is in a disaster-prone, rural area where students already face hardships due to landslides, poor infrastructure, and staff shortages. His absence has left classes unattended and children deprived of subject guidance. Mandhare's removal has added to the strain on teachers in the Mahad Panchayat Samiti, forcing others to handle extra classes. Parents allege that education is being sacrificed at the altar of political convenience, as ministers pull scarce teachers out of schools for clerical work.

Disturbing trend

The controversy exposes a disturbing trend: misuse of teachers as political aides. If allowed, this practice sets a dangerous pre-

cedent where ZP staff, meant for schools, can be diverted to ministerial offices at will. It also raises the fundamental question: should teachers — appointed to serve children — be working as personal assistants to ministers? Gogawale's letters dated January 8 and January 20, 2025, are signed directives pressuring the Rural Development Department to legitimise these deputations. Coupled with revelations that Dr. Shirke had previously served illegally under then Education Minister Deepak Kesarkar, the pattern is undeniable: the same teacher has been repeatedly pulled out of classrooms to do the bidding of ministers.

The issue is not just administrative — it is politically explosive. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has earned a reputation for the strict vetting of ministerial staff. He withheld approval of Private Secretaries to at least four ministers due to charges of corruption or controversial service records. His stand was clear: only clean, qualified officers would serve in ministers' offices. But will the same Fadnavis now allow ZP teachers to moonlight as PAs? If yes, it undermines his credibility. If no, Gogawale could face direct embarrassment and action. This has turned the case into a political test for Fadnavis.

## Azar, Indira win titles

By Correspondent

**Mumbai:** Azar Ansari and Indira Rane emerged as winners in the men's and women's category respectively in the Bank of Baroda-BOB Mumbai divisional selection trial carrom tournament organized in collaboration with Ideal Sports Academy.

In the men's final, Ansari, playing precise shots at the right moment, defeated the defending champion and first seed Vikas Mahadik 5-1 and secured the title.

In the women's final, Indira Rane scored a win against Jyoti Shirmal 17-8 to seal the championship.

Earlier, in the men's semi-finals, Vikas Mahadik routed Jitendra Mithavkar 16-1 while Azar Ansari overcame Hemant Shelar 16-6.



Pradeep Suroshe of Bank of Baroda-Mumbai Sports Department and Shiv Chhatrapati Award winner Leeladhar Chavan felicitated the winners and runners-up.

The Mumbai division men's team will be represented by Azar Ansari, Vikas Mahadik, Hemant Shelar, Jitendra Mithavkar and the women's team by Indira Rane, Jyoti Shirmal, Siddhi Todankar, Devi Shanti in the All India Bank of Baroda inter-division carrom tournament to be held in Surat.



An artist gives a final touch at a Ganesh idol making workshop in Girgaum on Sunday. Pic: Ruddhi Phadke

# Manoj Jarange gives 'Chalo Mumbai' call

TERMS IT 'LAST' FIGHT FOR MARATHA QUOTA

**Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar:** Activist Manoj Jarange on Sunday urged the members of the Maratha community across Maharashtra to join his 'Chalo Mumbai' march on August 27, calling it their "last" fight to seek reservation.

Addressing a rally at Manjarsumba in Beed district, he said the turnout should unsettle the government. "If not, it will feel the real pressure when we reach Mumbai. The fight will now shift to Mumbai," he said.

Jarange has called for a protest at Azad Maidan in the country's financial capital from August 29, demanding reservation for the Maratha community in education and government jobs under the Other Backward Classes (OBC)

category. The activist said he would set out from his native place Antarwali Sarati in Jalna district on August 27. "We will go to Mumbai and hold our agitation peacefully. This is our last fight, and we will not return without the Maratha quota," he said.

Jarange also accused Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis of provoking the Maratha community by creating "minor" hurdles. "Fadnavis should not use the police to trouble us. I'm coming to Mumbai and we will meet there," he said.

Instead of troubling the Maratha community members, the police should nab the killers of Mahadev Munde, he said. Munde, a resident of Parli in Beed,

was abducted on October 9, 2023, and was found dead three days later. The local Crime Branch is probing the case.

The activist said he was compelled to plan his 'Chalo Mumbai' morcha.

"If the government gives us the quota, we have no interest in going to Mumbai. We will celebrate here itself," he said.

Urging the community to protest peacefully, he said, "We don't want to destroy the lives of our future generations. No one should run if anything goes wrong. If someone pelts stones, hand him over to the police. Those who hurl stones are not our people. It could be a plot by the government," he added.

-PTI

# Mahajan asks Jarange to show restraint

**Mumbai:** Minister and BJP leader Girish Mahajan on Sunday asked activist Manoj Jarange to exercise restraint, saying it was Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis who first gave something tangible on Maratha quota.

Speaking to reporters over various issues, he also criticised Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) president Raj Thackeray and senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi.

Jarange, who has called for a protest in Mumbai from August 29, earlier accused Fadnavis of provoking the Maratha community by creating "minor" hurdles. "Fadnavis should not use the police to trouble us. I'm coming to Mumbai and we will meet there," he said in Beed.

Mahajan said that justice to the Maratha community was first ensured by CM Fadnavis.

"It was Fadnavis who first gave something tangible on the Maratha reservation. Unfortunately, the decision did not stand in court, but no previous government had given any-



thing in this regard. One must be mindful of what is being said and against whom," he said.

Advising Jarange to exercise restraint, Mahajan said everyone agrees that Fadnavis first delivered something on the reservation issue.

Jarange has been demanding reservation for the Maratha community in education and government jobs under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category.

"To call him (Fadnavis) cruel has no meaning and will find no support. You have your demands, and they should be put forward through the right means. But when speaking, one must keep control over their tongue," said Mahajan.

The BJP leader said Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav



Thackeray failed to connect with people or deliver on governance when he was the CM of Maharashtra.

"Instead of indulging in empty talk, Uddhav Thackeray should have gone among the people, spoken to them and mobilised his party workers. People had given him two and a half years, though in reality, he grabbed the post through betrayal. What did he achieve in that period," Mahajan asked.

"Uddhav Thackeray never stepped out of his house, corruption marred contracts for handling dead bodies during the pandemic, and many are in jail because of it. For Marathi people, what did he do during the COVID-19 crisis," the minister asked while speaking to reporters.

-VNS

## Two injured in sloth bear attack

**Chandrapur:** A man and his son were injured in a sloth bear attack in a forest area in Chandrapur district, a senior forest officer said on Sunday.

Villagers accompanying the duo attacked the sloth bear while trying to rescue the duo, resulting in its death during treatment.

The incident occurred when Arun Kupshe and his son Vijay Kupshe were plucking leaves in the Junona forest area on Saturday.

The condition of Arun, admitted to a hospital in Nagpur, is critical, while his son sustained minor injuries, the forest officer said.

A viral video of the incident showed a group of people throwing stones and sticks at the animal.

The injured sloth bear was tranquillised by a team of forest personnel on Saturday evening. It was later shifted to TTC in Chandrapur for treatment. However, it succumbed to injuries on Sunday, the officer said, adding that it might have been injured when some people tried to rescue the father-son duo.

-PTI

# 'Ten smart villages in each taluka'

**Nagpur:** Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday announced that 10 smart villages will be developed in every taluka of the state, equipped with advanced technology-based services in agriculture, health, education and other essential sectors.

Fadnavis was speaking at the launch of the country's first smart and intelligent village, Satanwari, in Nagpur district.

"Soon, 10 villages in every taluka of Maharashtra will be developed as 'smart' and 'intelligent'. In the first phase, nearly 3,500 villages will be transformed," he said.

The initiative has been implemented with the co-operation of the state government and Nagpur district administration in collaboration with Voice of Indian Communication Technology Enterprises

(VOICE) and 24 Indian companies, stated a release from the Chief Minister's Office.

Through this initiative, Satanwari has become India's first Smart and Intelligent Village, equipped with modern technology-based services, it said.

Fadnavis said that the initiative is a revolutionary step to provide all essential facilities to villagers through technology.

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision, the BharatNet project was successfully implemented in villages across the country, and in Maharashtra, the MahaNet project followed, he said.

Now, with the help of Indian tech companies, villages will get access to 18 services, including telemedicine, smart education with AI, smart irrigation, drone-based pesticide and



fertiliser spraying, banking services on wheels, and digital surveillance, Fadnavis said.

Improved quality

Farmers in Satanwari use drones and sensors for soil testing, spraying, and fertiliser management. Drinking water quality has improved, and health facilities are accessible through telemedicine.

"Satanwari will soon become a model village for the entire country," Fadnavis said, expressing hope that it would soon be

recognised as one of India's most progressive villages.

State Revenue Minister and Nagpur Guardian Minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule said that following PM Modi's initiatives like smart cities and Digital India, Fadnavis has taken the ambitious decision to create smart and intelligent villages in Maharashtra.

He added that Rs 1,200 crore has already been sanctioned for development works in Nagpur district. Earlier, VOICE CEO Rakesh Kumar Bhatnagar made a presentation on the facilities introduced in Satanwari. The chief minister also performed boomipoojan for 40 anganwadis virtually and inaugurated solar panels installed at primary health sub-centres under the 15th Finance Commission. -PTI

## Leaders alleging vote theft are consoling themselves for poll defeat

CM Fadnavis on Sunday said leaders alleging vote theft were doing so to provide solace to their workers for their defeat in polls instead of introspecting about their loss.

Fadnavis's remark has come after Maharashtra Navnirman Sena chief Raj Thackeray on Saturday said that he had been talking about "vote theft" since 2016, and the Election Commission should have conducted a probe when

both Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and the BJP's Anurag Thakur alleged voter list fraud.

Speaking to reporters, Fadnavis, in a veiled jibe, said, "Poet Ghalib once said 'Dil behelana ke liye khayal acha hain' (to console the heart, this thought is good). I want to say that they (leaders) are trying to provide solace to themselves and their workers by claiming there was a conspiracy behind their defeat in

elections. But I want to tell them that they must introspect about their defeat, or they will never win."

Asked about Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's statement that Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks too much but works less, he said, "Why do you ask me about Kharge ji? He speaks about many things, and we don't take him seriously. He is not a person to be taken seriously."

By Quaid Najmi

**Mumbai:** Leveraging on the Centre's thrust for milking inland and coastal waterways for transport, Mumbai has started taking small steps with big and small speedboats and large vessels to ferry both passengers, vehicles and small cargo to various destinations.

In the past few years, the government has introduced shore-to-shore ferry boats across creeks, coasts in and around the city, which have grown in popularity with locals, commuters and tourists for their convenience, time-and-fuel savings

# Exploiting waterways to progress

and the novel thrill of 'sailing' short distances.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Union Minister Nitin Gadkari have been staunch advocates of water transport while Prime Minister Narendra Modi has stressed on port-led development comprising ports modernization, enhanced connectivity, port-linked industrialization, and coastal community development.

In Mumbai, some ferries — passengers, Ro-Ro, or both — are operated by government agencies, a handful by local cooperatives



and a few by private operators

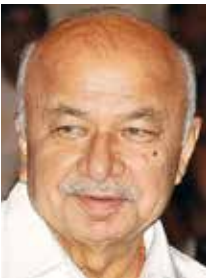
The Roll On-Roll Off (Ro-Ro) have especially gained popularity among the tourist crowds thronging to destinations like Mandwa

(mainland at Raigad), Elephanta Islands, Gorai, Madh Island and Uttan beaches, Arnala and Vasai forts, boosting tourism and creating job avenues for the locals.

# QUOTE OF THE DAY

"We did not disturb the practice of equality for all religions. We never looked at the caste system. So Congress falls, rises again, but we do not change its principles. I am confident that Congress will come back to power. We have to set aside our differences."

Sushilkumar Shinde, Leader, Congress





Ganeshostav As State Festival

# Mandals’ body says govt should’ve taken it on board

By Manisha Rege

**Mumbai:** The state government has accorded a ‘state festival’ status to ‘Ganeshotsav’, but a coordination committee of the public Ganesh mandals says it would have been better if their suggestions had also been considered.

The Brihanmumbai Sarvajanik Samanvay Samiti, which has been overseeing the festival in the metropolis for the last 44 years in coordination with the civic body, police and traffic department, has 12,000 public mandals registered with it.

Talking to PTI, the samiti president, Naresh Dahibavkar, claimed the Rs 11 crore allocation to the state festival was not enough.

“The mandals work all through the year and contribute to the society whenever there is a crisis. It would have been better if the government had involved us in this decision as it would have been an encouragement to work

more for the society,” he said.

Dahibavkar felt the mandals, which are more than 25 years’ old, should have been taken on board.

The mandals work round-the-clock and not just for the Ganesh festival. They run libraries and social and financial aid is provided to the needy, he said.

If assistance is given to them, they can do their social work with more vigour, Dahibavkar said.

Nearly 1,800 ‘bhajani mandals’ (devotional music troupes) will be given an assistance of Rs 25,000, as per the government.

“What are the norms to select around 1,700 mandals and are they registered? A bhajani mandal will exist if there is a Ganpati mandal,” he said.

Dahibavkar said their organisation has over the years worked to ensure Mumbai remains free from religious tensions during the festivities.

‘Members of all reli-



Devotees take Ganesh idols to the mandals in Mumbai on Sunday.

Pic: Bhushan Koyande

gions participate in the preparations (of Ganesh festival). The tarpaulin used to set up mandaps is supplied by Muslims,” he said.

He said a large Ganesh mandal’s turnover is between Rs 50 lakh to Rs 30 crore.

‘A mandal has to spend at least Rs 50 lakh to Rs 1 crore (on organising the festival) and gets income from donations and advertisements. The revenue depends on the prevailing circumstances...suppose if it rains, the inflow of devotees may be less all ten days,’ he pointed out.

**GST revenue**

The government also gets revenue in the form of GST and other taxes during the festival, he added.

Dahibavkar said Anant Chaturdashi (last day of Ganesh festival) used to be declared a holiday every year in Maharashtra. But this year, since it falls on a Saturday, that holiday for government employees

has been given on the seventh day of the festival, he noted.

The non-government employees will be working on Anant Chaturdashi and it may cause traffic issues during the immersion processions, he added.

Meanwhile, the government has announced multiple activities, including various programmes, celebrations and competitions, during the festival.

As part of these initiatives, a special portal -- ganeshotsav.pldmka.co.in -- has been created to ensure people can witness the grandeur of both household and public festivities.

An anthem, “Aala re aala...Rajya Mahotsav aala”, along with the portal was launched recently.

Maharashtra Rajya Sarvajanik Ganeshotsav Mandal competition has been extended to the taluka level, with the prize money significantly increased to encourage wider participation.

-PTI

By Prashant Rangnekar

**Mumbai:** With the high-stakes battle for Mumbai’s civic body looming, the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena and its rival Sena (UBT) are vying for the support of Ganesh mandals, the socio-political nerve centres that have traditionally served as bases for foot soldiers and voter outreach.

The Shinde-led Shiv Sena claims that many mandals are shifting allegiance due to the “unprecedented” financial assistance being provided for organising the Ganesh festival.

Sena (UBT) chief Udghav Thackeray, however, has accused the rival faction of luring mandals with money.

“Who is taking away the mandals? Where will you take them? You will finally stay in Mumbai. We are not bothered by you taking away the mandals till the time we have the blessings of Ganpati bappa,” Thackeray told representatives of Ganesh mandals earlier this month.

A Shiv Sena functionary asserted that Shinde’s popularity among mandals has surged due to the generous support extended by his party.

Support from the mandals—community organisations that prominently celebrate Ganesh Chaturthi—could prove crucial for the Shinde-led Sena, which is still struggling to gain a foothold in Mumbai’s political landscape, long dominated by the undivided Shiv Sena.

Mumbai hosts nearly 8,000 registered Ganesh mandals, with an estimated 14,000 unregistered ones.

These mandals, which also organise Dahi Handi, Navratri, and in some cases Saibaba festivities, are deeply intertwined with local politics, noted political analyst Abhay Deshpande.

He explained that corporators, MLAs, and MPs often play a role in support-

## Rival Senas slug it out to win over Ganesh mandals

ing mandals, which largely depend on donations.

“Often, young mandal workers act as foot soldiers for political parties during elections. Alternatively, they serve as muscle power for public representatives, and every party taps into this resource,” Deshpande added.

He said the mandals also hoist banners of leaders who help them.

A Sena (UBT) functionary recalled how Ganesh mandals helped a former corporator secure a Lok Sabha ticket. The corporator had donated generously, prompting mandals to display his banners prominently, catching the attention of party leadership.

Historically, the mandals were dominated by the undivided Shiv Sena.

A Sena (UBT) functionary from Lalbaug-Parel—once a stronghold of the undivided Sena—said that when the party was founded in 1966, the late Bal Thackeray had directed party workers to dominate mandals organising Ganesh, Navratri, and Dahi Handi celebrations.

This led to decades of unchallenged Sena dominance over most mandals.

However, things began to shift over the past two to three years, following the party’s split and Shinde’s emergence as a new leader.

The Sena (UBT) functionary admitted that the Shinde-led faction has been attracting mandals with donations, and other parties like the BJP and MNS are also actively engaging with them.

“Earlier, mandals affili-

ated with the undivided Shiv Sena received support from party sympathisers. Since Shinde took over, donations to mandals have increased significantly, prompting many to shift allegiance,” he said.

In Mumbai’s grassroots politics, corporators play a pivotal role. Over 50 former corporators have joined the Shinde-led Sena and have helped secure funding for various mandals, the Sena (UBT) functionary added.

Still, he insisted that the traditional loyalty of mandals to the original Shiv Sena remains strong.

“Money doesn’t always buy loyalty. Many mandals may have accepted financial assistance from the Shinde-led Sena, but that doesn’t mean they’ve switched sides,” he said.

A Shinde Sena functionary acknowledged that numerous mandals have approached their party.

He noted that mandals not only seek financial support but also require help with permissions for setting up pandals and completing other formalities.

“We set up a help desk four months ago to address their problems. This year, several mandals have approached us. The level of assistance given to the mandals since the last two years has been unprecedented,” he said, adding that Shinde will visit pandals in Mumbai and Thane this year too.

The last elections to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) were held in 2017.

-PTI

## Private vehicles choke Mumbai’s roads

BEST BUSES ACCOUNT FOR LESS THAN 1 PC

**Mumbai:** Private vehicles continue to dominate the roads of Mumbai, with two-wheelers and cars accounting for nearly 80 per cent of the city’s 50 lakh-plus vehicle population, while public transport buses make up less than a per cent, as per a report.

According to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation’s “Environment Status Report 2024-25”, Mumbai’s vehicle population crossed the 50-lakh mark in 2024-25, a gradual rise from 45,37,211 in 2023 and 47,59,976 in 2024 to 50,54,907 as of March 2025.

The report, released earlier this week, stated that of these, two-wheelers (59.34 per cent) and cars, jeeps, and station wagons (28.72 per cent) together make up nearly 88 per cent of the city’s vehicles.

The remaining vehicles included 5.02 per cent autorickshaws, 3.27 per cent taxis, 0.42 per cent goods vehicles, 0.02 per cent tractors/trailers, and 2.72 per cent vehicles categorised as other.

At least 2.94 lakh new vehicles were registered in Mumbai between April 2024 and March 2025, reflecting a

significant rise of 6.2 per cent in registration, the report stated.

Of the newly registered vehicles, 60.87 per cent were two-wheelers, followed by cars, Jeeps, and station wagons at 23.94 per cent, taxis and cabs made up 6.26 per cent, autorickshaws 3.06 per cent, and goods vehicles 4.43 per cent.

Buses accounted for 0.73 per cent of the total, with tractors/trailers and other vehicles contributing just 0.09 per cent and 0.6 per cent, respectively. As per the report, the highest number of 39.83 lakh (78.79 per cent) vehicles run on petrol, followed by 5.63 lakh (11.15 per cent) on diesel and 4.36 lakh on CNG.

Mumbai has just 48,854 electric vehicles, followed by 11,418 that run on LPG and 10,832 on other fuels.

The report also pointed out that the BEST undertaking was operating a total of 2,731 buses till the end of March. These buses include 612 owned by the BEST and 2,119 operating under the wet-lease model. Notably, 91 per cent of the total fleet of BEST consists of environment-friendly CNG and electric buses.

-PTI



MSRTC buses parked at a depot as MSRTC runs extra buses for Konkan ahead of ‘Ganesh Chaturthi’ festival in Navi Mumbai on Sunday.

Pic: PTI

## Doctor crushed by truck

**Thane:** A 58-year-old doctor was killed after his scooter hit a pothole, causing him to fall and get crushed by a truck in Thane district, police said on Sunday.

The accident occurred near Vanjar Patti Naka in Bhiwandi town on Friday night, an official said.

The official said the victim, Dr Naseem Ansari, was returning home on his scooter when it hit a pothole, causing him to fall and come under the rear wheel of a truck.

Locals rushed Ansari to Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital, where doctors declared him dead, he said.

The accident, captured on CCTV, quickly went viral and sparked public outrage.

Residents staged protests over poor road conditions and civic negligence,

alleging that ongoing repair work on the APJ Abdul Kalam Bridge forced heavy vehicles onto city roads, making conditions dangerous.

The Bhiwandi-Nizampur Municipal Corporation’s PRO, Shrikant Pardeshi, said road repairs could only be carried out at night.

Truck driver Mohammad Bilal Mohammed Aslam has been arrested, and a probe has begun. The truck, however, did not hit the doctor directly, but the uneven road caused the fatal fall, Senior PI Vishwas Dagale said.

Local MLA Rais Shaikh has demanded FIRs against civic officials, warning of large-scale agitations if pothole-ridden roads remain unrepaired.

-VNS

## Two cops injured in attack

**Mumbai:** Two police constables suffered injuries after some drugs peddlers attacked them with sharp weapons in Deonar area of Mumbai, an official said on Sunday.

Five of the attackers have been arrested in connection with the incident which took place late Saturday night, a Deonar police official said.

During patrolling near a garden in Deonar, the two constables found four-five drug peddlers smoking ganja. When the constables tried to nab them, they attacked the police personnel with sharp weapons, the official said.

One constable was stabbed in his chest and abdomen while the other one received injury on his ear, the police said.

-VNS

## 600 lives lost in 12 years

BHIWANDI-WADA ROAD TURNS INTO A DEATH TRAP DESPITE RS 881 CRORE SANCTIONED

By Dr. Abhilash Dawre

**Bhiwandi:** Bhiwandi-Wada-Manor highway, regarded as Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde’s political stronghold, has turned into a death trap. Over the past 12 years, more than 600 people have lost their lives in accidents caused by pothole-ridden stretches of the road, with 75 deaths recorded in just the last three years. Despite a sanctioned fund of 881 crore, the road remains in a dangerously dilapidated condition, raising serious questions about corruption and administrative negligence.

According to Shramajivi Sanghatana spokesperson Pramod Pawar, the government has failed to take any action against negligent contractors, instead allegedly protecting them. Pawar accused contractors and officials of embezzling crores of rupees under the pretext of repairs, while only carrying out superficial patchwork each monsoon. “Every year the road collapses, and every year the administration looks away while innocent citizens lose their lives,” he



said.

The 40-kilometer stretch between Bhiwandi and Wada is reported to be in an extremely poor condition. Although Chief Minister Eknath Shinde himself inspected the road and approved 801 crore for repairs, followed by an additional 80 crore for concrete patchwork, the execution has been substandard and painfully slow. The work was awarded to Eagle Infra Company, yet the road today remains filled with dangerous craters, obstructing traffic and putting lives at risk daily.

Pawar pointed out that despite repeated agitations over the past five years, the administration has shown little seriousness. Families have been devastated by accidents, and rural citi-

zens continue to risk their lives, particularly during Ganeshotsav, when thousands of devotees transport idols along this treacherous route. Locals have now demanded that the road be made pothole-free before the upcoming festival.

Deputy Collector Dr. Sandeep Mane told *‘The Perfect Voice’* that the district administration has already begun urgent pothole-filling work. “The District Collector has inspected the road, and instructions have been given to speed up repairs, especially considering Ganeshotsav. Although the matter is pending before the High Court, we are taking immediate steps to ease public hardship,” Dr. Mane said.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“Members from the Opposition chose to speak on non-issues such as the India-Pakistan match. Some people shared the data with the Opposition and later admitted that it was wrong information. The Opposition is trying to set a fake narrative but it will not succeed.”

Ajit Pawar, Deputy CM

## Dreamt of being the first choice: Pratik

**Mumbai:** Actor Pratik Gandhi, known for his versatility, reflected on his journey from “Scam: 1992” to “Saare Jahan Se Achha” to “Gandhi”.

In an interview with PTI, the 45-year-old, recalled his dream of being the “first choice of the writers and directors since my (his) theater days.”

“In theatre, I was always the third option. Most of the time, I was called for replacements. So, whenever there are critical situations where somebody is ill, or not available, I was asked to replace and perform a couple of shows,” the actor said.

He said that “Scam: 1992”

changed his career trajectory.

“I wanted to be the first name flashing in the director’s mind whenever he thought about a character. That suddenly started happening after ‘Scam,’” Gandhi said.

The actor expressed that the past five years have become a dream come true and he is particularly grateful for this phase of his life.

“So, the last five years was a journey where people came to me with a lot of excitement and trust in their eyes, stating, ‘Now, we want to work with you’, and all of them have been varied genres and characters. I was happy, and I still



say that I’m living the dream that I saw once,” the actor said.

Gandhi revealed that films like “Do Aur Do Pyaar”, “Madgaon Express”, “Phule”, and “Gandhi” series, were all made with him in mind.

“In mainstream cinema, it started happening with ‘Do Aur Do Pyaar’, ‘Madgaon Express’, and ‘Phule’. Anant (Mahadevan, director) sir said that, ‘I can see Phule in you, for ‘Gandhi’, Sameer Nair (producer) approached me and said, ‘This is what we want to do with you, you are the first choice’. I can’t thank the universe enough for this particular phase in my life,” Gandhi said.

When asked what is next for his sky rocketing career, Gandhi spoke of his wish explore more genres doing an “out-and-out action film” or a “good love story”.

His most recent series, “Saare Jahan Se Achha”, directed by Sumit Purohit and written by Bhavesh Mandalia and Gaurav Shukla, charts the rise of two spy agencies RAW and ISI, in the aftermath of the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971.

It is produced by Bombay Fables, and also features Sunny Hinduja, Suhail Nayyar, Kritika Kamra, Tillotama Shome, Rajat Kapoor and Anup Soni.

-PTI



# 'INDIA bloc in Bihar working unitedly'

**Araria (Bihar):** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday asserted that all the INDIA bloc constituents in Bihar were working unitedly for the upcoming assembly polls and that the results will be fruitful.

Addressing a press conference in Araria, with RJD's Tejashwi Yadav and leaders of other constituents of the INDIA bloc by his side, Gandhi said that the opposition alliance will soon come out with a common manifesto for the polls, due later this year.

"The INDIA bloc will soon come out with a common manifesto for the Bihar assembly polls. All constituents of the opposition alliance are working unitedly... we are both ideologically and politically aligned, mutually respecting each other. The results would be fruitful," Gandhi said.

"I call it a good partnership among all constituents of the INDIA bloc," he said.

Launching a scathing attack on the NDA government at the Centre, the Leader of Opposition in



Lok Sabha alleged that the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the eastern state was "an institutionalised attempt by the Election Commission to steal votes to help the BJP".

"We will not allow the EC to steal votes in Bihar. The poll panel is working for the benefit of the BJP. The SIR is an institutionalised attempt by the EC to steal votes in the upcoming assembly polls in the state to help the saffron party," he added.

The EC has been completely exposed as working for the BJP, Gandhi said.

"When I exposed the EC over the irregularities committed in preparing voter lists in Haryana, Maharashtra, Karnataka

and how forged voters were added to the rolls, the EC demanded an affidavit from me over the issue. But when Anurag Thakur of the ruling dispensation said the same thing in a press conference, the Commission did not ask for any affidavit from him. This shows that EC is not neutral."

The partial behaviour of the EC needs to change, he added.

"The 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' in Bihar has been a great success, and people joined it in large numbers... we have received the support of crores of people of the state, who joined us on their own. It has established the fact that the EC is stealing people's votes in Bihar," the Congress leader said.

"One can imagine the impact of our yatra that even small kids are now raising the slogan of 'vote chor, gaddi chhor' (vote thief, vacate seat of power)," Gandhi said.

He, however, evaded a direct reply to a question as to why the Mahagathabandhan was not declaring Tejashwi Yadav as the chief ministerial candidate of the INDIA bloc for the upcoming polls. "We are cooperating with one another, and we have to check 'vote chori'."

Several other leaders of the INDIA bloc, including CPI (ML) Liberation's Dipankar Bhattacharya, VIP's Mukesh Sahni, besides Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, were also present. -PTI

## Two arrested over attack on Indian restaurant

**London:** A 15-year-old boy and a 54-year-old man were arrested on suspicion of arson on Sunday after an Indian restaurant in east London went up in flames, seriously injuring five people.

The Metropolitan Police said officers were called to the Indian Aroma restaurant in Ilford on Friday night.

Three women and two men, believed to be diners at the eatery, suffered burn injuries and were treated at the scene by paramedics from the London Ambulance Service before being taken to the hospital. Two of them – a man and a woman – remain in a life-threatening condition, the police said.

"While we have made two arrests, our investigation continues at pace so we can piece together what happened on Friday evening," said Detective Chief Inspector Mark Rogers of the Met Police's Central Specialist Crime North unit.

"I know the community members are concerned and shocked by this incident. I would urge anyone with any information or concerns to come forward and speak to police," he said.

The suspects have been arrested on suspicion of arson with intent to endanger life, and remain in police custody. There was a large police presence in the Woodford Avenue, Gants Hill, area of the restaurant over the weekend.

"It is also believed there are two further victims who left the scene before officers arrived. Efforts remain ongoing to identify them," the police said. -PTI



Aspirants stage a protest demanding reform in the recruitment process of the Staff Selection Commission (SSC) in New Delhi on Sunday. Pic: PTI

## Tribals' Protest Over Land Acquisition Ex CM Champai Soren under house arrest

**Ranchi:** Former Jharkhand chief minister and BJP leader Champai Soren was placed under house arrest on Sunday to prevent law and order issues in view of a protest by tribal outfits against land acquisition for a multi-crore state-run health institute, police said.

The protesters alleged that police lathi-charged and fired tear gas shells to disperse them from the site of the proposed project in Nagri area of Ranchi. However, police could not be reached for a comment to verify the claim.

Champai Soren's son Babulal, along with supporters who were on their way to Ranchi, have also been detained at a police station, police said.

"Champai Soren is under house arrest as a preventive measure to maintain law and order in view of the tribal outfits' protests," Ranchi City Deputy Superintendent of Police K V Raman told PTI.

A large number of police personnel have also been

deployed and barricades put up at strategic points in the wake of the protest, he said.

Soren, however, termed the move undemocratic and said his house arrest was ordered for supporting the tribals and their protest.

Security has also been beefed up at the residence of Soren, who has announced that he will join the protest.

Over 20 tribal groups, farmers and land owners have called for a 'Hal Joto, Ropa Ropo' (plough field, plant saplings) protest on Sunday at the site where the Rs 1,074-crore RIMS-2 hospital project has been proposed.

RIMS-2 refers to the expansion of the Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), a premier health facility in the state.

Despite barricades put up along roads leading to Nagri area, protesters, farmers and land owners from different villages gathered at the proposed site with posters in their hands displaying pictures

of former chief minister Shibu Soren and his message 'Harwa toh joto na yaar... kaise bachega?' (plough the field... else how will you survive?).

Many protesters were seen wearing the mask of Shibu Soren, who is popularly known as 'Dishom Guru' (leader of the land).

Protesters alleged that the police lathi-charged and fired tear gas at them to disperse them from the protest spot.

The agitators claimed that by defying resistance from the police, they planted saplings on the land, where the hospital project is proposed to be set up.

Police, however, could not be reached for a comment regarding the claim.

The barricades put up by the administration caused trouble for the commuters. A local of the area, 50-year-old Basant Kumar Mahato, said he was stopped near Chandini Chowk in Kanke.

"I reside at Ring Road, but I am not allowed to go to my home," he claimed. -PTI

## Rahul Gandhi hugged, kissed by unidentified man

Rahul Gandhi was momentarily taken aback on Sunday during his 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' in Bihar when an unidentified man suddenly hugged him tightly and planted a kiss on his shoulder.

The incident took place in Purnea district, from where Gandhi left for adjoining Araria, his final stop for the day, on a motorcycle. Hundreds of bikers, including RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, were riding

alongside Gandhi when a young man, dressed in dark trousers and a shirt, indulged in the apparent display of affection.

As the leader of opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha struggled to keep his two-wheeler balanced, security personnel pounced on the intruder, who was slapped and shoved aside. Asked about the breach in security, Purnea SP Sweety Sehrawat told PTI over phone, "The LoP was being

escorted by a Close Protection Team, which appears to have handled the situation. However, if the CPT flags any concerns to the local police, we will track down the person concerned and take necessary action".

Asked about some bikers, including Bihar Congress president Rajesh Kumar, who rode pillion on the motorcycle driven by Gandhi, not wearing helmets, Sehrawat said.

## 'Sponsored attack on Hindu faith'

**Bengaluru:** Union Minister Pralhad Joshi on Sunday attacked the Karnataka Congress government over the Dharmasthala controversy, calling it a "sponsored attack on Hindu faith" and accusing the state of "reckless governance."

In a strongly worded post on 'X', Joshi alleged that the incident surrounding the famous Dharmasthala temple was deliberately amplified to tarnish the image of the shrine.

"The Dharmasthala case stands exposed as a sponsored attack on Hindu faith. Congress government jumped on it, and fully utilised its Toolkit to try and defame an ancient Hindu temple," he wrote.

Joshi criticised the state for failing to verify allegations before they were al-

lowed to dominate the public discourse.

"What is shocking is how the Congress govt allowed this to spiral without even a basic parallel background check. From a masked man to fully funded YouTubers, unverified claims were given space, reducing a sacred place into a 15-day media circus," the minister said.

Arguing that governance demands caution, Joshi remarked that "faith may be personal, but governance demands checks & balances. Instead, Congress acted recklessly."

He accused the government of taking action only after the controversy escalated. "Now, after damage is done, they arrest culprits as if concerned. This is a grave mistake that has hurt devotees & under-

mined trust," he noted.

The union minister also pressed for a thorough investigation into the issue.

He questioned whether the episode was orchestrated at someone's behest, why the state did not respond despite mounting evidence, and how those involved in funding and running what he called a "toolkit" would be held accountable.

A controversy erupted after a complainant, later identified as C N Chinnai, was arrested on charges of perjury, claimed burying a number of bodies, including those of women with signs of sexual assault, in Dharmasthala over a period of time, with the implications pointing towards the administrators of the local temple. -PTI



DRDO successfully conducts maiden flight tests of Integrated Air Defence Weapon System (IADWS) off the coast of Odisha. Pic: PTI

## Man kills pregnant wife

**Hyderabad:** A five-month pregnant woman was brutally murdered allegedly by her husband, who then chopped her body parts at their house in Medipally near here, and threw the pieces in the Musi river, police said on Sunday.

The incident occurred at about 4.30 pm on Saturday when the 27-year-old accused, who works as a driver with a ride hailing company, murdered his 21-year-old wife by throttling her over frequent quarrels due to family disputes.

In order to conceal the evidence, he chopped the

body into pieces using a hexa blade, disposed of the head, hands, and legs by throwing them into the Musi river at Prathapsingaram, and retained the headless and legless trunk in his room, DCP (Malkajgiri Zone) P V Padmaja told reporters.

The accused then packed the body parts separately in small plastic covers and went to the river three times to throw the pieces, the DCP said.

Later, the accused called his sister informing that his wife went missing, who then raised suspicion and informed a relative, who

took him to a police station. He again tried to portray the murder as a missing incident, but during questioning he confessed of killing his wife.

Based on his confession, a case under relevant BNS sections on charges of murder and causing disappearance of evidence of offence was registered and the accused was taken into custody, she said. The dismembered was found in the house and sent for post-mortem, she said, adding "We have to ascertain the deceased (is wife of the accused) and a DNA test will be conducted". -PTI

## Women form just 9 pc of FMCD workforce

**Mumbai:** Even as India's fast-moving consumer durables (FMCD) sector has posted a 30 per cent hiring growth over the past two years, women remain starkly underrepresented, making up just 9 per cent of the workforce, said a report.

India's FMCD sector has demonstrated consistent hiring momentum, with a cumulative 30 per cent increase from May 2023 to May 2025, according to a report by CIEL HR titled 'FMCD Sector: Talent Trends and Insights'.

The report is based on quantitative analysis, drawing on data from 1,00,000 executives working

in India's FMCD sector and 1,005 job postings. It also includes insights from the career sections of FMCD companies operating in India.

Despite the sector's strong growth trajectory, the report revealed a huge gender gap, with women making up only 9 per cent of the FMCD workforce, one of the lowest among major sectors.

Their representation remains especially low in manufacturing, sales, and technical roles due to long-standing structural barriers, it added.

"The FMCD sector is at a critical inflection point where diver-

sity can drive significant competitive advantage. "Companies that proactively address this low participation rate of women in their workforce will not only access a wider talent pool, but also benefit from diverse perspectives that fuel innovation and better consumer understanding, particularly as women influence the majority of consumer purchasing decisions," CIEL HR Services Managing Director and CEO Aditya Narayan Mishra told PTI.

Further, the report said the FMCD sector is witnessing new opportunities emerging beyond metros.

Tier-II cities now account for 22 per cent of total FMCD job postings, and this shift is driven by rising consumer interest in white goods, such as cooling appliances, inverters, and home electronics across non-metro markets, it said.

The trend signals geographic diversification of hiring and the



AI generated image

emergence of new consumer markets beyond metro hubs.

As FMCD companies move beyond manufacturing into differentiated consumer experiences, demand is rising for industrial designers, data engineers, product managers, and customer success specialists, it added.

The report shows that 14 per cent of executives in the FMCD sector have changed jobs in the last one year, on par with the trend observed in the IT and ITes sector and higher than that of BFSI, retail and manufacturing, indicating a highly competitive and dynamic talent market. -PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“Debate must take place in a democracy. But it is not good if the House is not allowed to function in the name of opposition for someone's narrow political gain. We should work to offer an impartial platform to raise the issues of the people.”

Amit Shah, Union Minister, Home



# Torrential rains in J-K trigger flood-like situation

## BRIDGE DAMAGED ON JAMMU-PATHANKOT HIGHWAY

**Jammu/Srinagar:** Heavy rains battered most parts of Jammu and Kashmir overnight, triggering flood-like situation in several low-lying areas and causing damage to a vital bridge on the Jammu-Pathankot national highway, officials said.

Jammu recorded 190.4 mm rainfall in the past 24 hours ending 8.30 am, the second-highest downpour this month in a century. The highest rainfall for August remains 228.6 mm, logged on August 5, 1926 while the previous second-highest was 189.6 mm on August 11, 2022.

Authorities have issued advisories asking people to stay away from water bodies and landslide-prone areas amid a weather forecast predicting moderate to intense rainfall with possibility of cloudbursts, flash floods and landslides in high altitude areas till August 27.

In Jammu, at least 45 students of the Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (IIIM) were evacuated to safety in a joint operation by the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and police after floodwaters submerged the ground floor of the hostel complex, officials said.

SDRF and police deployed manpower equipped with boats to reach out the students after more than seven feet of water from the overflowing



Portion of a bridge on the Jammu-Pathankot national highway gets damaged due to overflowing of Sahar Khad nallah following heavy rainfall in Kathua on Sunday.

Pic: PTI

canal entered their hostel buildings this morning, the officials said.

They said the rescue operation continued for more than five hours and all the trapped students were evacuated to safety.

Director IIIM, an autonomous body under the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR), Dr Zabeer Ahmed said the institute has made arrangements for the safe stay of the students.

Normal life was disrupted in Jammu city because of the heavy downpour which led to overflowing of streams and drains, leading to inundation of roads and flood waters entering homes at several places, including Janipur, Roop Nagar, Talab Tilloo, Jewel chowk, New Plot and Sanjay Nagar.

Boundary walls of several houses were also damaged, while nearly a dozen

vehicles were swept away in the flash floods, the officials said.

A portion of a road adjacent to a temple near Tawi bridge caved in, while a culvert on the exit gate of Jammu bus stand also collapsed owing to the heavy rainfall.

The overflowing streams and drains aggravated the situation in low-lying areas where the flood waters entered home, damaging boundary walls at several places and dozens of vehicles.

### High alert

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has directed all departments concerned to remain on high alert amid heavy rains.

He has advised people to remain cautious amid a weather forecast predicting moderate to intense rainfall with possibility of cloudbursts, flash floods

and landslides in high altitude areas till August 27.

The chief minister has directed all departments to remain on high alert in view of heavy rains across Jammu and Kashmir, which have caused water-logging in several residential areas and led to rivers and nallahs flowing above the danger mark.

He has emphasized close coordination among departments, ensuring that control rooms remain fully functional and responsive.

The Chief Minister's Office is in constant touch with the line departments to monitor the evolving situation. He said special priority is being given to clearing waterlogged areas, restoring drainage systems, and ensuring the immediate resumption of essential services including drinking water supply and electricity in the affected regions.

-PTI

## Anish Singh deputy NSA

**New Delhi:** Former CRPF and ITBP director general Anish Dayal Singh has been appointed the new deputy National Security Advisor (NSA), with a mandate to handle internal affairs, official sources said.

Singh, a 1988-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer from the Manipur cadre, retired from service in December 2024.

He brings extensive experience to the role, having served for nearly 30 years in the Intelligence Bureau (IB) before heading the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), and most recently, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

According to officials, Singh will be in charge of internal affairs of the country, including Jammu and Kashmir, and Naxal and Northeastern insurgency, as the deputy NSA.

Former RAW chief Rajinder Khanna is the Additional NSA, while retired IPS officer TV Ravichandran and former IFS officer Pawan Kapoor are the two serving deputy NSAs.

During his tenure as CRPF chief, Singh was instrumental in a number of key initiatives, such as CRPF's strides in combating Naxalism, establishing over three dozen forward operating bases, and introducing four new battalions in the Left-Wing Extremism-affected areas.

He also oversaw the CRPF's role in ensuring security during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and the first Assembly elections in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. He also introduced "samvaad" (dialogue) sessions with company commanders to gather feedback, a move widely appreciated within the force.

-PTI



Congress workers burn an effigy during a protest against Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar in Kolkata on Sunday.

Pic: PTI

# No political activities in temples: Kerala HC

**Kochi:** The Kerala High Court has directed three prominent devaswom boards in the state to ensure that premises of temples under their control are not used for any political activity.

The direction to the Travancore, Cochin and Malabar Devaswom Boards was issued by a bench of justices Raja Vijayaraghavan V and K V Jayakumar on a plea by an Ernakulam resident N Prakash.

In his plea, Prakash had claimed that various temple premises, like the Tali Temple at Kozhikode, Sree Indilayappan Temple at Attingal and Kadakkal Devi Temple in Kollam, were used for the promotion of political activities.

"Such activities are inappropriate and hurt the feelings of the devotees," he said.

The Malabar Devaswom Board had told the court that it was "not pragmatic" for the Devaswom Boards to issue directions regulating the selection of any forms of events or per-

forming acts, other than those connected with the customary poojas, rites, and rituals of the temple.

It also said that misuse of the temple and its precincts, by violating the provisions of the Religious Institutions (Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1988, was actionable under the said law and no direction from the court was necessary.

Moreover, innumerable people had participated and enjoyed the cultural events referred to by Prakash, it said.

After hearing both sides, the court said that the Religious Institutions (Prevention of Misuse) Act states that a temple or its manager shall not use or allow the use of its premises for the promotion and propagation of any political activities.

The court also pointed out that the Act prohibits the use of funds of religious institutions for the benefit of any political party.

It also prohibits any ceremony, festival, congrega-

tion, procession etc., organised or held in the temple to be used for any political activity, the bench said.

The bench directed the three devaswom boards to "ensure that the premises of the religious institutions under their control or superintendence shall not be used for the promotion or propagation of any political activity" and that provisions of the Act are "scrupulously complied with within the various temples under their control or superintendence".

If any violation of the Act was brought to the notice of the Boards, they have to inform the law enforcing authority without any delay so that appropriate action can be taken in accordance with law, the bench directed in its order of August 23.

The court further directed the Boards to issue fresh directives to the religious institutions under their control of superintendence to ensure that the provisions of the Act are strictly adhered to.

-PTI

## Murder accused shot in leg trying to flee

**Noida:** A man accused of setting his wife ablaze over a dowry demand of Rs 36 lakh was shot in his leg by police while fleeing custody on Sunday in Greater Noida, an officer said.

Vipin Bhati was being escorted for a routine medical check around 1.30 pm when he tried to flee, according to the Gautam Buddh Nagar Police PRO.

"He was chased and apprehended after being shot in the leg," the officer said. Bhati, a native of Sirsa village under Kasna Police Station limits, was arrested on Saturday after a disturbing video surfaced on social media showing him and another woman assaulting his wife, Nikki, and dragging her by the hair.

Another clip showed Nikki, severely burnt, walking down a staircase before collapsing.

She succumbed to burns while being taken to a hospital Thursday night.

Nikki's elder sister, Kanchan, who is married in the same family, recorded a video of the attack and accused Bhati and his family members of killing her sister for dowry.

"We were beaten and tortured for days. They

were demanding Rs 36 lakh. They hit her on the neck and head, threw acid, and set her on fire in front of her child," Kanchan told reporters.

She said she, too, was assaulted when she tried to intervene.

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police Sudhir Kumar had on Friday said that police got a call from Fortis Hospital informing them that a woman with burn injuries had been admitted and was referred to Safdarjung Hospital.

"Police immediately left for Safdarjung Hospital, but the woman succumbed to her injuries before the team could reach the hospital," he said.

Kanchan said that their in-laws wanted her sister to go away so that Vipin could be remarried. "They slapped me. I was injured and unconscious the entire day."

Nikki was cremated by her family members.

Based on Kanchan's complaint, a case was registered against Nikki's husband, Bhati, and his family at Kasna Police Station.

Nikki married Vipin in 2016 and the couple has a son.

-PTI



UP CM Yogi Adityanath interacts with a girl at Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha, in Paidleganj of Gorakhpur on Sunday.

Pic: PTI

## Key member of Ram Janmabhoomi Trust dead

**Ayodhya:** Bimalendra Mohan Pratap Mishra, a key member of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust and a scion of Ayodhya's erstwhile royal family, passed away late Saturday night at the age of 75.

Mishra breathed his last at his residence, according to his younger brother, Shailendra Mohan Pratap Mishra.

Mishra had been in poor health for several months following a leg injury that required surgery. Friends and family noted that he never fully recovered from

the procedure.

After the Supreme Court's final verdict on the Ayodhya dispute, Mishra was appointed as the 'receiver' of the Ram Temple, a role previously held by the Ayodhya Commissioner.

In addition to his contributions to the temple trust, Mishra also had a brief political career. He contested the 2009 parliamentary election from the Faizabad (Ayodhya) Lok Sabha constituency as a candidate for the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) but was unsuccessful.

-PTI

### Money Laundering Case

## Cong MLA flown to Bengaluru by ED

**Bengaluru:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) sleuths on Sunday brought Congress MLA K C Veerendra 'Puppy' to Bengaluru for further investigation into a money laundering case linked to illegal betting.

According to sources, the MLA, who is in ED custody, was flown in from Sikkim on Sunday morning.

A special ED team took him into custody upon his arrival at the airport.

To prevent any untoward incident, strict security was in place at Terminal-2 of the Kempegowda International Airport here

Officials swiftly moved Veerendra away from the media, taking him to an undisclosed location for interrogation to unearth his local ties.

Searches were conducted by the central agency in multiple states as part of an alleged illegal betting-linked money laundering case against Puppy (50), his brother and some others on Friday.

At least 30 locations in Chitradurga district, Ben-



Karnataka Congress MLA KC Veerendra being brought to Bengaluru from Sikkim for probe in online gaming case on Sunday.

Pic: PTI

galuru and Hubballi in Karnataka, Jodhpur (Rajasthan), Mumbai and Goa were covered under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the sources said.

Five casinos in Goa named Puppy's Casino Gold, Ocean Rivers Casino, Puppy's Casino Pride, Ocean 7 Casino and Big Daddy Casino were also raided, they said.

As per the ED sources, the searches were conducted in a case related to 'illegal' online and offline betting.

Veerendra is accused of running online betting

sites like King567, Raja567, Puppy's003, Rathna Gaming etc., and his brother K C Thippeswamy is alleged to be 'operating' three business entities from Dubai named Diamond Softech, TRS Technologies and Prime9Technologies.

These entities are related to the call centre services and the gaming business of Veerendra.

The premises of Anil Gowda, brother of Kusuma H (who unsuccessfully contested the Rajarajeshwari-nagar assembly seat on a Congress ticket), in Bengaluru were also covered, as per the sources.

-PTI

## MLA follows DK on RSS anthem

**Tumakuru:** Taking a cue from Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, ruling Congress MLA H D Ranganath sang the opening lines of the RSS anthem and praised it on Sunday.

Shivakumar, who also serves as the Congress state president, took everyone by surprise on August 21 by singing the RSS anthem during a discussion in the state Assembly on the stampede near Chinnaswamy stadium, which claimed the lives of 11 people.

Speaking to reporters at Kunigal in Tumakuru district, Ranganath crooned the opening lines of the RSS anthem "Namaste Sada Vatsale".

Calling the anthem a "very good song", the MLA said he too heard it after the Deputy CM sang it in the assembly.

"I read its meaning. It says we should salute the land where we are born. I see nothing wrong in that. Ours is a secular party, and we must accept good things from others." Criticising the BJP, he said, "Right-wingers insist on creating divisions of caste and religion, which we oppose."

-PTI

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Investments are taking place in areas like Anantnag and Pulwama districts in the Kashmir valley. More industrial units have been set up in Pulwama than in Srinagar. The fear of terrorists and their ecosystem has almost ended."

Manoj Sinha, Lieutenant Governor, Jammu and Kashmir



# Minimal health impact from waste-to-energy plants

**New Delhi:** All four waste-to-energy plants in Delhi located at Okhla, Ghazipur, Bawana and Tehkhand are largely compliant with regulatory norms and pose minimal risk to public health and the environment, according to a joint report by the Central Pollution Control Board and Delhi Pollution Control Committee.

The report, filed before the Supreme Court and the National Green Tribunal, says all four plants operate with pre-processing facilities that raise the calorific

value of waste above 1,500 kilocalories per kilogram, in line with the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016.

Stack emissions, including suspended particulate matter and heavy metals like nickel, meet stipulated standards, though dioxin, furan and cadmium plus thallium levels exceed norms at Bawana.

However, the estimated incremental cancer risk from dioxin emissions, even at that facility, remains well below the one-in-a-million threshold recognised by the United



States Environmental Protection Agency.

Ambient air quality monitoring at the eight stations around the plants showed PM10 and PM2.5 occasionally breached prescribed limits but were within the range seen across Delhi's 39 Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Stations

(CAAQMS). Elevated ozone and nickel levels were observed at some sites.

The report, however, notes that nickel exceedances are based on 24-hour data and not directly comparable with long-term averages and that the contribution of Waste To Energy (WTE) plants to these pol-

lutants is negligible.

It calls for expanded nickel monitoring at Ghazipur and Bawana. Regarding waste ash, bottom ash at three plants meets norms, and fly ash meets standards except in the case of Bawana, where fly ash exceeds norms for cadmium, manganese, lead and copper. Leachate treatment data revealed that Bawana's treated effluent exceeds norms for biochemical oxygen demand. Ghazipur showed elevated levels of dissolved solids and chlorides, while

Tehkhand reported exceedances for both chloride and phenolic compounds. Reuse practices also vary by plant.

Groundwater sampling detected cadmium, copper and lead within permissible levels across all sites, though iron exceeded limits at Bawana and Ghazipur.

Broader groundwater observations flagged exceedances in total dissolved solids, hardness, sulphates, nitrates and phenolic compounds around Bawana, Ghazipur and Tehkhand.

-PTI



# Regulated pre-IPO trading platform to bring transparency

**New Delhi:** Market regulator Sebi's plan to introduce a regulated pre-IPO trading platform could reshape how investors buy and sell unlisted shares, bringing transparency to a space long dominated by the opaque grey market and reducing risks for retail investors, market experts said.

Moreover, for employees, especially those holding ESOPs (employee stock options), the framework could be a game-changer.

Rajesh Singla, founder and CEO of Planify, which deals in buying and selling of unlisted shares, explained that a large portion of ESOPs remains unutilised today as employees lack access to liquidity options before an initial public offering (IPO). With Sebi's proposed system, they would finally have an avenue to monetise their holdings in a regulated environment.

On Friday, Sebi chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey hinted at introducing a regulated platform for pre-IPO share trading, potentially replacing existing grey market practices.

The move, if implemented, may also allow investors to trade shares in a transparent environment during the three-day gap between allotment and listing. At present, this window is dominated by the unregulated grey market, which could be replaced by a formal mechanism.

Currently, the grey mar-



Tuhin Kanta Pandey, Chairman, SEBI

ket functions as an informal over-the-counter network, where brokers and investors negotiate deals based on the expected listing price. The Grey Market Premium (GMP) often emerges as the key sentiment indicator.

While GMP doesn't guarantee outcomes, it frequently shapes retail investor decisions on whether to apply for an IPO, said Trivish, COO of Tradejini.

Experts believe that the regulated platform would bring structure and supervision to a segment that has so far operated outside formal oversight.

"A regulated platform will create defined standards and boundaries, reducing market anomalies and enabling transactions to happen transparently under Sebi's supervision," Planify's Singla said.

Feroze Azeez, Joint CEO

of Anand Rath Wealth, said the proposal could significantly reduce grey market activity by shifting pre-IPO trades into a transparent ecosystem.

Beyond transparency, he noted that proper disclosures and structured settlement mechanisms will help investors evaluate companies more accurately and transact with greater confidence. This, in turn, could increase retail participation in the unlisted space, which has been limited due to risks of fraud and price manipulation.

The growing scale of India's IPO market makes the case for such a platform even stronger. In 2024 alone, 337 companies went public -- 91 on the mainboard and 241 on SME -- raising nearly Rs 1.67 lakh crore, with average listing gains of 29 per cent.

On the unlisted side, estimates suggest that more than 1,300 profitable companies collectively hold around Rs 150 lakh crore of value waiting to be unlocked.

"A formal mechanism could tap this liquidity and allow wider participation beyond select circles," Trivish said.

## Ensured protection

On the other hand, experts said existing grey market offers no such protection. Retail participants remain exposed to fraud, default, and unfair practices, with transactions often driven

by short-term speculation rather than informed, long-term investment.

The system also encourages reliance on speculative indicators, such as Kostak and Sauda rates -- terms that reflect premiums on IPO applications irrespective of allotment or contingent on allotment, respectively, Azeez said.

While GMP is widely followed as a gauge of demand, its reliability is questionable. Operators can manipulate premiums to sway investor behaviour, creating both opportunities and risks for retail investors.

A recent study by Anand Rath Wealth in July 2025 underlines this point -- of 19 IPOs on the mainboard, more than 60 per cent were listed below their GMPs, 40 per cent below Sauda rates, and 26 per cent at or below the issue price. This shows that GMP often mirrors speculative sentiment rather than true fundamentals.

The mismatch between pre-listing hype and actual performance has been evident in several high-profile IPOs, including Paytm, Zomato, Nykaa, Policybazaar, and Brigade.

In many of these cases, strong grey market premiums failed to translate into sustained listing gains, with stocks witnessing sharp corrections soon after debut, Anand Rath's Azeez said.

-PTI

## BUSINESS SENSE

# From Busy to Owned: Build the Middle



By Rashmi Kulkarni

## Monday, 11:10 am.

Sales is celebrating a PO (Purchase Order). Ops is juggling dispatch. Finance is nudging a payment. Three different teams, same pause: "Who signs off?" "Ship now or wait?" "Loop you in, sir/ma'am?" It's not speed that's missing. It's ownership you can see.

## What "the middle" actually means

Not more managers. Not longer meetings. It's a simple leadership system that tells everyone who decides, when, and where exceptions go:

### 1. Role Charters (one page, per manager)

Scope, decisions owned end-to-end, what "good" looks like, and red-line escalations. Short, public, living ... so people don't need to "just check" on WhatsApp.

### 2. Decision Ladder (green / amber / red)

**Green:** Decide & inform.

**Amber:** Decide with consult (time-boxed).

**Red:** Escalate with context (into fixed slots).

Post one Ladder per core flow ... sales, delivery, support, finance ... so polite waiting doesn't replace action.

### 3. Escalation Windows (twice a week, fixed)

Example: Tue & Thu, 11:30-12:00. Stuck work lands here inside the system, not at midnight. Predictable beats urgent.

### 4. Published Rhythm (the operating diary)

A weekly review with a standing agenda: WIP lanes, owner tags, next decisions, risks. Visibility replaces supervision; founders can be strategically unavailable.

If that felt abstract, here's the home-version you'll recognise.

## The Society WhatsApp Test (real version)

9:12 p.m.: "Paani kam aaya." (Lesser water supply)

By 9:14: 47 messages, one "Good morning" sticker, and three people tagging the secretary. The watchman is now answering calls and switching the motor like a DJ.

Classic no middle.

Now add a small, desi middle: the Water Subcommittee Head plus the watchmen. They ration first, tanker last. A simple playbook: stop-start timings agreed, a ready message ("Supply stop 6-8 am. Conserve water. Update at 8:15."), and a rule that the Head decides rationing; only if two cycles fail, the treasurer is pinged to price a tanker; the secretary enters only if both steps don't hold.

Result? Fewer pings, fewer heroics, and full buckets by breakfast. The group goes back to birthday photos. Work didn't get lighter ... ownership got visible.

In teams, the same logic turns polite waiting into steady motion.

## How the shift becomes visible

Instead of a before/after story, here are signals you'll notice in 10 days when the middle is working:

- Fewer "Can you just see this once?" pings.
- Standups end with named owners and time-boxed decisions ... not updates.
- Amber items stop floating; they're decided within the window.
- Red items wait for the slot unless truly urgent (and urgent is now rare).
- People start saying, "Town it," without adding, "unless you want to review."

No fanfare. Just steadier motion.

## How to install it (Indian SME reality)

**Day 1-2:** Pick one friction lane (onboarding, change requests, month-end collections).

**Day 3-4:** Draft two Role Charters for your natural "catchers." One page. Read them aloud in the team meet.

**Day 5-6:** Mark 10 typical decisions as Green/Amber/Red. Time-box amber consults (e.g., 24 hours).

**Day 7:** Announce two Escalation Windows on the shared calendar. If it's not red, it waits.

**Day 8-10:** Run the rhythm. Daily WIP = owner tags + next decisions; weekly ops = risks + handoffs. Founder attends only if a red-line is hit.

Track two simple numbers before/after: after-hours messages and cycle time. If both drop, the middle is taking hold.

## When it wobbles (and it will)

- Charter drift: If managers still seek blessings, your red lines are too generous; tighten the Ladder.
- Window spillover: If escalations leak to DMs, add a third temporary slot and sort by type.
- Review theatre: If meetings become status shows, cut to four beats: WIP, owners, decisions due, risks.

## Rashmi's note

Headcount adds capacity. The middle adds speed. It's not culture decks or tool rollouts. It's the quiet confidence that comes when "who decides" is public ... and exceptions have a place to go. That's when teams stop waiting for the founder and start moving on time.

*Next week, Rahul explores restraint: why presence can quietly slow execution unless exits from loops are designed in.*

(Rashmi Kulkarni is Co-founder at PPS Consulting. She works with growth-stage teams to install operating rhythm and clear decision rights so work moves without supervision. Views are personal. Write to rashmi@ppsconsulting.biz or connect on LinkedIn.)

## Trade Mark Rights

# Everyday words can't be monopolised: HC

**New Delhi:** The Delhi High Court has held that generic and commonly descriptive word can never become trade marks on their own since "words used in everyday language cannot be monopolised".

Justice Tejas Karia made the observation while dismissing an application filed by Yatra Online Limited, which had sought to restrain Mach Conferences and Events Limited from launching services under the marks 'BookMyYatra' and 'Book-MyYatra.com'.

The judge held that the expression "Yatra", being synonymous with travel in Hindi, is generic and descriptive in relation to travel services, and "no single entity can claim exclusivity over it".

"Generic or commonly descriptive word can never become trade marks on their own as they never acquire distinctiveness or a secondary meaning. These words do not indicate origin or source. It is settled law that words used in everyday language cannot be allowed to be monopolised," the judge said in an order passed on August 22.

The counsel for Yatra Online claimed that it had built enormous goodwill in its "Yatra" and "Yatra.com" marks since 2006, with over 15 million customers and a turnover of more than Rs 5,600 crore in FY 2023-24.

The counsel submitted that the rival mark - Book-MyYatra - was deceptively similar and adopted in bad faith to ride on Yatra's reputation.

Mach Conferences' counsel opposed the submission, claiming that "Yatra" was a descriptive term used by hundreds of travel operators across India for decades, and that Yatra Online's registrations contained clear disclaimers denying any exclusive right over the word.

He added that the prefix "BookMy" gave the marks a distinct character, already common in the online space.

The court also noted in the order that Yatra Online's trademark registrations for "Yatra with device" and "Yatra Freight" were granted only with explicit disclaimers: "No exclusive right for the word Yatra."

-PTI

## Indian envoy discusses 'fair' trade

**New York:** Indian envoy Vinay Mohan Kwatra discussed "fair, balanced and mutually beneficial trade ties" with US lawmakers amid ongoing tariff tensions between New Delhi and Washington.

The Indian Ambassador has met four US lawmakers in the last 24 hours and 23 since August 9, as revealed by his social media posts.

Kwatra met Congressman Rep Joe Courtney, Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces, on Saturday (local time) and thanked him for supporting the bilateral partnership between the two countries.

"Highlighted our perspectives on trade and economic cooperation, including the need for fair, balanced and mutually beneficial trade ties," Kwatra posted on social media.

He appreciated Amo's support for the bilateral ties and "shared perspectives on the importance of fair, balanced and mutually beneficial trade engagements," said his social media post.

-PTI



Farmers process jute at a field in Nadia, West Bengal on Sunday.

Pic: PTI

# CII suggests reforms in GST

**New Delhi:** Industry lobby by CII on Sunday unveiled a reform roadmap to accelerate India's economic transformation, pitching for a simplified GST structure, expanded coverage to petroleum and real estate, rationalised tariff structure, national employment and gig economy policies.

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in its report "Policies for a Competitive India", presents over 250 actionable recommendations across 14 critical reform areas.

Developed through wide-ranging consultations with industry leaders, economists, and policy

experts, the blueprint is aligned with the government's Viksit Bharat vision, it said.

CII President Rajiv Memani said, "These recommendations are closely aligned with the government's reform trajectory and are in support of the Prime Minister's call for bold and transformative change. As a live document, policies for a Competitive India will continue to evolve, bringing fresh ideas to support policymakers."

The reform areas include fiscal prudence, inflation management, and modernised statistical sys-

tems; privatisation of non-strategic PSEs, creation of a sovereign wealth fund; decriminalisation of minor violations, time-bound approvals, single-window clearances, and second-generation IBC reforms; streamlined labour codes, minimum wage framework, and fast-track dispute resolution.

The industry lobby has also recommended energy policy reforms, including competitive tariffs, elimination of cross-subsidisation, stronger transmission networks, private participation in nuclear energy, and a green hydrogen roadmap.

-PTI

# No copying, decryption of Indian data overseas

**New Delhi:** The government has approved a permit to Starlink after the company agreed to comply with domestic laws, including security conditions, which bar it from copying and decrypting data overseas and mirroring Indian user traffic on any system set up abroad, Minister of State for Communications Pemasani Chandra Sekhar said.

The minister told PTI that security conditions mandate satellite communication providers to set up earth station gateways in

## Permit To Starlink

India through which communications from satellite to users are routed.

He said that the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) granted a Unified License (UL) to Starlink Satellite Communications Private Limited after the US firm agreed to the stipulated terms and conditions of the UL, including security conditions which is applicable to all satcom players.



"The security conditions, inter-alia, include the establishment of earth station gateway(s) in India for providing satellite-based communication services with no user traffic originating from or des-

tined for India to be routed through any gateway located outside India, no copying and decryption of the Indian data outside the country, and the Indian user traffic is not to be mirrored to any system/server



located abroad," the minister said.

He also said the telecom department had sought recommendations of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) on terms and conditions of

spectrum assignment, including spectrum pricing, for providing satellite-based communication services, which were received on May 9.

"Satellite-based communication services are an upcoming area and, as any new economic activity would do, it is also expected to generate employment in the country, as it involves, inter alia, the installation, operation and maintenance of the telecom network, including user terminal equipment," the minister added.

-PTI

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

"If you look at all the questions around AI adoption, AI excitement, agents in the workforce, for example, the question on how many companies are re-looking at their core strategy with AI, the global number is 82 per cent, India is at 90 per cent."

Puneet Chandok, Head, Microsoft India





# Ancient shells, pottery reveal 3,200-years-old trade routes

**Brisbane:** New research conducted at Walufeni Cave, an important archaeological site in Papua New Guinea, reveals new evidence of long-distance interactions between Oceania's Indigenous societies, as far back as 3,200 years ago.

Our new study, published in the journal Australian Archaeology, is the first archaeological research undertaken on the Great Papuan Plateau. The findings continue to undermine the historical Euro-centric idea that early Indigenous societies in this region were static and unchanging.

Instead, we find further evidence for what Monash Professor of Indigenous Archaeology Ian J. McNiven calls the Coral Sea Cultural Interaction Sphere: a dynamic interchange of trade, ideas and movement over a vast region encompassing New Guinea, the Torres Strait, and north-eastern Australia.

The goal of the Great Papuan Plateau project was to determine whether the plateau may have been an eastern pathway for the movement of early people into north-eastern Australia, at a time when New Guinea and Australia were joined in the continent of Sahul.

The two countries as we know them separated about 8,000 years ago due to sea levels rising after the last glacial period.



Our research in Walufeni Cave, located near Mount Bosavi in New Guinea's southern highlands province, identified occupation dating back more than 10,000 years. We also found a unique and as yet undated petroglyph rock art style.

Our analyses of cave deposits reveals significant changes in how the site was used starting from just over 3,000 years ago. This includes changes to the frequency of occupation, to plant and animal use, as well as the sudden appearance of coastal marine shell.

Specifically, we found 3,200-year-old evidence for the transport of marine shell 200km inland, which has previously been recorded as coming from the southern coast of the Gulf of Papua, and from as far away as Torres Strait.

This suggests the long-distance maritime trade and interaction networks

between the societies of coastal southern New Guinea, Torres Strait and northern Australia extended far inland – and much further than previously known.

### The significance

Archaeologists and ethnographers have widely documented the use of culturally modified marine shells as important items of trade and prestige in New Guinea.

These shells were used as markers of status and prestige, for ritual purposes, as currency and wealth, as tools, and to facilitate long-distance social ties between groups.

Despite the coastal availability of a large variety of shellfish, only a relatively small selection are recorded as being commonly used in New Guinea.

The most prominent of these are dog whelks (Nassaridae), cowrie shells (Cypraeidae), cone shells

(Conidae), baler shell (Volutidae), and pearl/kina shell (Pteriidae). Many of these are significant for ritual and symbolic functions across the Indo-Pacific and indeed, globally.

Dog whelks were the predominant species we found in Walufeni Cave, along with olive shells and cowrie shells. These come from very small "sea snails", or gastropods.

All of the shells we found had been culturally modified, such as to allow stitching onto garments, or threading onto strings.

Gastropod shells continue to be used by today's plateau societies. They may be sewn onto elaborate ceremonial costumes, or offered in long strings as trade items, or as bridal dowry.

### Pottery tradition

Further evidence for long-distance voyaging between the southern coast of Papua New Guinea and the

Torres Strait and Northern Australia comes in the form of pottery.

Researchers have found Lapita pottery at two archaeological sites on the south coast of New Guinea (Caution Bay and Hopo). These have been dated to 2,900 and 2,600 years ago, respectively.

Lapita pottery is a distinctive feature of Austronesian long-distance voyagers with origins in modern-day Taiwan and the Philippines. Lapita peoples bought the first pottery to New Guinea about 3,300 years ago, providing the template for later localised pottery production.

In a separate finding, Aboriginal pottery dating back to 2,950 years ago was reported from Jiigurru (Lizard Island), off the coast of the Cape York Peninsula. While this pottery isn't stylistically Lapita, the technology used to make it is.

Similar pottery dating back 2,600 years ago has been reported on the eastern Murray Islands of Torres Strait, and in the Mask Cave on Pulu Island, western Torres Strait. Analysis of the Murray Island pottery indicates the clay was derived from southern Papua New Guinea.

These studies suggest the Lapita peoples' knowledge of how to make pottery spread to Torres Strait and northern Australia via the interaction sphere. -AP

## Nepal joins India-led Big Cat Alliance

**Kathmandu:** Nepal has officially joined the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA), an India-led global initiative to protect seven species of big cats.

IBCA is a multi-country, multi-agency coalition of over 90 big cat range countries and non-range countries with an interest in big cat conservation.

"Nepal has formally joined the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) by signing the Framework Agreement," announced the IBCA on Saturday.

"With snow leopard, tiger and common leopard in its landscape, Nepal's joining the IBCA will strengthen global collaboration for big cat conservation," the IBCA said.

The IBCA has "congratulated the Government of Nepal for this significant step towards shared ecologically significant step towards shared ecological security."

Nepal succeeded to almost triple its tiger population to 355 in 2022 (the latest census carried out so far) from a mere 121 in 2009. Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) for global conservation of seven big cats namely Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar and Puma on April 09, 2023, in Mysuru, Karnataka.

India has a long-standing experience on tiger agenda and exemplary conservation models for other big cats like lion, snow leopard and leopard.

With the help of this platform Big Cat Range Countries can share their experiences and mobilize resources in order to find solutions to conserve big cats. -PTI

## Moscow says Kyiv struck nuclear power plant



**Moscow:** Russia accused Ukraine Sunday of launching drone attacks that sparked a fire at a nuclear power plant in its western Kursk region overnight, as Ukraine celebrated 34 years since its independence.

Russian officials said several power and energy facilities were targeted in the overnight strikes.

The fire at the nuclear facility was quickly extinguished with no injuries reported, according to the plant's press service on Telegram. While the attack damaged a transformer, radiation levels remained within normal ranges.

The United Nations' nuclear watchdog said it was aware of media reports that a transformer at the plants had caught fire "due to military activity," but hadn't received independent confirmation. It said its director-general, Rafael Mariano Grossi, said that "every nuclear facility must be protected at all times."

Ukraine did not immediately comment on the alleged attack.

Firefighters also responded to a blaze at the port of Ust-Luga in Russia's Leningrad region, home to a major fuel export terminal. The regional governor said approximately 10 Ukrainian drones were

shot down, with debris igniting the fire.

Russia's Defence Ministry claimed its air defences intercepted 95 Ukrainian drones over Russian territory overnight into Sunday.

Russia fired 72 drones and decoys, along with a cruise missile, into Ukraine overnight into Sunday, Ukraine's air force said. Of these, 48 drones were shot down or jammed.

The incidents occurred as Ukraine marked independence day, commemorating its 1991 declaration of independence from the Soviet Union. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy delivered remarks in a video address from Kyiv's Independence Square, emphasising the nation's resolve.

"We are building a Ukraine that will have enough strength and power to live in security and peace," Zelenskyy said, calling for a "just peace."

"What our future will be is up to us alone," he said, in a nod to the US-Russia summit in Alaska earlier in August, which many feared would leave Ukrainian and European interests sidelined.

"And the world knows this. And the world respects this. It respects Ukraine. It perceives Ukraine as an equal," he said. -AP

## Kim supervises tests of new anti-air missiles

**Seoul:** North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised the test-firing of two types of new anti-air missiles, state media said Sunday, displaying his expanding military capabilities as the South Korean and U.S. militaries carry out joint drills.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency said the test Saturday proved the missiles effective in countering aerial threats such as drones and cruise missiles, and that Kim assigned unspecified "important" tasks to defense scientists ahead of a major political conference expected early next year.

The report did not specify the missiles that were tested or where the event took place. It did not mention any remarks by Kim directed at Washington or Seoul.

The test coincided with new South Korean President Lee Jae Myung's trip to Tokyo for a summit with Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, where they vowed to strengthen bilateral cooperation and their trilateral partnership with the United States to address common challenges, including North Korea's



nuclear ambitions. Lee was to depart for Washington on Sunday for a summit with US President Donald Trump.

Kim's government has repeatedly dismissed calls by Seoul and Washington to restart long-stalled negotiations aimed at winding down his nuclear weapons and missiles programs, as he continues to prioritize Russia as part of a foreign policy aimed at expanding ties with nations confronting the United States.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Kim has sent thousands of troops and large shipments of weapons, including artillery and ballistic missiles, to help fuel President Vladimir Putin's warfighting.

That has raised concerns Moscow could provide technology that strengthens Kim's nuclear

armed military, with experts pointing to North Korea's aging anti-air and radar systems as a likely area of cooperation. South Korea's previous conservative government said in November that Russia supplied missiles and other equipment to help strengthen air defenses of the North Korean capital of Pyongyang, but did not specify which systems were provided.

Kim held a ceremony in Pyongyang last week to honor North Korean soldiers who fought in Ukraine, awarding state "hero" titles to those who returned and placing medals beside 101 portraits of the fallen, praising them as "great men, great heroes and great patriots," state media reported.

According to South Korean assessments, North Korea has sent around 15,000 troops to Russia since last fall and about 600 of them have died in combat. Kim has also agreed to send thousands of military construction workers and deminers to Russia's Kursk region, a deployment South Korean intelligence believes could happen soon. -AP

## Torrential rains kill 11 in KP

**Peshawar:** At least 11 people, including three children, died and 47 injured on Sunday as torrential rains and windstorms battered parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in northwest Pakistan, officials said.

Heavy rains, accompanied by strong winds, hit Dera Ismail Khan district and adjoining areas early Sunday, leaving eight people dead and over 45 hurt in various incidents, mainly roof collapses. Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) spokesperson Bilal Faizi told PTI.

Faizi added the injured were shifted to two different hospitals and over two dozen were discharged after treatment.

In another incident, three children were killed when the roof of a house caved in at Tikatak area of Maidan in Lower Dir district, a Rescue 1122 spokesperson said.

The storm also uprooted trees and downed power lines, disrupting electricity in several areas of Dera Ismail Khan. Heavy showers were reported in Peshawar, Mardan, North and South Waziristan, and other districts. -PTI

## Bangladesh raises apology, pending issues with Pakistan

**Dhaka:** Bangladesh on Sunday raised pending issues, including an apology for the 1971 war, with Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, who is the most senior leader from his country to visit Dhaka since 2012.

Dar, who arrived in Dhaka on Saturday on a two-day visit aimed at rebuilding ties with Bangladesh following the ouster of longtime prime minister Sheikh Hasina, held talks with the interim government's Foreign Adviser M Touhid Hossain.

"We have raised unresolved issues such as an apology or expression of regret for 1971, claims over assets, and the matter of stranded Pakistani citizens (with Dar)," Hossain told reporters after talks with Dar.

It would be wrong to expect problems of 54 years to be solved in a single day, he said.

"Both countries have presented their respective positions on these issues," the foreign adviser said at a press conference.

Dar, who is also the deputy prime minister, said



the unsettled issues over 1971 were resolved twice -- first in 1974 in tri-partite talks involving New Delhi in India. "Later, the then president Pervez Musharraf settled the issues of genocide again during his Dhaka visit when he talked in public with an open mind," Dar added.

One agreement and five memorandums of understanding (MoUs) were signed between the two countries, the Bangladeshi foreign adviser said.

Hossain said both countries have agreed that to move bilateral relations forward, historical issues must be resolved through discussion.

### Not first

This is not the first time that Dhaka has raised the pending 1971 issues with Pakistan. In April, in the first foreign secretary-level talks in 15 years, Bangla-

desh had asked Pakistan to resolve unsettled historical issues and settle pre-independence asset sharing. Dhaka also demanded a formal apology for the genocide of the 1971 Liberation War.

Bangladesh-Pakistan ties were at their lowest ebb during Hasina's Awami League regime, particularly when it initiated in 2010 the trial of collaborators of Pakistani troops during the 1971 Liberation War.

A violent student-led street movement toppled Hasina's government on August 5, 2024, with Yunus taking over as the chief adviser of the interim government three days after she left Bangladesh for India.

The development paved the way for revitalising ties with Islamabad in the past year when relations between Dhaka and New

Delhi turned icy, while India was previously seen as Bangladesh's closest strategic and economic partner under Hasina's rule.

Hina Rabbani Khar was the last Pakistani foreign minister to visit Dhaka in November 2012 to invite Hasina to a summit in Islamabad.

### Strengthening ties

On Sunday, at a foreign minister-level meeting, Bangladesh and Pakistan reiterated their pledges to further strengthen the existing multidimensional and historical bilateral relations based on mutual respect, understanding and cooperation, state-run news agency Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) said.

During the meeting, the two sides stressed strengthening trade relations and expanding investment, as yearly turnover between the countries is below USD 1 billion, Hossain told the press conference.

The foreign adviser said Bangladesh sought access to Pakistan markets under the South Asian Free Trade Area. -PTI

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

"India must take Trump's point over Russian oil seriously. Trump is right to target India's massive Russian oil purchases, which are helping to fund Vladimir Putin's brutal war against Ukraine. India must be treated like the "prized free and democratic partner that it is."

Nikki Haley, Republican Leader, US



## Criminals in UK to face travel, sports bans

By Aditi Khanna

**London:** Criminals will be barred from pubs, concerts and sports matches under new sentencing powers widening the scope of punishments unveiled by the UK government on Sunday.

Judges in the country will be able to curtail offenders' freedoms with driving limits, travel bans and restriction zones confining them into specific areas as part of the new measures.

The changes will toughen up community punishments to deter reoffending and force offend-

ers back onto the straight-and-narrow, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) said.

"Widening the range of punishments available to judges is part of our Plan for Change to cut crime and make streets safer," said UK Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood.

"When criminals break society's rules, they must be punished. Those serving their sentences in the community must have their freedom restricted there too. These new punishments should remind all offenders that, under this government, crime does not pay," she said.



Shabana Mahmood

Offenders coming out of prison and supervised by the Prob-

ation Service will also face similar restrictions and an expanded mandatory drug testing regime.

In future, criminals without known drug habits will face this scrutiny, not just those with a history of substance misuse, the MoJ said.

Offenders who break the rules face being brought back to court or hauled back to prison as punishment depending on the sentence they are serving.

"Rightly, the public expect the government to do everything in its power to keep Britain safe, and that's what we're doing," said Mahmood.

Currently, judges in Britain are able to give out limited bans for specific crimes, for example football bans for crimes committed inside a stadium on match day, to prevent further antisocial behaviour.

The MoJ said it will change the law shortly so such bans can be handed down as a form of punishment for any offence in any circumstance.

It will form part of wider reforms to sentencing to ensure punishments cut crime and prisons never again run out of places for dangerous offenders, the ministry said. -PTI



EDITORIAL

Timeless Wisdom

India has often been accused of neglecting its own intellectual inheritance in favour of borrowed canons. Now, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has attempted something quietly radical by wanting its undergraduates to grapple with the mathematics of their own civilisation. A draft curriculum prepared under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 proposes modules on *Kala Ganana* - the traditional reckoning of time, *Bharatiya Bijganit* (Indian algebra), the mathematical insights embedded in the *Puranas*, and the astronomy of texts such as the *Surya Siddhanta* and *Aryabhatiyam*. This is no nostalgic dalliance. It is a recognition that the intellectual traditions of Hindu civilisation are not curios of the past, but deep wells of knowledge that can illuminate the present.

For decades, Indian students have been taught mathematics in a fashion borrowed wholesale from Europe, with a genealogy that jumps from Euclid to Newton and then lurches towards the abstractions of modern algebra. Yet India's own masters like Aryabhata, Brahmagupta and Bhaskara were mapping planetary orbits, devising algebraic identities and calculating the value of  $\pi$  to astonishing accuracy long before Europe's Renaissance.

To recover that lineage is intellectual self-respect. The curriculum's eclecticism is striking. It asks students to study the *Paravartya Yojayet Sutra*, to explore the *Panchanga*, the Indian calendar still used to calculate auspicious muhurtas for rituals and to compare Vedic units of time such as ghatas and vighatis with Greenwich Mean Time and Indian Standard Time.

Some may scoff by questioning what need a budding mathematician could possibly have for the metaphysics of cosmic time? The answer lies in breadth. A civilisation that once measured the shadow of a gnomon in Ujjain to fix its prime meridian should not be ashamed to teach its students that science, like culture, has always been entangled with myth and ritual.

This initiative also deserves praise as it insists on integration rather than isolation. Students are not being asked to abandon modern mathematics. Instead, they are to see Vedic and classical Indian techniques as part of a longer continuum. Political science students will be exposed not only to Western thinkers but also to the statecraft of the Ramayana and Mahabharata, to Jain and Buddhist treatises, to the poetry of Kalidasa and the chronicles of Kalhana. Mathematics students will be taught that algebra did not arrive in India by accident of colonial curricula, but that it has roots in Sanskrit treatises as venerable as those of Europe's Latin scholars.

Preserving such facets of Hindu civilization is about recognising that the past was richer, more diverse, and more inventive than the textbooks of the 20th century ever admitted. To introduce students to the elegance of Vedic timekeeping and the grand cosmologies of the Puranas is to expand their imagination of what mathematics can be and of knowledge itself. In doing so, India is equipping its youth with a deeper, more rooted sense of intellectual possibility.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Broken Consensus: Is the UN Still Relevant?



By  
Sumant Vidwans

The United Nations was born out of the ashes of the Second World War with a lofty promise: to prevent future wars, uphold international peace and security, and provide a forum for resolving disputes through dialogue, not violence. It was conceived as the cornerstone of a new world order, where multilateralism would guide diplomacy and global cooperation would replace confrontation. For many years, it lived up to that promise in spirit, if not always in practice. Today, however, the UN is increasingly being bypassed, ignored, or rendered ineffective in the face of the very challenges it was created to address.

The world has changed greatly since 1945, yet the UN's core structure remains frozen in time. Institutions that fail to evolve risk irrelevance, and the UN is no exception.

Many of today's major challenges, like climate action, security alliances, technology governance, pandemic response, and even peace negotiations, are tackled outside the UN—through bilateral or regional deals or forums like the G20, BRICS, and ASEAN. The General Assembly passes resolutions, but with no enforcement, they are mostly diplomatic theatre. The Security Council, once central to global security, is paralysed by vetoes and inaction. Unable to enforce its own decisions, it has become more of a stage for power politics than a tool

The UN's current structure is a colonial relic, where a few nations still dominate global rules.



for peace.

The Security Council still mirrors the power balance of 1945. The five permanent members—the US, UK, France, Russia, and China—hold disproportionate power through their veto, often blocking action in conflicts tied to their interests. As a result, the Council frequently fails to issue even statements, let alone binding resolutions.

Much of the world lacks a voice in the Council: Africa, Latin America, and much of Asia are sidelined, fueling resentment and eroding the UN's legitimacy.

The war in Ukraine starkly shows the UN's paralysis: Russia's permanent seat lets it veto any move to hold it accountable. Similarly, the Syrian civil war, with its mass deaths and refugee crisis, dragged on for years without effective UN action.

**Case for Reform**

India's frustration with the UN system is neither new nor unique. As the world's most populous nation and a major economy, its absence from permanent Security Council membership is a glaring anomaly. A nuclear power, a spacefaring nation, the world's largest democracy, and a leading contributor to UN peacekeeping, India still re-

mains outside the core decision-making circle.

The UN's current structure is a colonial relic, with a few nations still dominating global rules. India's growing stature and the UN's stalemate have led it to seek greater strategic success through forums like BRICS and SCO. By contrast, the UN often feels like a stage where India is asked to contribute but denied a role in writing the script.

UN reform has been debated for decades, from expanding the Security Council with new permanent members (India, Brazil, Germany, and an African representative) to curbing the veto. Yet efforts remain stalled, as the P5 have little incentive to dilute their power.

Without consensus among permanent members, reform remains a distant dream. Yet the status quo is increasingly untenable. As more nations lose faith, the global order may tilt further towards regional blocs, fragmenting the notion of a unified international community.

The real question is not whether the UN needs an overhaul or not. The real question is whether the UN can reform itself from within or whether it is time for the world to look for a new

alternative.

Today's world needs a new international body that can better reflect the current geopolitical, economic, and demographic realities. It should be based on a new framework built on principles of democratic representation, rotational leadership, transparency, and accountability.

The real danger lies not in reforming the global system but in doing nothing. As global politics shift in today's multipolar world and the UN declines, we risk deeper polarisation, where international law is honoured only when convenient and cooperation yields to rhetoric. In this vacuum, powerful states or alliances will pursue their own interests, leaving weaker nations to navigate a fragmented, volatile order.

For countries like India, this is both a challenge and an opportunity. As a rising global power, India must assert its role not just as a reform-seeker but as a reform-leader, building consensus among like-minded and under-represented nations and proposing viable models for a more inclusive and effective international system.

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

POLITICS AND PROSE

From Panipat's Ashes: Peshwa Madhavrao and the Phoenix-like rise of the Maratha Empire

With scalpel-like precision, Dr. Uday S. Kulkarni revives the drama of one of Indian history's greatest recoveries.



By  
Shoumojit Banerjee

The Marathas' recovery after the carnage of Panipat in January 1761 is one of the great comeback stories of Indian history. An early centrepiece of that comeback is the Battle of Rakshashbhuvan, that was fought this month and was among the most psychologically consequential of all Maratha victories.

On August 10, 1763, on the flooded banks of the Godavari near Rakshashbhuvan, the 18-year-old Peshwa Madhavrao came into his own and recovered Maratha self-belief shattered on the plains of Panipat when he defeated the Nizam of Hyderabad.

In his magisterial 'The Mastery of Hindustan: triumphs and travails of Madhavrao Peshwa' (2022), Dr. Uday S. Kulkarni tells the complex and little-understood story of how a young statesman steered the Maratha confederacy from the wreckage of Panipat towards a fragile but remarkable resurgence.

The Battle of Rakshashbhuvan, usually a footnote in histories of the Deccan and absent altogether from Delhi-centric narratives was in fact a hinge moment in 18th-century India and a contest that was as much about political legitimacy as it was about military supremacy.

It became the resurrection of a state that had staggered at the brink of annihilation, much like the Dutch Republic after the Spanish Fury of 1576 or the Habsburg Monarchy after

its catastrophic defeat at White Mountain in 1620.

In Kulkarni's expert hands, Rakshashbhuvan becomes a restoration of Maratha nerve and the re-establishment of deterrence along the Deccan hinge. Just as the Habsburg Monarchy recovered from near-collapse at the hands of the Ottomans, or the Dutch built a republic from the wreckage of Spanish repression, so too did the Marathas revive from the ashes of Panipat.

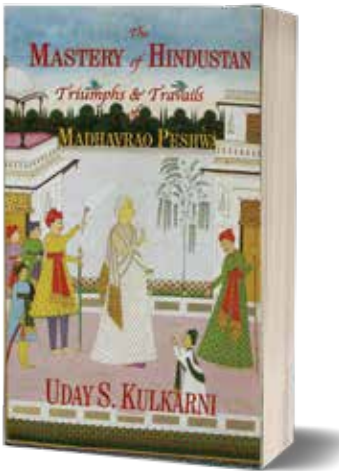
Like a young William Pitt steering Britain through the Seven Years' War, Kulkarni's Madhavrao grasped that states survive not by the glory of one battle but by the patience of many ledgers.

For anyone who cares about how states survive shocks, and how leaders craft authority from defeat, 'The Mastery of Hindustan' is an exemplar of the historian's craft that is compulsively readable at the same time.

The shadow of Panipat hangs heavy over the narrative. In 1761 the Maratha confederacy was the pre-eminent power of the subcontinent, stretching from the Sutlej in Punjab to the fringes of Tamil country. Its defeat at Panipat at the hands of Ahmed Shah Durrani, however, shattered that dominance. Confidence in leadership eroded as a result while ominously, fissures within the Maratha polity widened.

It was a catastrophe comparable to the opening disasters for the Protestant cause in the Thirty Years' War (1618-48) when Swedish, Bohemian and Dutch hopes seemed destined for eclipse under Habsburg steel.

What marks Kulkarni's histories is the sheer depth of his immersion in the period. He writes like a surgeon-historian - with a steady hand, a keen eye and prose free of ostentation as he effortlessly decodes the tangled skein of 18th century Indian



politics through its turbulent course in the Deccan, Bengal and the north.

Through letters, ledger entries, Persian akhbarats, Marathi bakhars and observations from British residencies, Kulkarni tracks armies and intrigues across half a continent with the patience of a cartographer.

His incredible research binds the written record to the lived landscape of the period, recalling the texture of great works like Sir Charles Oman's 'The Peninsular War - attentive to the mud of the battlefield and the fog of decision, but never drowning the reader in minutiae.

The Maratha Confederacy was not a coherent empire but a loose federation of powerful families - the Holkars, the Scindias, the Gaekwads, the Bhonsales - each jealous of its prerogatives. Like the Holy Roman Empire, it was an unwieldy assemblage where centripetal forces constantly threatened cohesion. As Kulkarni shows, the fact that this polity held together in the 1760s and 1770s owed much to Madhavrao's capacity to command and his immense courage.

That Madhavrao was obliged to



govern with his uncle - the terminally erratic Raghunathrao - gives the narrative added tension. The other theatre in which Kulkarni excels is Mysore and the tangled intricacies of the 'Deep South.' Hyder Ali, that self-made general of cavalry and statecraft, had built a machine that ate revenue and territory with equal appetite. Between late 1764 and 1767, Madhavrao marched south repeatedly, humbling Hyder.

Dr. Kulkarni demonstrates that Madhavrao's true distinction lay in suturing a fractured polity and restoring credibility to Maratha arms at a moment when their prestige was in tatters. It was a daunting feat reminiscent of similar statesmen-surgeons of Europe (albeit in different epochs and vastly different circumstances), like Richelieu who re-knit a France torn by sectarian strife or William of Orange, who held together a fragile Dutch Republic against overwhelming odds.

By marshalling letters, diaries and orders, Kulkarni allows his dramatic personae - adventurers, administrators, generals, courtiers - to speak for themselves. In doing so, he subtly rebuts a lazy assumption

common in narratives leaning heavily on Company records that 18th-century Indian polities were nothing more than 'military-fiscal states,' surviving by the sword until Europeans supposedly taught them the pen.

Madhavrao's centralising energies were inseparable from the politics of personality. When tuberculosis carried Madhavrao off at 27 in 1772, the polity shuddered.

Kulkarni's definitive study makes clear that had he lived longer, the Marathas might have consolidated their mastery of India before the English East India Company rose to dominance. Madhavrao's premature death - like that of Prince Henry Frederick of Wales (who died at 18 in 1612) whose early death dashed hopes of strong Stuart leadership and altered the fate of England - left a vacuum that others struggled to fill.

Dr. Kulkarni's book is a joy to behold. Unlike most Indian works of history today, 'The Mastery of Hindustan' bears the unmistakable stamp of an author who has not only written but conceptualised and designed his project down to its small-

est detail (as he has with all his works). Kulkarni has trekked every single fortress and battlefields he describes - Miraj, Channarayana Durga, Patthargarh - walking in the footsteps of armies who marched there two and a half centuries ago. He has collected rare images, hunted down unpublished documents (the casualty roll from the Battle of Moti Talao) and excavated forgotten bakhars with the care of an archivist and the imagination of a storyteller.

In this sense, he distinctly belongs to an older lineage of Indian historians like Jadunath Sarkar and Govind Sakharam Sardesai, who undertook arduous journeys in pursuit of their craft.

Extensive fieldwork as a habit has all but disappeared from Indian historical writing in the last several decades given the dominance of armchair Marxist historians. Yet in the West, the tradition forms a fundamental part of historical writing - be it the popular works of Peter Hopkirk, or that of brilliantly accessible classicists like Mary Beard, or Andrew Roberts, who traversed every site while researching his biography of Napoleon.

Likewise, for Dr. Kulkarni, who has almost single-handedly revitalised Maratha historiography of the Peshwa era for a new generation, history lives in the landscapes he describes, in the cracks of old ramparts and in the brittle pages of overlooked reports he has marshalled with such assiduity. It is this tactile engagement with his subject that makes his work not merely a chronicle of events but a reconstruction of a lost world.

His magnificent account reminds us that for a brief span, under a young Peshwa, India's destiny might have been shaped not in London but in Pune.





All Pictures: PTI, AP

- KALEIDOSCOPE**
1. Artistes perform ahead of the inauguration of All India Speakers' Conference at the Delhi Legislative Assembly in New Delhi on Sunday.
  2. Zhang Jiayuan, a Chinese Bharatanatyam student, during her 'Arangetram' performance in Beijing on Sunday.
  3. Birds fly over the Jal Mahal during the monsoon season in Jaipur on Sunday.
  4. People from the Malayali community prepare a 'Pookalam' ahead of the Onam festival celebrations in Bhopal on Sunday.
  5. People from Sikh community take part in the 'Nagar Kirtan' procession at Golden Temple on 'Guru Granth Sahib Parkash Utsav' in Amritsar on Sunday.

READERS' VOICE

A Fond Farewell to Cheteshwar Pujara



By  
Waleed Hussain



In the fast-paced circus that is modern cricket, where sixes rain like confetti and strike rates are worshipped like golden calves, Cheteshwar Pujara was the serene monk in the corner, methodically building his innings like a Lego fortress—one brick at a time. Now, as of this week in 2025, with his retirement announcement still fresh, it's time to reflect on a career that embodied resilience, even if it occasionally tested our patience. Pujara, the man who made “grinding it out” an art form, deserves our respect for anchoring India's Test triumphs abroad. But let's be honest—with a dash of humor—he also had moments where his bat seemed stuck in molasses, crumbling under the weight of expectations (and perhaps a few too many dot balls).

Pujara's Test cricket journey, spanning 103 matches, is a testament to his unshakeable grit. Debuting in 2010 against Australia, he quickly established himself as the heir to Rahul Dravid's “Wall” legacy. With 7,195 runs at an average of 43.60, including 19 centuries and 35 half-centuries, his numbers speak volumes. His highest score of 206\* against England in 2012 was a masterclass in controlled aggression—or should I say, controlled restraint? He became one of the fastest to reach 1,000 Test runs, doing so in just 11 matches and 18 innings, earning the ICC Emerging Cricketer of the Year award in 2013. But it's his overseas exploits that truly shine. In Australia's 2018-19 series, Pujara scored a mammoth 521 runs across four Tests, facing 1,258 balls—the most by any visiting batsman in a four-Test series Down Under. His three centuries there were pivotal in India's historic 2-1 victory, the first time an

Asian team conquered the Aussies on their turf. Fast-forward to 2020-21, and despite injuries ravaging the squad, Pujara's 271 runs, including a gritty 56 in the Brisbane fortress-breaker, helped seal another 2-1 win. He batted for an average of 124 minutes per innings, the third-longest among modern Indian batters, often wearing down bowlers like a persistent telemarketer. Respect where it's due: without Pujara's marathon efforts, like his 525-ball 202 against Australia in Ranchi 2017, India's middle order might have collapsed faster than a house of cards in a gale.

Yet, for all his accomplishments, Pujara's career wasn't without its comedic tragedies—failures that, in hindsight, add a human touch to his stoic persona. His strike rate of around 44 often felt like watching paint dry on a humid day; snails could lap him on the pitch. Critics, including Ricky Ponting, lambasted innings like his laborious 50 in the 2021 Sydney Test, calling it one of the worst in recent memory.

It built pressure on teammates, turning potential chases into nail-biters. And oh, the crumbling under pressure! Pujara had a knack for getting set—beautifully, agonizingly—only to fall to a “jaffa” just when the team needed acceleration. Remember the 2023 World Test Championship final against Australia? His twin failures (14 and 27) symbolized a broader batting collapse, leading to his scapegoating and axing from the West Indies tour. Sunil Gavaskar defended him fiercely, arguing he was unfairly blamed for others' flops, but the truth stings: Pujara's inability to

adapt to quicker tempos or short-ball barrages haunted him. In England, where bounce is king, he averaged a modest 29 across series, often poking tentatively like a kid testing hot soup. Domestically, his IPL snubs—no bids in 2015 auctions—highlighted his mismatch with white-ball cricket; he played just 30 IPL games, scoring at a pedestrian 20 average. Failures like these, as Pujara himself admitted in interviews, can “haunt you,” leading him to tweak his stance for Australia tours. Humorously, it's as if the cricket gods gifted him infinite patience but forgot the turbo button. Even his wife, in her recent book, credits herself for dragging him through slumps, proving that behind every great wall is a greater support system.

In my opinion, Pujara's story is one of specialization in an era demanding versatility. He wasn't flashy like Kohli or explosive like Pant, but his “Che-stance”—that cult-favorite term blending Che Guevara and resistance—symbolized old-school Test cricket. Dropped repeatedly post-2023 for younger guns, his exclusion felt like benching a reliable old Volvo for a flashy Ferrari that might crash. Yet, it's respectful to acknowledge the game's evolution; his slow play sometimes amplified team pressures, turning draws into losses. Still, no one in the current lineup replicates his anchored role, as a former teammate lamented during India's recent New Zealand drubbing.

(The writer is a senior journalist based in Mumbai.)

INDIA'S ELECTIONS

Elections and the Constitution: A Voter's Guide



By  
Vishwanath Garud



The part 1 of this series traced the constitutional foundations of India's election system, outlining the powers of the Election Commission under Articles 324-329. It explained how electoral rolls are mandated, how commissioners are appointed and protected, and why independence of the Commission is central to free and fair elections.

Part 2 focuses on the Representation of the People Acts of 1950 and 1951, arguing that understanding the specific legal provisions governing voter registration and electoral rolls is crucial to grasping how India's electoral process functions in practice.

The Representation of the People Act, 1950, and the Representation of the People Act, 1951, are different. The provisions that are not in the 1950 Act are found in the 1951 Act. The detailed explanation regarding elections is in the 1951 Act. Whereas, all the information regarding voter registration and electoral rolls is found in the Representation of the People Act, 1950. The provisions regarding electoral rolls are found in Parts 2(B) and 3 of the same Act. As per the provision of Section 13 (D), it is clear that there will be no separate electoral roll for the Lok Sabha elections. This provision states that the latest electoral roll for the assembly constituencies falling under the respective Lok Sabha constituency will be deemed to be the electoral roll for the Lok Sabha constituency.

As per Section 15, an electoral roll will be prepared for each assembly

Part 2: Two Different Acts and Detailed Provisions.

constituency. It states that this electoral roll will be prepared under the supervision of the Election Commission of India in accordance with the provisions of this Act. This Act has given all powers to the Election Commission of India regarding the electoral roll.

Section 16 provides a detailed explanation of who is disqualified from being registered as a voter. If the person concerned is not a citizen of India, has been declared by a competent court to be of unsound mind, and has been disqualified under law for having committed an illegal act or other offence in the election, he shall be disqualified as a voter, and his name shall be removed from the electoral roll. If the competent court later decides that he cannot be disqualified, his name shall be restored to the relevant electoral roll, as is also stated in the same section.

It is clear from this that there are only two prerequisites for registration in the electoral roll. One of them is that the person concerned must be a citizen of India and must have attained the age of 18 years. If these two conditions are fulfilled, then that person can be registered as a voter.

According to Section 17, any voter can register as a voter in only one constituency. This means that each voter can vote only once in each election. For this reason, since the 1960s, ink has been applied to the left index finger of a voter who goes to vote.

**Indrajit Barua vs. Central Election Commission**  
This case is considered to be an im-

portant case in the history of the Central Election Commission. In this case, the petitioners had challenged the 1979 electoral rolls in Assam in the Supreme Court. The petitioners had claimed that the names of many non-citizens of India were included in the electoral rolls. In this judgement, the Supreme Court laid down three things in total.

One – The provisions of the law should be strictly followed while including anyone's name in the electoral roll.

Two – If any voter objects to the inclusion of another voter's name in the electoral roll, he should prove it before the competent authorities. For example, if a voter objects to the inclusion of another voter's name in the electoral roll and says that the other voter is not a citizen of India, therefore his name should be excluded from the electoral roll; in such a case, the person who has objected should prove that the other voter is not a citizen of India. This is what is called “burden of proof”.

Three – Objections to the inclusion of names in the electoral roll should be decided by the competent authority. While making this selection, the concerned authority should take sufficient care so that only the names of persons who are Indian citizens are included in the electoral roll.

More in the next instalment.

(The writer is an author and digital journalism teacher. Views personal.)



By Kushan Sarkar

**New Delhi:** Cheteshwar Pujara never had a cover drive like Virat Kohli.

Neither he took your breath away with a falling hook shot like Rishabh Pant nor did he play a short-arm pull with the finesse of Rohit Sharma that could send the fans into raptures.

But in the era of uber-stylish batters, Pujara was that glue that held the Indian batting together for a decade between 2013-14 till 2023 over a period of 100 plus Test matches.

His contribution to Indian cricket is not measured in sixes or strike-rates, but in time, grit, and unyielding defiance against the world's best attacks.

If Virat Kohli was the structure of the beautiful edifice that was Indian Test batting, Cheteshwar Pujara was definitely the foundation.

Those who swore by the virtue of patience that Test cricket always stood for, Pujara was that slice from the bygone days when 'T20 wasn't even an idea.

An obsessed father Arvind, a small time first-class cricketer with limited means but with big dreams, and a mother, who was a silent rock, made Pujara a man with a tunnel vision. He never knew the incorrect way of batting, which after the advent of T20 cricket is understandably termed as unconventional. Copy-book cricket was like his second skin as father Arvind instilled in him that real cricket was Test cricket.

#### Boringly conventional

In fact, the most unconventional

# MAN OF SUBSTANCE

character trait about Pujara was that he remained boringly conventional in his philosophy -- both in cricket and in life.

As his wife Puja in her book, "The Diary of a Cricketer's Wife: An unusual Memoir" put it succinctly:

"Cheteshwar Pujara is a man of few words and fewer expressions. If a smile can do the job, he prefers not to speak. If a sentence can end in three words, he will make no attempt to add another."

Hence he became that 'go to' man in the Indian squad, whom you would want on your side when you go to the war.

When Kohli gave the charge, Pujara knew he had to nudge.

And when Pant belted Aussie bowlers on a crooked surface, Pujara's mere presence at the other end and copping those eleven body blows on day five at the Gabba en route a 211-ball-56 was everything that he epitomised -- Man of Substance, Body of Steel and Runs of context.

In a team filled with flamboyance, Pujara's scars became his badge of honour.

For Pant's 'tour de force' act at Gabba, you needed a piece de resistance from Pujara.

Through the 1980s and 90s, Rajkot for an average Indian fan was a venue where primarily one dayers were held and the pitch used to be like a shirtfront helping a run-feast.

But Indian Railway employee Arvind Pujara had a dream and that

was produce a Test cricketer, who would not merely play but earn his stripes with distinction.

With limited resources, he would travel to Mumbai and meet former India cricketer Karsan Ghavri and seek a second opinion whether he should put all his eggs on one basket to make his son a cricketer.

#### Difficult journey

It wasn't an easy journey and it became even more difficult when mother Reena lost her battle with cancer even before Pujara grew into an adult.

Imagine what a 17-year-old would go through when he spoke to his mother after playing a district game and informing her that he would reach home by evening. By the time the bus journey ends, the biggest inspiration of his life wasn't there anymore.



**Pujara, it was always reassuring to see you walk out at No.3. You brought calm, courage, and a deep love for Test cricket every time you played.Your solid technique, patience, and composure under pressure have been a pillar for the team. Out of many, the 2018 series win in Australia stands out, it wouldn't have been possible without your incredible resilience and match-winning runs."**  
**Sachin Tendulkar, Cricket legend**

## 'He stood tall when the storm raged'

Cheteshwar Pujara's retirement on Sunday evoked an outpouring of admiration from the cricketing fraternity with former teammates and coaches saluting his grit, determination and selflessness that defined his Test career. "He stood tall when the storm raged, he fought when hope was fading. Congratulations Pujji," India head coach Gautam Gambhir wrote on X.

Former India all-rounder Yuvraj Singh lauded Pujara's commitment to the national team.

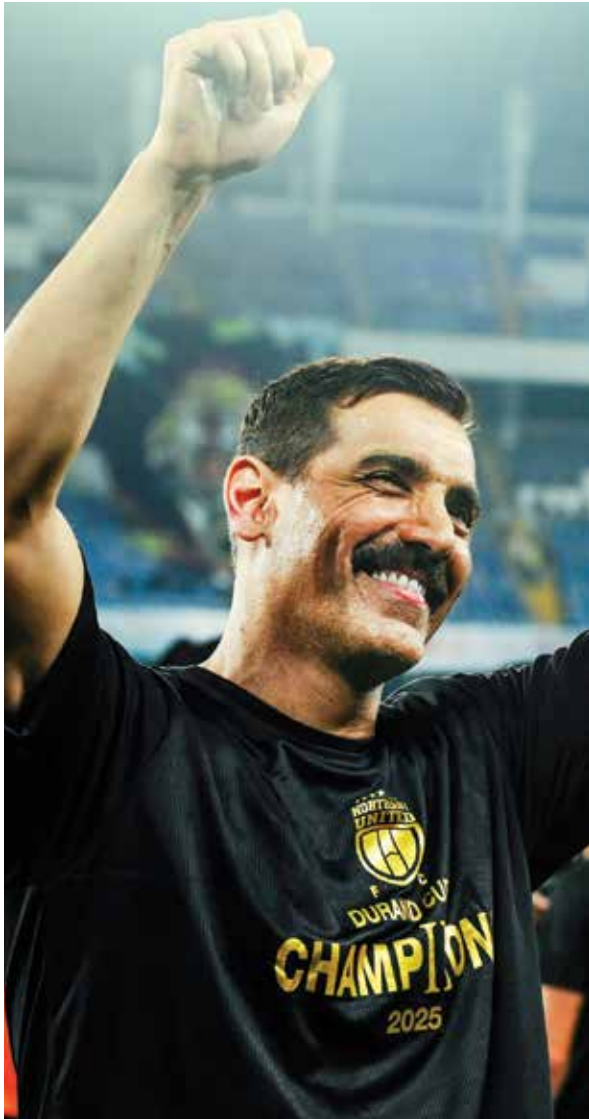
"Someone who always put his mind, body and soul for the country! Many congratulations on an outstanding career Pujji! See you on the other side!" wrote Yuvraj.

Former India batter VVS Laxman recalled the defining moment of Pujara's career, the series-clinching Test at the Gabba in 2021, when he endured several body blows.

"From the time I first saw Pujara and his potential, it was brilliant to see that potential translating into performance. "His courage, grit and determination stood out and the body blows that he took in the Gabba Test we won against Australia symbolised Pujara the cricketer for me, willing to give everything he has for his country. Well done and wish you a happy and joyous second innings," Laxman wrote. Pujara's long-time batting ally Ajinkya Rahane also paid a heartfelt tribute.

"Congratulations Pujji on a wonderful career. Loved every moment of playing alongside you and will always cherish our special Test wins together. Best wishes for the second innings!" Rahane said.

BCCI underlined Pujara's contribution to Indian cricket. "Cheteshwar Pujara's career is a shining example of perseverance and selflessness. He personified the spirit of Test cricket. His ability to grind opposition attacks and his immense powers of concentration made him the bulwark of India's batting," BCCI Secretary Devajit Saikia said.



**Bollywood actor and NorthEast United FC's owner John Abraham celebrates after the team won the Durand Cup 2025 in Kolkata on Saturday.**

Pic: PTI

## Asian Shooting Championship Aishwary claims gold, Adriyan wins in junior

**Shymkent (Kazakhstan):** Indian shooter Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar dished out a dominant show to win the gold medal in the men's 50m rifle 3 positions competition at the Asian Shooting Championship here on Sunday.

In the junior men's 3P event, Adriyan Karmarkar claimed the gold medal with an Asian junior record of 463.8 in the final.

Aishwary shot 462.5 to finish on top. China's Wenyu Zhao won the silver medal with 462 points, while Japan's Naoya Okada claimed bronze with a score of 445.8.

Aishwary led the field for a major part of the competition.

The 24-year-old Olympian had an excellent outing in kneeling position and though he could not replicate that in prone, Aishwary did enough in the standing round to emerge winner after entering the final phase of the competition with a lead of more than 1.5 points.

The other Indian shooters in the fray, Chain Singh finished fourth, while Akhil Sheoran ended fifth in

the final. Aishwary was placed third in the qualification with a total of 584.

This was Aishwary's second Asian title in the same event, having won a gold in 2023 as well. However, he had to settle for the silver medal after losing to compatriot Sheoran at the 2024 edition in Jakarta.

Aishwary then bossed the individual final taking a healthy lead after the first five shots of the first kneeling position itself and then going from strength to strength to bag gold, leaving Zhao 0.5 short in the end.

The closest the two came was after the 13th shot when they were just 0.3 apart, but a 10.8 by Aishwary for his 14th got him back to an above one-point advantage, which was enough in the end.

Double Olympic medalist Manu Bhaker, who won bronze medals in both the women's 10m air pistol individual and team events earlier this week, was fourth in the women's 25m pistol qualification round after the precision stage.

Esha Singh was second.

-PTI

## Sinquefield Cup Gukesh takes on Firouzja

**St. Louis (USA):** World champion D Gukesh has his task cut out when he takes on Alireza Firouzja of France while compatriot R Praggnanandhaa will meet Duda Jan-Krzysztof of Poland in the sixth round of the Sinquefield Cup here.

A rest day in high-level tournaments usually results in combative chess and past the half way stage both Pragg and Gukesh will not settle for anything less when the action resumes.

Local hero Fabiano Caruana leads the field on 3.5 points with two victories and three draws thus far and has been the pick among the 10 participants post the half way stage.

Praggnanandhaa is just a half a point behind on 3 with a lone victory over Gukesh in the first round followed by four back-to-back draws.

Firouzja is a tough customer but Gukesh is in the zone wherein he has survived some tough positions and came back strongly after his first-round loss.

-PTI

## Commonwealth Championships Mirabai returns to action

**Ahmedabad:** Tokyo Olympics silver medalist Mirabai Chanu will return to competitive action on Monday after a year-long hiatus, leading the home challenge at the Commonwealth Championships where Indian weightlifters are expected to bag a rich medal haul.

Chanu, who has battled injuries in recent years, was last seen at the Paris Games in last August, where she missed the podium by a kilogram.

With the new Olympic weight categories in force for the 2028 Los Angeles Games, the 31-year-old has decided to move down from the 49kg division to 48kg, a weight class in which she won her world championship title and two Commonwealth Games medals, but hasn't competed in it since 2018.

Managing the weight will be a challenge, and Chanu herself has admitted it. But the tenacious Manipuri, who has collected almost every accolade the sport has to offer, has embraced it.

Working closely with chief national coach Vijay Sharma, she has also been fine-tuning her technique in pursuit of the elusive 90kg snatch.

However, as she works towards peaking in October's World Championships, Chanu will not be going full tilt at the Commonwealth Championships, which is one of the qualifying tournaments for next year's Commonwealth Games



in Glasgow.

"I'm not putting all my effort into Ahmedabad because I'm preparing for the World Championships. My biggest target is the Asian Games, where I aim to break world records and win a medal, as I have none there yet," she said on Saturday.

While Chanu remains the star attraction, India's contingent is expected to finish on the podium in almost every weight category. Commonwealth events -- Commonwealth Games and the Commonwealth Championships -- have long been a happy hunting ground for Indian lifters, who benefit from the absence of heavyweights like China and North Korea.

When India last hosted the Championships in 2023, the home team signed off with a rich haul of 20 medals.

This time too, several CWG medallists, including silver-winner Bindiyanani Devi and bronze medallists Harjinder Kaur and Lovepreet Singh, will look to add to India's tally.

#### Indian Team:

**Women:** Mirabai Chanu (48kg), Sneha Soren (53kg), Bindiyanani Devi (58kg), Seram Nirupama Devi (63kg), Harjinder Kaur (69kg), Harmanpreet Kaur (77kg), Vanshita Verma (86kg+), Mehak Sharma (+86kg)

**Men:** Chanambam Rishikanta Singh (60kg); M Raja (65kg); Narayana Ajith (71kg), Valluri Ajaya Babu (79kg), Ajay Singh (88kg), Dilbag Singh (94kg), Harcharan Singh (110kg), Lovepreet Singh (+110kg).

-PTI

# Sen, Sindhu face stern test at BWF Worlds

**Paris:** Lakshya Sen will face a daunting opener against top seed Shi Yu Qi while former champion P V Sindhu will look to shake off a poor run as Indian shuttlers gear up for a stern test at the BWF World Championships beginning here on Monday.

It has been a tough year for India's leading players with injuries and inconsistent form hampering their build-up. Sen, ranked 21, is returning to the French capital a year after the heartbreak of finishing fourth at the Olympics.

Since then, the 24-year-old from Almora, who claimed a bronze at the 2021 edition, has struggled for results with a quarterfinal at the All England being his best show in 2024.

He has often faltered in tight

matches against Li Shi Feng, Kodai Naraoka and Shi, who leads their head-to-head 3-1. The Chinese world No.1, in red-hot form with three Super 1000 titles this season, had beaten Sen in three games in Indonesia earlier this year.

In women's singles, Sindhu, a two-time Olympic medallist and 2019 world champion, will have to recover from the shock defeat against fellow Indian Unnati Hooda at the China Open.

The most accomplished Indian with five world championship medals, Sindhu will begin her



campaign against Bulgaria's Kaloyana Nalbantova. Sindhu has endured a lean season.

Now ranked 15, she could run into world No. 2 Wang Zhi Yi of China as early as the round of 16. Prannoy, who claimed bronze in the 2023 edition, will open against Finland's Joakim Oldorff, but a potential second-round showdown with world No. 2 Anders Antonsen of Denmark looms large for the world No. 34 Indian. Prannoy showed his trademark fight during a narrow three-game loss to Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei at the China Open, but he will need to win those clutch moments to cross the hurdles and go deep into the tournament.

#### Race in doubles

Men's doubles spearheads Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, seeded ninth, have received a first-round bye and will play either compatriots Hariharan Amsakarunan and Ruben Kumar or Chinese Taipei's Liu Kuang Heng and Yang Po Han in the second round.

A tricky round-of-16 clash against China's Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang, who enjoy a 6-2 lead in their head-to-head, lies ahead. If they cross that hurdle, the Asian Games champions could meet old nemesis Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik of Malaysia, who knocked them out of the Paris Olympics quarterfinals and lead their rivalry 11-3.

-PTI