

Across State

Year -7 Issue - 20

Mumbai, Thursday 22-28 Feb '24

EDITOR IN CHIEF: SANJAY M. BHAIRE

Rs.5/- PAGES- 24

Sharad Pawar faction can use 'NCP-Sharadchandra Pawar' name till further orders: Supreme Court

New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday directed that Election Commission's order of February 7 granting name of 'Nationalist Congress Party-Sharadchandra Pawar' for the group led by Sharad Pawar will continue till further orders.

A Bench of Justices Surya Kant and K V Viswanathan sought response of Ajit Pawar-led faction on a plea of Sharad Pawar against the February 7 order of Election Commission recognising the Maharashtra deputy chief minister-led group as the real Nationalist Congress Party (NCP).

The Bench gave liberty to Sharad Pawar to move the poll panel for allocation



of the party symbol and directed the poll panel to allot it in one week of the application.

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Sharad Pawar, said that order passed by the Election Commission on February 7 is an interim arrangement made by the poll panel for Rajya Sabha elections till

February 27.

"The Maharashtra Assembly session is scheduled to start from February 26 and our group will be without any name or symbol," he submitted.

Sharad Pawar had sought an urgent hearing of his plea in the top court in the wake of twin blows suffered by the group led by him and the

consequential fear of facing action for possible violations of whip by his MLAs.

He had sought urgent hearing in view of the February 15 order of Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar.

Narwekar held that the NCP faction led by Ajit Pawar was the real NCP and that the anti-defection provisions in the Constitution cannot be used to stifle internal dissent.

Prior to this, the poll panel announced on February 7 that the Ajit Pawar faction is the real NCP and also allotted the party's 'clock' symbol to the group.

The one-day special Maharashtra Assembly session on Maratha quota is beginning on February 20

Inside...

Maharashtra Assembly approves 10% Maratha quota

[Read Story On page 2](#)

Maharashtra got highest FDI at 39% of total investment in country: Bais

[Read Story On page 3](#)

ISRO Achieves Big Milestone For Human Mission Gaganyaan's Cryogenic Engine

[Read Story On page 4](#)

Article 370 was main hurdle in J-K's development, BJP government abrogated it, says PM Modi

[Read Story On page 7](#)

5 injured as Haryana Police fire tear gas, rubber bullets at protesting farmers; situation tense

Chandigarh

A 20-year-old protester was killed while 25 others were injured on Wednesday after the Haryana police fired rubber bullets and lobbed tear gas shells on the protesting farmers at Khanauri border.

According to officials, the deceased identified as Shubhkaran Singh of Baloke in Bathinda succumbed to his injuries at Patiala's Rajindra hospital. He was allegedly hit by a rubber bullet.

As per initial reports, a bullet entered his head from above his ear.

Ten of the injured farmers were rushed to hospital, while others got

first aid at the makeshift medical camp at Shambhu.

Three of the injured farmers were

Rajindra Hospital.

Currently, the firing of tear gas shells has been stopped.

Meanwhile, the farmer leaders rushed to the Rajindra hospital after reports of two of the farmers receiving critical injuries at Khanauri.

Tear gas shells were fired by Haryana security personnel after some farmers were heading towards the multi-layered barricades at the Shambhu border on Wednesday.

Earlier, Dallewal and Pandher said the protesting farmers, who have been camping at two border points between Punjab and Haryana after they were stopped by security personnel, will march towards Delhi in a peaceful manner.



referred to Rajindra Hospital, Patiala.

Sangrur Civil surgeon Dr Kirpal Singh said a youth sustained injuries in the head and has been referred to

Maharashtra Assembly approves 10% Maratha quota

New Delhi

A Bill granting 10 per cent reservation to the Marathas in government jobs and educational institutions in Maharashtra today received the nod of the state legislature as it pledged to take the overall reservation cap from the existing 52 per cent to 62 per cent.

The attempt was made even though in 2018, a similar enactment by the then BJP government through the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Act for reservation to the Marathas had been struck down by the Supreme Court.

Protesting Maratha activist Manoj Jarange, however, was unhappy and insisted on a quota for the community under the OBC segment.

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, while tabling the Maharashtra State Socially and Educationally Backward Bill, 2024, in a special Assembly session called to resolve the matter pertaining to the quota, said the Marathas comprised 28% of the state's population and would get 10% reservation. This is a second



attempt in six years to push Maratha quota in Maharashtra where Jarange began an indefinite fast for the demand in August last year.

The Bill stems from the State Commission of Maharashtra for Backward Class findings that the Marathas, who are 28% of the state's population, face "extraordinary and exceptional" backwardness, making it a fit case for the quota to breach the SC

mandated limit of 50 per cent in the Indira Sawhney case.

"We want to grant reservation to the Maratha community without touching the existing quota of the OBCs in the state," Shinde argued, insisting that the current law would pass the legal muster.

The Bill, passed unanimously with the Opposition in support, mentions that the 10 per cent quota would be reviewed after 10 years.

Considering 'threat perception', BJP leader Ashok Chavan's security upgraded to 'Y-plus'

Mumbai

BJP leader and former Maharashtra Chief Minister Ashok Chavan's security cover has been upgraded

comprises two security personnel.

Considering a "threat perception", the VIP security department of the



to 'Y-plus' category considering a "threat perception", officials said on Wednesday.

The state police have also increased the security at Chavan's residence in Mumbai and his hometown Nanded, an official said.

Chavan earlier had 'Y' category security cover, he said. 'Y-plus' cover

state police has upgraded Chavan's security cover to 'Y-plus' category, the official said.

Chavan (65) joined the ruling BJP last week after quitting the Congress. He was subsequently nominated by the BJP for the Rajya Sabha election from Maharashtra and was declared elected unopposed on Tuesday.

Subscribe Today!

Across State

SUBSCRIMEDIAON FORM

अक्रॉस मुंबई

Name :

Address :

.....

.....

.....

City : State:

.....

Phone : E-mail:

☐ 1 year subscrimediaon of both Across State (English) & Across Mumbai (Marathi+Hindi) – 500/- Rs.

☐ 1 year subscrimediaon of Across State (English) 240/- Rs.

☐ 1 year subscrimediaon of Across Mumbai (Marathi+ Hindi) 240/- Rs.

Kindly, send the Cheque in favour of
BHAKTI PRINT MEDIA PRIVATE LIMITED.

Signature

Send Your Subscrimediaon Here:

B wing, 512, Knox Plaza, Mindspace,
Off. Link Road, Behind Inorbit Mall,
Malad (W), Mumbai-64.

Contact :
Mr. Sanjay M. Bhaire
(9819991194)

Proposed Thane-Padgha highway: MMRDA begins process of appointing consultant to prepare DPR

Mumbai

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) has initiated the process of appointing a consultant to prepare a detailed project report (DPR) at an estimated cost of Rs 1.5 crore for a proposed 30-km elevated

the National Highway-3, which sees a large number of container and other big commercial vehicles plying on it.

Currently, if travellers want to commute from Kalyan and Dombivali to Thane city, they have to use NH-3 via Rajnoli Junction, which leads to huge traffic congestions. The proposed elevated Highway is essential to provide relief to commuters.

As per the MMRDA, given the rising traffic, the new elevated highway will act as a connector to the forthcoming Samruddhi Mahamarg, connecting Nagpur to Thane by this year.

Currently, this expressway is open only up to Bharvir in Igatpuri from Nagpur. The elevated highway will also provide relief to commuters using the existing Bhiwandi Bypass road which has several warehouses.



highway project between Thane and Padgha, officials said on Tuesday.

In a comprehensive transport study from October 2021, the elevated highway was proposed in order to decongest

Maharashtra got highest FDI at 39% of total investment in country: Bais

Mumbai

MAHARASHTRA WILL achieve its target of one-trillion-dollar economy by 2027-28, Governor Ramesh Bais said on Tuesday, pointing to the foreign direct investment (FDI) it attracted that accounts for over 38 per cent of the total investment in the country.

Addressing the joint session of state legislatures at the central hall in Vidhan Bhawan during the day-long special session, the governor also underlined the contribution of the state towards country's ambitious target of becoming a five-trillion dollar economy during the same period.

"The state has attracted highest FDI at Rs 65,500 crore, which accounts for 38.78 percent of total investment in country,"

Bais said adding that through package schemes of investments, it has approved 75 projects with investments worth Rs 61,576 crore and 53,000 employment opportunities.

During the World Economic Forum summit held at Davos, the state signed MoUs of Rs 3.53 lakh crore promising employment to two lakh people, the governor said adding a lot of impetus has been given on rural employment through skill development programmes.

The Nagpur-Mumbai Maharashtra Samruddhi Mahamarg, which has become operational, is set for further expansion. It has also been proposed a four-lane Sindkhedraja to Shegaon, Bhandara-Gadchiroli, Nagpur-Chandrapur, Nagpur-Gondia and Jalna to Nanded, he said.

The governor also said that towards making 5,700 villages free of water scarcity, the government has enforced Jalyukta Shivar Abhiyan in these villages.

This is the second phase of the project.

In 13 districts covering 43 talukas, 1,442 villages will have Atal Bhujal Yojna. Administrative approval has been given to 68 irrigation projects to bring 13 lakh hectares of land under irrigation for which Rs 80,000 crore has been approved.

The Governor reiterated government's commitment to farmers, for which huge incentives are doled out. He also stressed on the government's commitment to make medical care accessible to common man.



"Go Goregaon Fest 2024"

Food Stalls | Exciting Games
Kids Zone | Goregaon's Got Talent
Celebrity Performances
Graffiti Painting | Competitions

FREE ENTRY

24th & 25th
Feb 2024
4.00 PM
to
10.00 PM

sameerdesai
foundation
presents



GO
GOREGAON
FESTIVAL
नाचो - गाओ - खेलो - खाओ



INITIATIVE BY
Shri. ADITYA THACKERAY
Shivsena Leader, YuvaSena Pramukh



Shri. SUBHASH DESAI
Shivsena Leader,
Ex Industries Minister



Shri. SAMEER DESAI
President
Sameer Desai Foundation



Shri. ROANAQ DESAI
Secretary
Sameer Desai Foundation



DJ Chetas
Worlds No 1 Bollywood DJ



Shahid Mallya
Bollywood Playback Singer



ABHANGA REPOST
The Band



Shri. Dinesh Rao



Shri. Raju Padhye



Shri Ravi Salvi

Why Maratha Quota Activist Refuses To End Hunger Strike Despite Quota Bill



Mumbai

Manoj Jarange Patil, the face of the Maratha quota agitation, has refused to call off his hunger strike even after the Maratha Reservation Bill was passed in the assembly yesterday.

The Maratha community's demand for reservation has been a focal point of discussions between the community leaders and the state government.

Mr Jarange said it does not matter if the Maharashtra government grants 10 or 20 per cent reservation as long as the quota comes under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category and is not separate.

He said that a separate reservation might pose legal challenges as it would exceed the 50 per cent reservation cap.

Manoj Jarange Patil On Assembly Move

The Maharashtra Assembly yesterday unanimously passed the Maratha Reservation Bill, a legislation that will grant a 10 per cent reservation for the Maratha community in both education and government jobs.

Manoj Jarange Patil said the bill passed in the assembly will not stand the test of law. "We have been demanding that we should be given a quota in the OBC category. But the government

has given us separate reservation which crosses the 50 per cent ceiling. This will not stand the legal scrutiny," Mr Patil said.

"We are Kunbis. We are already in the OBC category. Why do we need separate reservation? If one brother gets reservation, then why not another? It is our right," he said.

Legal Scrutiny

This is the third time in a decade that Maharashtra government has put forward such legislation. The first two attempts were struck down by the court for breaching the 50 per cent quota.

Just ahead of elections in 2014, the then Congress government under Prithviraj Chavan issued an ordinance implementing a 16 per cent reservation for Marathas. The Bombay High Court struck it down, citing the 50 per cent limit imposed by the Supreme Court.

In 2018, the Devendra Fadnavis government announced a 16 per cent reservation for Marathas, which was struck down by the top court in 2021 as it breached the 50 per cent quota ceiling, and that there was no 'extraordinary circumstance' for justification.

Ameen Sayani, Radio's Most Recognised Voice, Dies At 91

Mumbai

Ameen Sayani, radio's most recognised voice for millions of Indians who tuned into Binaca Geetmala every week, has died. He was 91.

Sayani suffered a heart attack Tuesday evening and was taken to a hospital in south Mumbai but could not be saved, his son Rajil told PTI.

"He passed away last night of a heart attack at the HN Reliance hospital. He was rushed to the hospital last evening around 6 pm after he complained of chest pain. They tried to revive him but he passed away around 7 pm," Rajil said.

"Namaste behno aur bhaiyo, main aapka dost Ameen Sayani bol raha hoon". The familiar greeting and the instantly identifiable voice coasted on airwaves into countless homes every Wednesday on Radio Ceylon from 1952 to 1988, still evoking strong nostalgia amongst listeners.

After 1988, Binaca Geetmala moved to All India Radio's Vividh Bharati where it ruled the charts till 1994.

Sayani, who was born in Mumbai in a multilingual family on December 21, 1932, compered, presented and voiced over 50,000 shows in 42 years.

Condoling Sayani's death, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the iconic radio presenter "nurtured a very special bond with his listeners".

"Shri Ameen Sayani Ji's golden voice on the airwaves had a charm and warmth that endeared him to people across generations. Through his work, he played an important role in revolutionising Indian broadcasting and nurtured a very special bond with his listeners. Saddened by his passing away. Condolences to his family, admirers and all radio lovers. May his soul rest in peace," the PM posted on X. Sayani's death was also mourned by politicians like TMC leader Derek O'Brien and Congress leader Jairam Ramesh.

"Ameen Sayani left us today to join The Great Broadcaster in The Sky," O'Brien posted on X. Ramesh said Sayani's voice



was a part of his childhood, teen and youth years.

"Ameen Sayani, an iconic radio personality, belonged to a distinguished family of nationalists who epitomised the values of an India that seems to be fast vanishing," Ramesh posted. Sayani had a creative flair since childhood and started writing for his mother's fortnightly journal Rehbar when he was just 13, which was when he became a proficient broadcaster in English and started participating in children's programmes on the English service of All India Radio Bombay.

He later left Bombay to study in Gwalior. When he returned to Bombay post Independence, he auditioned for AIR's Hindi service but was rejected because of a slight Gujarati accent.

The tryst with fame came a few years later.

In 1952, then information and broadcasting minister B V Keskar banned Hindi songs from AIR.

Around that time, Radio Ceylon, which was founded by the British, started becoming popular for its programmes in English, Tamil and Hindi. Broadcast from Colombo, Radio Ceylon began its journey in 1949.

American businessman Daniel Molina saw an opportunity there and established his company, Radio Advertising Services in Mumbai. He hired Sayani's elder brother, former AIR broadcaster Hamid Sayani, to run Radio Ceylon's production arm.

Hamid Sayani and Molina were keen to produce a programme on Hindi songs and the elder Sayani zeroed in on his young brother. The rest, as they say, is history.

ISRO Achieves Big Milestone For Human Mission Gaganyaan's Cryogenic Engine

Bengaluru

ISRO has accomplished a major milestone in the human rating of its CE20 cryogenic engine that powers the cryogenic stage of the human-rated LVM3 launch vehicle for Gaganyaan human spaceflight missions, with the completion of the final round of ground qualification tests. ISRO's CE20 cryogenic engine is now human-rated for Gaganyaan missions," the space agency said on X on Wednesday.

Rigorous testing demonstrates the engine's mettle, it said, adding the CE20 engine identified for the first uncrewed flight LVM3 G1 also went through acceptance tests.

The February 13 final test was the seventh of a series of vacuum ignition tests carried out at the High Altitude Test Facility at ISRO Propulsion Complex, Mahendragiri, to simulate flight conditions, it said.

The ground qualification tests for the human rating of the CE20 engine involved life demonstration tests, endurance tests and performance assessment

under nominal operating conditions as well as off-nominal conditions with respect to thrust, mixture ratio and propellant tank pressure, it said. All the ground qualification tests of the CE20 engine for the Gaganyaan programme have been successfully completed, ISRO said. In order to qualify the CE20 engine for human rating standards, four engines have undergone 39 hot firing tests under different operating conditions for a cumulative duration of 8,810 seconds against the minimum human rating qualification standard requirement of 6,350 seconds, according to ISRO.



ISRO has also successfully completed the acceptance tests of the flight engine identified for the first unmanned Gaganyaan (G1) mission tentatively scheduled for second quarter of 2024.

This engine will power the upper stage of the human-rated LVM3 vehicle and has a thrust capability of 19 to 22 tonnes with a specific impulse of 442.5 seconds, it was noted.



FOUNDER



UNK (SUMESH KRISHNA)
NATIONAL GENERAL SECRETARY

NAMASTE,
Hearty Welcome to all...

BHS - BHARATIYA HINDU SAMAJ was founded in 09th January 2016 at Goregaon, Mumbai - Maharashtra by **Shri. UNK (SUMESH KRISHNA)** of Kerala. The graceful activities of Bharatiya Hindu Samaj were launched by **Shri. PREM SHUKLA** Ji (National Spokesperson, Bharatiya Janata Party). In the Presence of **Shri. Abhijeet Ashok Rane** Ji (Founder Chairman, Dhadak Kamgar Union).

BHARATIYA HINDU SAMAJ stands for Social, Cultural, Spiritual, Educational development of Hindu Community from different walks of Bharat. All are invited to take part in the campaign in which the progressive development to the entire nook and corner of our nation Bharat. It is essential to intervene in the problems of the deaf and destitute, older people especially affected by fatal diseases those who require constant care and support, enable them to live for existence.

Though the rulers claim that India has achieved growth, in different spheres of development, the BHARATIYA HINDU SAMAJ is closely watching whether we are in the forefront of Social, Cultural, Spiritual, Educational, Economic, Scientific and Charitable Areas and to ensure speedy relief to the poor and needy especially to the bruised hearts, to promote social services throughout the country.

It is stated that BHS is dedicated to achieve the above said goal with immediate effect to the most deserving class of our nation.

Come let's join and be a link for the values of eternal life by rendering the service through this organization which stands for the total welfare of entire community in the light of humanitarian view.

Bharat Mata Ki Jai, Jai Siya Ram, Jai Ram Raj, Jai Hindu Rashtra

For BHS National High-Power Committee :-

Sd/-

(UNK) SUMESH KRISHNA

FOUNDER & NATIONAL GENERAL SECRETARY.

NEW MEMBERS CAN AVAIL MEMBERSHIP @

LIFE TIME MEMBERSHIP FEES
₹ 1000/-

ORDINARY MEMBERSHIP FEES
₹ 250/-

MONTHLY SUBSCRIPTION FEES
₹ 50/-

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS:

"Hindu Samaj Bhavan" Door No.: 7, 3rd Floor, Edassery Building,
Near Kerala High Court Jn., Banerji Road, Kochi Metro City, Kerala - 682 031.



President Droupadi Murmu visits Cellular Jail in Andamans



Port Blair

President Droupadi Murmu on Monday visited the historic Cellular Jail at Port Blair in Andaman and Nicobar Islands and laid a wreath at the Martyr's Column there.

Murmu, who is on a five-day visit to the archipelago from Monday, also visited Swantantraya Jyot, an eternal flame kept there as a tribute to thousands of freedom fighters who suffered incarceration in the jail. The President also paid tribute to Veer Savarkar at his cell.

She was told about the

freedom fighters whose names are engraved inside a designated place of the National Memorial. Murmu also witnessed the light and sound depicting the freedom struggle of the prisoners during the British rule.

Earlier in the day, the President was welcomed by Lieutenant Governor Admiral (Retired) DK Joshi on her arrival in Port Blair.

She was accorded a guard of honour on her first visit to the Union Territory. On February 20, Murmu will visit Indira Point and Campbell Bay.

Not Joined INDIA Bloc, Will Support Anyone Who...: Kamal Haasan

Chennai

Actor-politician Kamal Haasan today said discussions were on for his party MNM's political alliance and stressed it would support any bloc that would "selflessly" think about the nation but desist from being part of "feudal politics."



Addressing reporters here after leading the 7th anniversary celebrations of his Makkal Needhi Maiam, Mr Haasan also welcomed the recent political entry of top Tamil actor Vijay.

Asked if MNM will join the multi-party opposition INDIA bloc, he said, "I have already told, this is the time when you

have to blur party politics and think about the nation. Anybody who thinks selflessly about the nation, my MNM will be part of it."

However, MNM won't join hands with those doing "local feudal politics," he said.

Asked if he has joined the INDIA grouping, he said, "no, I haven't."

Govt has developed disaster warning systems to ensure zero casualty: Amit Shah

New Delhi

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday said in order to build a disaster-resilient India, the Narendra Modi government had introduced a multi-dimensional disaster management plan.

In a series of posts on disaster management on X, Shah said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi introduced a multi-dimensional disaster management plan. Under this vision, the Modi government raised prompt response forces and developed vigilant early warning systems leading to saving millions of lives."

Shah further said, "To build a disaster-resilient Bharat, PM Modi has adopted a zero-casualty approach in our response to calamities. Today, our disaster response teams operate as fully professional forces driven by the goal of securing every life."

Shah further said "The government has harnessed the power of Bharat's



youths to build a disaster-resilient nation. The Modi government trained millions in disaster management, which boosted the morale of our forces and made our societies capable of fighting disasters." The Ministry of Home Affairs has implemented a Rs 8,000 crore disaster management scheme expanding firefighting services in states, reducing flood risks in seven major cities and landslides in 17 states, official

sources said. Additionally, a Rs 5,000 crore project for the expansion and modernisation of firefighting services was initiated in June 2023. In 2021, the National Disaster Mitigation Fund allocated Rs 13,693 crore to the NDRF and Rs 32,031 crore to SDRFs under the State Disaster Mitigation Fund. Funding for SDRFs and the NDRF has tripled during 2014-2023 from what it was in 2005-2014, sources said.

There's unprecedented global positivity for India today: PM Narendra Modi

New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said development and preservation of national heritage were both pillars of new India's growth story, noting that the power of India today was infinite and possibilities for its people immense.

The PM was speaking after laying the foundation stone for Kalki Dham Temple in Sambhal district of Uttar Pradesh.

Later, he also addressed 'Viksit Bharat, Viksit Uttar Pradesh' event in Lucknow, and said there was unprecedented global positivity for India today. He said UP was the state with the highest number of expressways and international airports in the country.

The PM also remembered late Chaudhary Charan Singh as a "son of the soil of Uttar Pradesh who had been awarded Bharat

Ratna as a mark of honour for crores of farmers".

PM Modi launched 14,000 projects across Uttar Pradesh worth more than Rs 10 lakh crore at the fourth groundbreaking ceremony of UP Global Investors Summit today and said, "The



double-engine government of Uttar Pradesh is working day and night to make life easier for the people of the state."

Expelled UP Congress leader Acharya Pramod Krishna is the chairman of Shri Kalki Dham Nirman Trust.

Earlier, Krishna said the wait of decades had ended today with

the laying of the foundation stone of the temple. Krishna, who had criticised the Congress for declining the Ram Mandir inauguration invite and was later expelled, also said he had only sentiments to offer on the occasion to PM Modi and nothing material.

Responding to Krishna, the Prime Minister said, "Good you did not give me anything, otherwise times have changed in such a way that if in today's era, Sudama was to give rice to Lord Krishna and a video emerged, a PIL would be filed in court and a judgment given that Lord Krishna was indulging in corruption. It is good you only expressed your feelings and did not give anything." The PM also said for the first time, India was at a stage where it was not following but setting an example for others to follow. He said Kalki Dham Temple would emerge as a new centre of India's spirituality.

'Dilli Chalo' march: Government ready to hold 5th round of talks with protesting farmers, says Agriculture Minister Arjun Munda

New Delhi

The Central Government on Wednesday said it was ready to hold fifth round of talks with farmers, even as protesting farmers resumed their "Dilli Chalo" march from the Shambhu border near Ambala in Haryana.

"The government is ready for the fifth round of talks on all issues after the fourth round. The problem can be solved only through dialogue. And it is important to maintain peace", the Union Agriculture Minister Arjun Munda shared this message in Hindi on his account on X.

The ministers message came at 11.04 am as the farmers had given the call to resume their protest march towards Delhi at 11.00 am.



However, no schedule for the fifth round of talks was shared by the government yet as it might be waiting for farmers' response.

The fifth round of talks will be crucial as the farmers have already rejected government's offer of procuring five crops at Minimum Support Price (MSP) for five years.

In another post the minister wrote, "After the fourth round, the government is prepared to discuss all issues in the fifth round, such as the demand for MSP, crop diversification, the matter of stubble burning, and negotiations on FIR. I invite the farmer leaders again for discussions. It is essential for us to maintain peace."

Article 370 was main hurdle in J-K's development, BJP government abrogated it, says PM Modi

Jammu

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said Article 370 was main hurdle in the development of Jammu and Kashmir and the BJP government abrogated it.

Modi said that after the abrogation of Article 370, Jammu and Kashmir is moving towards balanced development.

He said the common people of Jammu and Kashmir got assurance of social justice mentioned in the Constitution for the first time after abrogation of Article 370.

"A remarkable day for Jammu and Kashmir," he said after launching multiple development projects in J&K.

He said the projects in Jammu and Kashmir would propel a holistic development of the



region. "This is first time in Jammu and Kashmir that the government has reached people's doorstep, this is Modi's guarantee that it will continue," said the PM.

The government whose priority is welfare of just one family cannot think of welfare of common people, he added.

"I am happy to see Jammu and Kashmir is getting free from dynastic rule....A developed India means a developed Jammu and Kashmir," said Modi.

Chandigarh mayoral polls case verdict: Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal thanks Supreme Court, says it saved democracy

New Delhi

The Supreme Court has saved democracy in these "difficult times", Delhi Chief Minister and AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal said on Tuesday, thanking the court for its decision in the Chandigarh mayoral polls case.

The top court has said it would direct recounting of votes polled in the controversial elections and declaration of result after considering the eight "defaced" ballots that were declared invalid by the returning officer.

"Thank you SC for saving democracy in these difficult times," Kejriwal said in a post on X.

The BJP won the Chandigarh mayoral polls on January 30 defeating the comfortably placed AAP-Congress alliance

candidate after the returning officer declared as invalid eight votes of the coalition partners,



drawing accusations of tampering with ballots.

Manoj Sonkar of the BJP defeated Kuldeep Kumar after polling 16 votes against his rival's 12 to bag the mayor's post. However, Sonkar resigned subsequently, while three AAP councillors defected to the BJP.

Blow to INDIA, Akhilesh Yadav refuses to join Rahul Gandhi's yatra till seat-sharing plan sealed

New Delhi

The disagreement between the Congress and Samajwadi Party over the sharing of seats in Uttar Pradesh for the upcoming General Election on Monday cast a shadow over the Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra (BJNY) and came as another setback to the INDIA bloc unity.

Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav on Monday refrained from joining the rally addressed jointly by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi in Amethi, saying he would join the Manipur-to-Mumbai "yatra" – currently passing through UP – once the seat-sharing deal between the two sides was finalised.

The Congress has been offered 17 Lok Sabha seats in UP, the SP said on Monday and asserted that Akhilesh would join the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Raebareli only if the proposal was accepted.

"We have given a final offer of 17 Lok Sabha seats to the Congress. Akhilesh Yadav's participation in the Nyay Yatra in Raebareli on Tuesday will

depend on their acceptance," said Rajendra Chaudhary, SP's chief spokesperson. He, however, refused to identify the seats offered to the Congress. The Samajwadi Party had earlier

considered a pocket borough of the Gandhi family, sprung a surprise in 2019 by electing BJP's Smriti Irani with Rahul Gandhi becoming the runner-up in the race.

The Congress party's prospects in Raebareli, another Gandhi family bastion, too, has come under cloud with the incumbent MP Sonia Gandhi opting for the Rajya Sabha route to reach the Parliament.

Rahul Gandhi's next stop is going to be Raebareli. It is unclear whether Akhilesh will show up there. Kharge, meanwhile, played down the issue: "Everything

will be alright. He (Akhilesh) has agreed and our people have agreed too. There is no problem," he said at Amethi today.

The INDIA bloc, cobbled up by opposition parties to challenge the ruling BJP in the coming Lok Sabha elections, earlier suffered a setback when TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee and Congress failed to decide on sharing of seats in Bengal.



offered 11 seats to the grand old party while the Congress' state unit demanded a higher allocation. The Congress secured victory only from the Raebareli seat in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections from UP. At 80, the state sends the highest number of MPs to Parliament.

Kharge had extended an invitation to Akhilesh, asking the SP chief to join yatra either in Amethi or in Raebareli. Amethi,

Russia has never hurt our interests; open to mediating in Ukraine conflict: EAM S Jaishankar



New Delhi

India is open to mediating on the Ukraine-Russia conflict but does not believe it should initiate anything in this direction on its own, said External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar while describing the relationship with Moscow as “stable and always very friendly” in an interview to a German economic daily ‘Handelsblatt’.

“Theoretically, yes. We have already helped with very specific issues, for example when Turkiye negotiated the corridor through the Black Sea. And we were very supportive of the inspections of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant by the IAEA. Everyone conducts a relationship based on their past experiences,” said Jaishankar when asked if India could mediate an end to the conflict due to its excellent ties with Russia.

Jaishankar also talked of India’s ties with Russia. “Russia has never hurt our interests. Relations of powers like Europe, the US, China or Japan with Russia have seen ups and downs. Our relationship with Russia today is based on experience. For others, things were different, and conflicts may have shaped the relationship. We, on the other hand, had a politically and militarily much more difficult relationship with China,” he

said.

He asserted that just as India did not expect Europe to have a view of China that was identical to New Delhi’s, Europe should understand that India couldn’t have a view of Russia that was identical to the European one.

The minister also defended India sourcing more oil from Russia even though the US and Europe have repeatedly asked it not to. “What should we have done? In many cases, our West Asian suppliers gave priority to Europe because it paid higher prices. Either we would have had no energy because everything would have gone to them or we would have ended up paying a lot more because you were paying more. In a certain way, we stabilised the energy market,” he said.

Asked about India buying more weapons from Germany, Jaishankar said, “Germany has long been cautious when it comes to security and defence. In contrast, we have had robust cooperation with France for a long time and to a more limited extent with Spain and Italy. But I have seen a development in Germany’s attitude in recent years; my interlocutors now understand that you can’t completely exclude one part of a relationship. It is developing, and that is good for both sides.”

Coaching classes not temple of knowledge: Dhankhar

New Delhi

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Tuesday said coaching classes were an example of “status quo” rather than true intellectual exposition and reminded them that innovation comes from thinking differently.

Stating coaching classes were not temple of knowledge, he said students must think beyond competitive examinations to get a position in the government and explore other opportunities, which are now available aplenty.



Addressing the convocation of Indira Gandhi National Open

University in the national capital, Dhankhar advised the youngsters to let go of doubts and insecurities and instead use the mind as a parking place for great ideas.

He emphasised the importance of cleaning the mind daily, eliminating negativity and executing good ideas without fear.

Dhankhar highlighted that innovation often came from thinking differently and challenging the status quo, such as coaching classes.

Farmers rejected offer as they understood government’s ‘mischief’; will provide justice to them: Congress

New Delhi

The Congress on Tuesday claimed that protesting farmers have rejected another “false offer” as they have understood the government’s “mischief” and asserted it is committed to providing legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price (MSP) and take other necessary steps to provide justice to the tillers.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said the legal guarantee for MSP would not make the Indian farmers a burden on the budget but ensure they become the drivers of GDP growth.

He claimed that “lies” are being spread that the MSP guarantee is not feasible under the government’s budget.

In a post on X, Gandhi claimed that ever since the Congress resolved to provide legal guarantee for the MSP, ‘Modi’s propaganda machinery and media friendly to him have spread a barrage of lies on MSP’.

‘Lie—It is not feasible to provide legal

guarantee for MSP in the budget of the government of India. Fact—According to CRISIL, giving MSP to farmers in 2022-23 would have resulted in an additional burden of Rs 21,000 crore on the government, which is only 0.4 per cent of the total budget,’ Gandhi said in his post.

In a country where bank loans worth Rs 14 lakh crore have been waived and corporate tax exemption of Rs 1.8 lakh crore given, why is even a little expenditure on farmers irking them, he asked escalating his attack on the ruling dispensation.

With the legal guarantee for MSP, investment in agriculture would increase, demand would increase in rural India and farmers would also get confidence in growing different types of crops, which is a guarantee of the country’s prosperity, Gandhi argued.

“Those who are spreading confusion on MSP are insulting Swaminathan and his dreams,” the former Congress chief said.

Indian Coast Guard evacuates Mexican national facing medical emergency off Goa coast

Panaji

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) safely evacuated a Mexican national who suffered a heart attack on board a passenger vessel off the Goa coast, a senior official said on Tuesday.

A medical evacuation at sea was successfully executed by the ICG Ship C-158, ensuring the safety and well-being of Mexican national Fernando Cruz Mendez (53) on Monday, the ICG spokesperson said.

The coast guard received a message from Celebrity Millennium, a passenger vessel, about a medical emergency around 7.25 pm on Monday, around 40 km from the coast, he said.

A passenger had suffered a heart attack on board the vessel, which was proceeding towards Mumbai, the official said.



The Coast Guard headquarters in Goa immediately diverted ICGS C-158, which was on area patrol, he said.

“The ICGS C-158 reached the vessel at 9.30 pm. It cast off from MV Celebrity Millennium along with the patient, his wife and a medical attendant, and entered Mormugao harbour at 11.30 pm. The patient was handed over to an ambulance at Mormugao Port for further medical management,” the official said.

5 Telangana Men Reunite With Families After 18 Years In Dubai Jail



Hyderabad

Five men from Telangana, who had been jailed in Dubai for 18 years, have finally returned home to their families. A video of their triumphant reunion, facilitated by BRS leader KT Rama Rao, is now viral on social media.

In 2005, five individuals, Shivarathri Mallesh, Shivarathri Ravi, Gollem Nampally, Dundugula Laxman, and Shivarathri Hanmanthu, all residents of Telangana's Rajanna Sircilla district, were working in Dubai when they found themselves accused in the death of a Nepali national, who used to work as a watchman in the Gulf nation. They were charged and then handed 25 years of prison sentences.

The BRS has given credit to their leader and former Telangana minister KTR for championing their cause and persistently working towards their release through diplomatic channels.

In 2011, he visited Nepal and met with the victim's family, presenting them with financial compensation of ₹ 15 lakh.

Over in Dubai, the language barrier complicated the five Telangana men's legal situation, and despite appeals and efforts, they faced a harsh sentence from a Dubai court. Their initial amnesty petition was rejected by the Dubai court, prolonging their incarceration.

The turning point came with a change in Dubai's laws, opening a window of opportunity for their release. In September last year, Minister KTR, with the assistance of the Union Ministry of External Affairs, secured an audience with the ruler of Dubai Sheik Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum to plead for amnesty in the case.

Eventually, the five men's mercy petition was approved and weeks of negotiations culminated into their release from jail.

India-US Ties Serve As Development Model For World: US Envoy Eric Garcetti



New Delhi

The United States Ambassador to India, Eric Garcetti, hailed the ties between New Delhi and Washington and stressed that the two nations should work more robustly on co-development and serve as a 'model' for the world.

He also said that ties between India and the US is not merely 'additive relationship' but instead a 'multiplicative relationship'.

The US envoy was speaking at the US India Business Council event in the national capital on Tuesday.

Speaking at the event, Garcetti said, "Looking at the way, we are understanding each other's culture, this is more than an additive relationship, this is not India plus the US, this is India times the US...a multiplicative relationship."

Explaining the difference between co-production and co-development while emphasizing

the importance of aligning needs and interests, the envoy said, "We should be clear with our terms. Co-production is not the same thing as co-development. We need to make sure, when we are looking at co-development, we are not doing for the sake of that. Something that India needs and its military, and something that America needs, and where do those circles intersect? And how quickly can we look at co-development...and become the model for the world?"

He further drew references to ancient Indian texts and said that so much of what is taught today was discovered in India centuries ago.

Our goal is not to wage war. In the Rig Veda, there is Indra, the most powerful god, the god of thunder and, in many ways, the god of war too. We knew the power and you can feel the power of that kind of primal creation

of the earth that came out of conflict," Garcetti said.

The US envoy also elaborated upon the concept of 'war' as described in 'Mahabharata' and 'Arthshastra'.

"There are two traditions in India. One that's in the Mahabharata of war being something kind of exciting, grim, but a sport, an even religious duty. We know that well. And when we were not as hopefully civilized as we are today, every culture embraced the necessity of war as places were conquered, as people suffered, histories that were never written," the Ambassador said.

He added, "But there is a second school of thought, the 'Arthshastra', which clearly states that 'war is a continuation' of politics by other means, over 200 years before, we studied in our colleges, like so much discovery in India, was actually written here first."

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor Receives France's Highest Civilian Honour

New Delhi

Shashi Tharoor, a prolific author and a diplomat-turned-politician, was conferred France's highest civilian honour 'Chevalier de la Legion d'honneur' at a ceremony here on Tuesday.

Author of several books and the Congress MP from Thiruvananthapuram, Tharoor was conferred the prestigious award at the French Embassy by French Senate President Gerard Larcher. The French government had announced the award for Tharoor, a former Union minister, in August 2022 but was conferred on him on Tuesday.

"The highest French civilian award

came in recognition of Dr Tharoor's tireless efforts to deepen Indo-French ties, commitment to international peace and cooperation, and as a long-standing friend of France," a statement issued by the French Embassy said. Conferring the honour on Mr Tharoor, Chairman of the French Senate Larcher said, "Through his outstanding career as a diplomat, author and politician, Shashi Tharoor has embraced the world with a thirst for knowledge and an intelligence that has led him to live several lifetimes in one, and all of them in service to India and a better world." "Dr Tharoor is also a true friend of France, a Francophone with a keen

understanding of France and its culture. Through this award, which I have the privilege to confer, the French Republic recognises your accomplishments, your friendship, your love of France, your commitment to a fairer world," Larcher said. Receiving the recognition, Mr Tharoor said he was immensely honoured to accept the Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur (Knight of the Legion of Honour). "As someone who admires France, its people, their refinement, their language, and their culture, especially their literature and cinema, I am deeply humbled to be conferred your country's highest civilian honour.



Electoral bonds

MIRED in controversy since its inception, the electoral bond scheme for political funding has been annulled by the Supreme Court. A five-judge Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud said the scheme was violative of the right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1) (a) of Constitution, adding that the fundamental right to privacy also included the citizens' right to 'political privacy and affiliation'. The court has directed the State Bank of India (SBI) to disclose the details of each electoral bond encashed by various parties over the years.

The verdict is a big blow to the BJP-led NDA in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections. Notifying the scheme in January 2018, the Modi government had touted it as a 'transparent' alternative to cash donations made to political outfits. Then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had

exuded confidence that the electoral bond



scheme would considerably cleanse the political funding system. However, the initiative ran into rough weather over allegations of 'selective confidentiality' and denial of a level playing field.

The government's insistence on

ensuring the anonymity of the donors and keeping the citizens in the dark struck at the heart of the scheme, whose avowed main objective was transparency. Paradoxically, the government itself was in a position to access the donors' details by demanding their data from the SBI. The Opposition had every reason to tear into the scheme as the BJP grabbed the lion's share of the bonds, even as the Election Commission of India (ECI) adopted an evasive approach. Last year, the apex court had rapped the ECI for not maintaining data on funding received through electoral bonds despite the interim order it had passed in April 2019. It is hoped that the poll panel and the SBI will finally lift the dubious veil of secrecy and make the details public.

// satyasya paramarṇ nidhānam //

We would like to hear from you. Please share your comments on editor.acrossstate@gmail.com

When you reach the end of your rope, tie a knot in it and hang on.

-Franklin D. Roosevelt

MSP proposal

Govt's offer fails to convince farmer leaders

A panel of Union ministers proposed the purchase of pulses (tur, urad and masoor), maize and cotton crops by government agencies at the minimum support price (MSP) for a five-year period after entering into an agreement with farmers. The offer was made during the fourth round of talks between the Centre's representatives and farmer leaders, who have rejected it as they want a legal guarantee for procurement at the MSP for various crops.

The government has tried in vain to pacify the protesting farmers, who have upped the ante in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections. The proposal betrays the ground reality: the MSP regime and assured procurement have largely remained confined to wheat and paddy. Year

after year, the government has been upwardly revising the MSP for over 20

even as farmers suffer losses whenever their produce fetches prices below the MSP.



crops — including wheat, paddy, pulses, maize and cotton — on the basis of recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices. However, farm unions have repeatedly rejected the 'paltry' hike,

In 2015, the Shanta Kumar-led High-Level Committee on Restructuring of FCI had urged the government to revisit the MSP policy. The panel had said: 'Effectively, price support operates primarily

in wheat and paddy and that too in selected states. This creates highly skewed incentive structures in favour of wheat and paddy.' The committee had noted that wheat-paddy procurement did not directly benefit more than 6 per cent of India's agricultural households. Indeed, this lopsided system continues to hamper crop diversification, besides leaving the majority of the nation's farmers at the mercy of unscrupulous market forces. The government's MSP plan for five crops was a non-starter in the absence of a robust system for guaranteed nationwide procurement. The larger objectives of enhancing food security, increasing farmers' income and reducing dependence on imports can be achieved if the glaring anomalies in the MSP regime are removed.

Printer-Publisher & Editor In Chief

Sanjay Mangesh Bhaire
Allied publication Across Mumbai (Marathi & Hindi)

Managing Editor
Suchita Bhaire

Editor
Sreeraj N.

Legal Advisor
Adv. Ameet Mehta

Special Correspondents
K V Raman
Vinod Raghavan
Asha Menon

Chief Designer
Vikram Jadav

Cartoonist
Sunil Vinekar

Photographers
Ajit Raut
Bhooshan Koyande

Contributors and Advertising
Satish Shetty
Savita Tiwari
J D Rodrigues

Circulation Dept.
Dinesh Gupta
Suchit Kumar Saytonday

Naval prowess

Exercise signifies India's maritime leadership

INDIA is gearing up to host 'Milan 2024', a multilateral naval exercise that signifies international maritime cooperation. Since its inception in 1995, 'Milan' has evolved into a premier event showcasing India's maritime prowess and commitment to global security. Involving over 50 nations, including naval powers like the US, Japan, Australia and France, 'Milan 2024' will seek to address

leading force. In 2022, the Navy joined the Bahrain-based Combined Maritime Forces, a US-led multinational naval partnership that aims to promote stability across international waters in the IOR; recently, India decided to become a full member of the grouping. India has also provided capacity-building assistance, platforms and training to countries in the region, thus helping them enhance their maritime

capabilities. Gifting naval assets such as offshore patrol vessels and fast-attack craft to nations like Mauritius, the Seychelles and Sri Lanka underlines India's contribution to collaborative maritime governance. Notably, the

hydrological surveys and joint Exclusive Economic Zone surveillance that India is carrying out in the ocean reflect its environmental stewardship.

'Milan' also serves as a platform for fostering trust and enhancing interoperability in naval activities among the participants. By promoting a rules-based maritime order, India is striving to ensure security on the high seas, vital for global stability and prosperity.



current maritime challenges. Attacks by Houthi rebels and Somali pirates in vital waterways like the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea have underscored the need for greater collaboration among nations.

India is playing a key role as a reliable security partner and advocate for maritime stability. The Indian Navy's engagement in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) demonstrates its emergence as a

WEST Bengal's Sandeshkhali made headlines when Enforcement Directorate officials were attacked by supporters of Trinamool Congress (TMC) strongman Sheikh Shahjahan on January 5. The raid in North 24 Parganas district was in connection with a ration scam. A month later, women took to the streets, demanding his arrest and that of his aides. Allegations of sexual exploitation were levelled. The TMC leader and others were also accused of land-grab and forcing men to work without pay. Three days of violent protests followed. Sheikh continues to be on the run. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has been blaming the Opposition, primarily the BJP, for fomenting trouble. Her comment that her detractors are making a mountain out of a molehill is deplorable. A responsible approach is expected, especially from a self-professed champion of women's rights.

The government claims that despite an assurance of safety, not a single woman spoke of sexual harassment when a

women's police team visited the violence-hit village. Complaints were registered that villagers were forced to attend TMC meetings. Gangrape charges have been added after a woman gave a statement before a judicial magistrate. The National Commission for Women has highlighted widespread fear and systematic abuse, while the National Commission for Scheduled Castes has recommended the imposition of President's rule in the state. The

Sonia in Rajya Sabha

Challenges are only getting bigger for her party

SONIA Gandhi was first elected to the Lok Sabha from Amethi in 1999. When she emerged victorious from Rae Bareilly for the fifth time in 2019, it was the only seat the Congress could win in Uttar Pradesh. The former party chief had announced that it would be her last



election. Amid health concerns, the 77-year-old leader's nomination for the Rajya Sabha polls from Rajasthan signals her exit from General Elections. With the Congress certain to win one seat from the state, Sonia is set to serve her first term in the Upper House. As the Congress gasps for breath in the face of the BJP

blitzkrieg, the party would hope that the matriarch's decision to maintain her presence in Parliament sends an uplifting message. But will it?

In the larger scheme of things, the unmaking of the INDIA bloc with just months to go for Lok Sabha polls is the gravest challenge at hand. As the Opposition alliance falters, the prospects of the combined opposition taking on the might of the BJP are getting dimmer by the day. Who contests in Sonia's place from Rae Bareilly is of little interest, unless Rahul or Priyanka is brave enough to throw the hat into the ring. Rahul was shown the door in the family borough of Amethi in 2019. Priyanka was in the forefront of the Uttar Pradesh campaign during the 2022 Assembly elections. Either or both contesting from UP can galvanise the Congress. Any hope of securing victory would still require the support of allies.

Once dismissed as a housewife and Rajiv Gandhi's widow, Sonia was installed as the party president in 1998. She also helmed the Congress-led UPA, which was in power for two consecutive terms. On the whole, she may count success and failure in equal measure. As she gets ready for a new innings, her party looks bereft of ideas and leadership. She can't escape blame for the Congress' plummeting fortunes.

an extension of the saffron agenda does not inspire confidence that the state government would ensure a comprehensive inquiry.

The CM must also take cognisance of the plight of women prisoners. Besides overcrowding in jails, an amicus curiae has pointed out the issue of many inmates getting pregnant. A ban has been sought on the entry of male staff of correctional homes into women's enclosures.



observations being dismissed as nothing but

women's enclosures.

Sandeshkhali row

Bengal govt needs to ensure thorough probe

Congress on I-T radar

Pre-poll disruption reeks of partisanship

BARELY a couple of months before the General Election, the Congress finds itself in the crosshairs of the income tax (I-T) department. The party claimed on Friday that the department had frozen its main bank accounts, adversely affecting its political activity as it was unable to pay salaries or use the funds received under its crowdfunding scheme. According to the Congress, drastic action was taken by the authorities on 'flimsy grounds' — late filing of I-T return for 2018-19. The party has approached the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal, which has allowed it to operate the accounts for the time being with a lien rider, even as further hearing will be held next week.

Despite a series of electoral setbacks in recent years, the

Congress continues to be the country's main Opposition party. Attempts to disrupt its everyday



functioning are uncalled for. The authorities' apparent overzealousness reeks of partisanship. Earlier this week, the party's Madhya Pradesh unit alleged that the I-T department

had sent notices to some Congress leaders in a bid to intimidate them ahead of the Lok Sabha polls. These

leaders were subpoenaed purportedly in connection with an I-T raid conducted in Bhopal in April 2019. The state unit also questioned the decision to summon them to New

Delhi instead of the local offices of the department.

The NDA government has been repeatedly accused by the Opposition of using Central agencies such as the Enforcement Directorate, CBI and the I-T department to target political rivals. There is apprehension that 'politically motivated' raids, searches and I-T surveys will be intensified in the coming days and weeks so as to browbeat Opposition leaders into joining the BJP. The onus is on the government, which suffered a blow on Thursday when the Supreme Court declared the electoral bond scheme unconstitutional, to dispel the growing impression that it is unleashing investigative agencies on its opponents to politically and financially destabilise them.

Attacks on Indians

America needs to do a lot to ensure their safety

THE White House gave a reassurance last week that the Joe Biden administration was working 'very hard' to prevent attacks on Indians, following a spike in cases of unnatural deaths among the diaspora in the US. 'There's no excuse for violence, certainly (not) based on race or gender or religion,' said a White House spokesperson.



Knocked off its moral pedestal abroad after turning a blind eye to Israel's unabated assault on Gaza, the US needs to at least justify its claims of nurturing liberalism and diversity at home.

Indians have been arriving in the US at an unprecedented rate in recent years. The Indian student intake in the US surged by 35

per cent in the 2022-23 academic year and is poised to overtake that of the Chinese this year. However, the deaths of half-a-dozen Indian-origin students since the beginning of this year are worrisome. Blatant racism or targeting was detected in a case in which the victim luckily escaped with his life. In a country where gun culture is prevalent and becoming a gangster is a 'career option' in some quarters, newly arrived Indians need to take precautions.

There is also the reality of a slow burn among some US citizens against people who look different from the whites and African-Americans. Last year, the New York City Mayor had to assert that the 'turban does not mean terrorism' after recurring

cases of hate crime against Sikhs. FBI statistics for 2022 showed hate crime at its highest since 2001. The White House's remit must go beyond protecting the likes of Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, designated as a terrorist by India, as it would be aware that the contribution of Indian immigrants to US economy and polity has been remarkable.

Hazardous kite string

Need to enforce ban on sale of Chinese manja

THE recent spate of tragic incidents involving the banned Chinese manja during kite-flying festivals across India serves as a stark reminder of the urgent need for action to curb this menace. The deaths or injuries underscore the gravity of the problem and demand immediate attention of the authorities, policymakers



and the public. Thirteen-year-old Jasveer Singh of Adampur, Punjab, died after his throat was slit by the Chinese string while he was riding home on a scooter earlier this week. In January, six bikers — four in Gujarat and one each in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh — became victims of the prohibited string. A farmer in Nashik,

Maharashtra, sustained a severe neck laceration, requiring 150 stitches.

In 2017, the National Green Tribunal had ordered a countrywide ban on the Chinese manja. However, the string continues to inflict harm on unsuspecting people and wildlife. There are numerous reports of birds suffering grievous injuries or dying after getting entangled in the razor-sharp string.

Along with the public shunning the deadly string, it is imperative that the authorities heed the calls for strict enforcement of the ban on the Chinese manja by intensifying surveillance, cracking down on underground markets and imposing stringent penalties on

violators. Also, awareness campaigns must be conducted to alert people about the grave risks associated with the manja and encourage them to use safe, environment-friendly alternatives. The joy of kite-flying must not be eclipsed by the spectre of mishaps.

Critical mineral sector needs friendly rules, sops: Report

New Delhi

In order to give a decisive push to the critical mineral sector, the government needs to come out with fiscal incentives, investments in technology and infrastructure and, promote mining operations abroad and conducive regulatory environment, says a report by think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI).

The Centre must support the growth of processing industries by measures such as providing subsidies to processing industries, support for research and development, and the establishment of favourable trade policies to secure raw materials from other countries, it suggested.

India is focusing on



developing its critical mineral sector as well as sourcing these minerals from outside as it is a crucial ingredient for all green energy and hi-tech sectors such

as EVs as well as for computers, solar panels, drones, jet engines, satellites, pacemakers and mobile phones.

India needs to grow at 9-10 per cent for 3 decades to be USD 35 trillion economy by 2047, says G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant

Mumbai

India needs to grow at an annual rate of 9-10 per cent for around three decades and constant innovations to become a USD 35 trillion economy by 2047, India's G-20 Sherpa and former NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant said on Sunday.

"We are the fifth largest economy in the world and by 2027 we will surpass Japan and Germany to become the third largest economy in the world. And our aim is that by the time we turn 100 in 2047, India should be a USD 35 trillion economy," Kant said while addressing a session at Mumbai Tech Week (MTW) hosted by Tech Entrepreneurs Association Mumbai (TEAM).

Which means, India will become the second largest economy in the world, Kant stated.

"And to be a USD 35 trillion economy means that we need to grow year after year for close to three decades by 9-10 per cent annually and this means that we need to do a lot of disruptions and constant innovation," he noted.



Kant said that India created the digital identity of 1.4 billion people and technologically the country has leapfrogged.

With the liberation of policy by the government which supports start-ups, space and in many other areas, young entrepreneurs should focus on areas like artificial intelligence, logistics, health and

education. "What India is doing is innovating at population scale and we are at the beginning of a huge disruption because we are the youngest country in the world and our average age is 29. Even when we are 100 our average age will be 33 and we will provide 31 per cent of the skilled manpower to the rest of the world," he added.

Citing customers' interest, RBI gives Paytm relief till March 15



New Delhi

The RBI on Friday gave customers and merchants of Paytm Payments Bank Ltd (PPBL) 15 more days to shift their accounts to other banks.

Now, by March 15, Paytm must close most of its operations, including deposit and credit transactions. The earlier deadline was February 29.

The RBI also clarified that the withdrawal or utilisation of balances by PPBL customers from their saving and current accounts, prepaid instruments, FASTags and National Common Mobility Cards will be permitted without any restrictions, up to their available balance, beyond March 15. But no further top-ups will be allowed.

It asked all customers to make alternative arrangements with another bank before March 15, 2024 to avoid inconvenience.

The existing deposits of PPBL customers maintained

with partner banks can be brought back (sweep-in) to the accounts with PPBL, subject to the Rs 2 lakh ceiling on balance. These sweep-ins for use or withdrawal by the customer will continue to be allowed but no fresh deposits with partner banks through PPBL will be allowed after March 15. Customers paying EMIs or OTT subscriptions through PPBL will have to make alternative arrangements. Merchants accepting payments using Paytm QR code, Paytm soundbox, Paytm POS terminal linked to PPBL account or wallet, will not be able to avail the service after March 15, and should also look for other alternatives.

Can use wallet, cards beyond deadline

Wallet services, FASTags and NCMC cards issued by Paytm Payments Bank can be used until the balance is exhausted beyond March 15, but no fresh deposits will be allowed

Mahindra electric vehicles to have Volkswagen's components

New Delhi

German automotive major Volkswagen Group and Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd on Friday announced their first supply agreement for electric vehicle components under their joint vision for electric mobility collaboration. Under the agreement,

Mahindra will become the first external partner to use Volkswagen's "groundbreaking unified cell concept", the core element of its battery strategy, the two companies said. M&M plans to launch five all-electric SUVs in December 2024.

NITI Aayog pitches for tax reforms, mandatory saving plan, housing plan for elderly

New Delhi

Government think tank NITI Aayog has pitched for tax reforms, mandatory saving plan, and housing plan for elderly in India, as the population of senior citizens is projected to reach 19.5 per cent of the country's population by 2050.

In a report titled 'Senior Care Reforms in India - Reimagining the Senior Care Paradigm', NITI Aayog said a national portal for senior care must be developed for senior citizens to provide easy access of services to them.

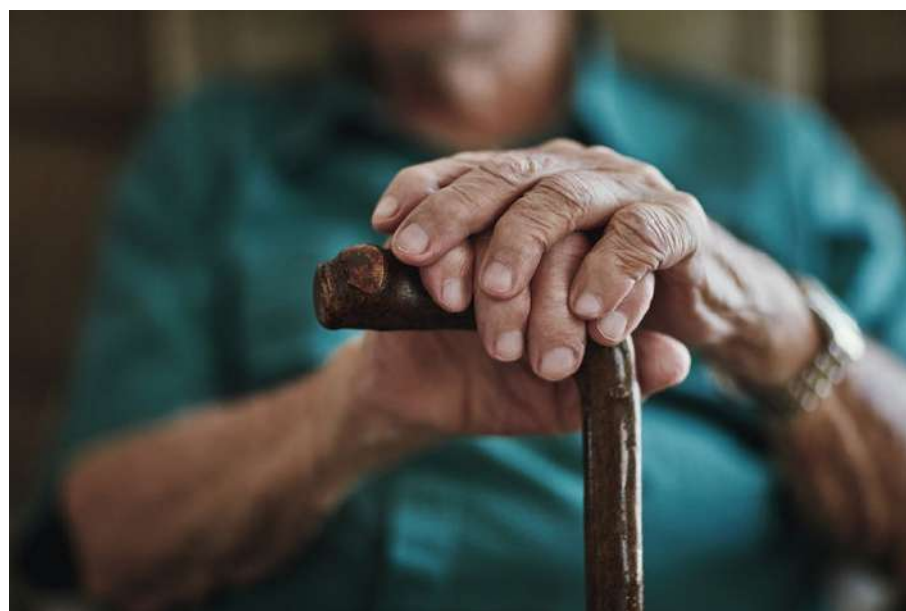
"Since the social security framework in India is limited, most seniors depend on the income generated from their savings. Variable interest rates result in the erosion of their income, sometimes even below sustenance levels.

"Therefore, a regulatory mechanism is required to set a viable base rate for the interest accrued on senior citizen deposits," the report said.

The report emphasised that giving a further concession to older women will contribute to their financial well-being.

The elderly in India currently comprises a little over 10 per cent of the population, translating to about 104 million, and is projected to reach 19.5 per cent of the total population by 2050.

The report also suggested that the government should reassess the reverse



mortgage mechanism to increase liquidity for seniors and by making necessary amendments to the current reverse mortgage rules.

"Tax and GST reforms, etc., on senior care products (needed) to increase the ease of adoption and safeguard the elderly population from the financial burden," the Aayog said.

Population ageing is a global phenomenon, and the number of people over 60 years of age has been rising rapidly across the world.

India, too, is witnessing an exponential growth in the number and proportion of elderly people, coupled with decreasing fertility rate (less than 2.0) and increasing life expectancy (more than 70 years).

The report also called for earmarking CSR funds as a contribution to national funds for care provided to the non-affording category of the elderly in their facilities.

It also stressed on developing partnerships with the private sector through various PPP models to encourage

private medical care at discounted prices to senior persons across the medical care cycle, from consultation to diagnostics to treatment.

Noting that catering to the needs of the elderly population of this size is challenging, the report said it also presents an opportunity for the growth of the senior care industry, which is estimated at USD 7 billion (Rs 57,881 crore).

More than 75 per cent of elderly people in India suffer from chronic diseases and these figures indicate the potential of the home-based care market in India.

As per the report, the size of the home healthcare market in India was estimated at USD 6.2 billion (Rs 50,840 crore) in 2020 and it is projected to reach USD 21.3 billion (Rs 1.74 lakh crore) by 2027.

The home healthcare market can lead to a 15-30 per cent reduction in infrastructure and operational costs compared to hospital costs for the same treatment, it added.

"We need to ensure the social security of the elderly and add more emphasis to wellbeing and care," NITI Aayog Member (Health) V K Paul said during the release of the report.

NITI Aayog Vice-Chairman Suman Bery said it is time to start thinking about the special dimensions of senior care, in addition to medical and social aspects.

CBDT sets Rs 1 lakh threshold per assessee for withdrawal of old tax demands

New Delhi

The Income Tax Department has prescribed a ceiling of Rs 1 lakh per assessee for withdrawal of small tax demands till Assessment Year 2015-16, in accordance with a scheme announced in Budget.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has issued an order giving effect to the 2024-25 Budget announcement by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

The Budget had announced that tax demands for AY 2010-11 of up to Rs 25,000 and for AY 2011-12 to 2015-16 of up to Rs 10,000 will be withdrawn. Tax demands totalling about Rs 3,500 crore will be withdrawn following the announcement.

The CBDT order said that such outstanding tax demands pertaining to income tax, wealth tax and gift tax as on January

31, 2024, shall be remitted and extinguished "subject to the maximum ceiling of Rs 1 lakh for any specific taxpayer/assessee".

The limit of Rs 1 lakh would include principal component of



tax demand, interest, penalty or fee, cess, surcharge.

However, the remission shall not be applicable on the demands raised against the tax deductors or tax collectors under TDS or TCS provisions of the I-T Act.

Nangia Andersen India Partner Maneesh Bawa said the directive further specifies that this waiver or cancellation does not entitle taxpayers to any claims for credit or refunds.

Additionally, the waiver or cancellation will not influence any ongoing, planned, or potential criminal legal proceedings against the taxpayer and does not grant any immunity under any legislation.

"Taxpayers are advised to access their online accounts and navigate to Pending Action > Response to Outstanding Demand to verify the status of 'Extinguished Demands' related to them," Bawa said.

Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra had earlier this month said that there are about 1.11 crore such disputed tax demands.

I bought Twitter to improve probable 'civilisational lifespan': Elon Musk

New Delhi

Elon Musk on Friday said that he acquired Twitter for \$44 billion to improve the "civilisational lifespan".

Twitter in April 2022 announced it will be acquired by Musk for \$54.20 per share in cash in a transaction valued at approximately \$44 billion.

Upon completion of the transaction in October 2022, Twitter became a privately-held company.

In a fresh post, Musk replied to a follower on X who posted that in the long run, 'I suspect Elon buying Twitter will be the most important thing he ever did'.

"I bought Twitter to improve probable civilisational lifespan," commented the Tesla and SpaceX CEO.

Famous author Stephen King replied to Musk, 'Just because you bought it doesn't mean you



own it'.

After renaming Twitter to X, Musk had said in a post that the platform made a record in terms of users in 2023, reaching 541 million.

Last December, X CEO Linda Yaccarino said that over 10 million people signed up for X in the same month.

In September, X's traffic dropped from 6.4 billion to 5.8 billion, a loss of 10 per cent, according to new SimilarWeb data.

The social media platform could become profitable in 2024, she had said.

India rejects European FTA bloc's 'data exclusivity' demand

New Delhi

India on Thursday said it has rejected the demand of the four

and Switzerland. The bloc is negotiating a trade agreement with India.

to protect the interest of the industry," he added.

Data exclusivity provides protection to the technical data generated by innovator companies to prove the usefulness of their products. In the pharmaceutical sector, drug companies generate data through expensive global clinical trials to prove the efficacy and safety of their new medicine.

By gaining exclusive rights over this data, innovator companies can prevent their competitors from obtaining marketing licence for low-cost versions during the tenure of this exclusivity. India's generic drug industry is estimated at about \$25 billion and the country exports 50 per cent of its produce.

What's data exclusivity?

Data exclusivity provides protection to technical data generated by innovator companies to prove usefulness of their products. By gaining exclusive rights over this data, these companies can prevent competitors from obtaining marketing licence for low-cost versions

Tokyo/London

Japan and Britain are among the Group of Seven advanced economies that have slipped into a recession. Japan's economy is now the world's fourth-largest

was overtaken by China's. Japan's nominal GDP totalled \$4.2 trillion last year, while Germany's was \$4.4 trillion, or \$4.5 trillion, depending on the currency conversion.



after it contracted in the last quarter of 2023 and fell behind Germany.

The Japanese government reported the economy shrank at an annual rate of 0.4% in October to December, according to Cabinet Office data on real GDP. Japan's economy was the second largest until 2010, when it

Britain's economy fell into a recession in the second half of 2023. GDP contracted by 0.3% in the three months to December, having shrunk by 0.1% between July and September, official data showed. Britain's economy stands just 1% higher than its level of late 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic struck.

RBI lists challenges in tackling inflation

New Delhi

Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday warned that the fight against inflation has not yet ended because recurring food price shocks and renewed flashpoints

Conference, the RBI chief also advocated re-energisation of multilateralism and in this respect suggested global pacts on dedicated corridors for critical minerals and food. "Such arrangements have to be fair and equitable," he suggested.

"We remain vigilant to navigate through the last mile of disinflation as it is often the most difficult part of the journey. We firmly recognise that stable and low inflation will provide the necessary bedrock for sustainable economic growth," he observed.

"Prudent fiscal policies have paved the path for India's success in sailing through these rough waters," he said.

Japan slips into recession; now becomes 4th largest economy, falls behind Germany

Tokyo

Japan's economy is now the world's fourth-largest after it contracted in the last quarter of 2023 and fell behind Germany.

The government reported that the economy shrank at an annual rate of 0.4% in October to December, according to Cabinet Office data on real GDP, though it grew 1.9% for all of 2023. It contracted 2.9% in July-September. Two straight quarters of contraction are considered an indicator that an economy is in a technical recession.

Japan's economy was the second largest until 2010 when it was overtaken by China's. Japan's nominal GDP totalled USD 4.2 trillion last year, while Germany's was USD 4.4 trillion, or USD 4.5 trillion, depending on the currency conversion.

A weaker Japanese yen was a key factor in the drop to fourth place, since comparisons of nominal GDP are in dollar terms. But Japan's relative weakness also reflects a decline in its population and lagging productivity and

competitiveness, economists say.

Real gross domestic product is a measure of the value of a nation's products and services. The annual rate measures what would have happened if the quarterly rate lasted a year.

Japan was historically touted as "an economic miracle", rising from the ashes of World War II to become the second largest economy after the US. It kept that going through the 1970s and 1980s. But for most of the past 30 years the economy has grown only moderately at times, mainly remaining in the doldrums after the collapse of its financial bubble began in 1990.

Both the Japanese and German economies are powered by strong small and medium-size businesses with solid productivity.

Like Japan in the 1960s-1980s, for most of this century, Germany roared ahead, dominating global markets for high-end products like luxury cars and industrial machinery, selling so much to the rest of the world that half its economy ran on exports.



European nations EFTA bloc for inclusion of a 'data exclusivity' provision in proposed free trade agreements, stating that it always protects the interests of the domestic generic drugs industry.

Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said there is no Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in which India would go against the generic drug industry.

The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) members are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway,



on the geo-political front have emerged as major spoilsports in this respect.

Addressing the South East Asian Central Banks Governors

Gendered Prevalence of Non-Communicable Diseases in India's Older Adults

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines non-communicable diseases (NCDs), or chronic diseases, as illnesses of long duration and the product of a combination of genetic, physiological, environmental, and behavioural factors. The major types of NCDs are cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes. This paper focuses on the NCDs burden of India's older adult women, which is a result of multiple factors, including what experts refer to as "social determinants of health". These are "the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life." They can include income and social protection, education, unemployment and job insecurity, housing, basic amenities, and the environment.

Women's health has been historically under-prioritised and under-funded, especially beyond reproductive and maternal health. Later in their life, women bear an uneven and disproportionate share of the elderly illiterate, financially uninsured, and progressively diseased population. This phenomenon can be partly explained by the impact of social biases and gendered roles. For example, older adult women bear a disproportionate amount of unpaid care work (245 minutes a day for elderly women; 112 minutes for elderly men); they are often segregated in poorly paid labour-intensive work; and they have poor access to digital tools and technology. They also face the risk of gender-based violence. Nutritional deficiencies and morbidities like anaemia (5.9 percent women compared to 3.1 percent men) and obesity (10.2 percent of women compared to 3.4 percent of men) further exacerbate with age.

The population of India's elderly was at 138 million in 2021, of which 71 million were females. Further, the share of the country's overall population comprising the elderly has been steadily rising since 1961: the elderly males, from 5.5 percent (1961) to 9.6 percent (2021); and elderly females, from 5.8 percent (1961) to 10.7 percent (2021).

As the proportion of the elderly has been increasing in recent years, little attention is being paid to their specific health challenges. While the National Sample Surveys (NSS) and Census regularly take stock of their numbers, there is a lack of understanding of the unique challenges that they face, because of their age, with regard to the prevalence of NCDs. Filling this gap in the literature should help India make appropriate elderly-related policies towards the fulfilment of targets encoded in SDGs 3 and 5. In particular, addressing the challenges facing older adults are related

to the following goals:

- 4 (To reduce by one-third premature mortality from NCDs through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being);
- 8 (To achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all); and
- 4 (To recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure, and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate by 2030).

Furthermore, in line with the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030), this paper recommends the implementation of person-centred integrated care and long-term health services that will be more responsive to older people.

Review of Literature Global Literature

Research from both developed and developing countries have captured the gender gap in self-rated health among the elderly. For instance, Le, Quashie and Prachuabmoh (2018) found, in their study of older adults in Vietnam, that the proportion of elderly women rating their health poorly was higher than that of elderly men. A similar study of older adults in Singapore showed the gender differences in self-reported health and prevalence of chronic diseases and functional disability, which had reduced significantly when demographic, socio-economic, health risk behaviours, and social support factors were controlled for. Meanwhile, a cross-city analysis in Latin America and the Caribbean suggests that women displayed worse health outcomes, of which self-rated health was a part, than men in all seven cities covered by the study. In Taiwan, the gender gap in self-perceived health is considerable despite controlling for various health factors. Evidence from Mexico also suggests that older women rate their health poorer than their male counterparts.

The prevalence of multi-morbidity is higher among women compared to men, not only for chronic ailments but also for other diseases. The reasons are many, and they encompass biological, sociocultural, and economic causes. Existing studies also focus on the prevalence of NCDs, in particular, among women across different age groups.

In Nepal, females were found to be more often affected by cancer than males. While breast cancer is more prevalent among younger women, cervical cancer

is more common in middle-aged women, and lung cancer among the elderly women. The prevalence of diabetes and impaired fasting glucose in the country was observed to increase with age for both men and women. Meanwhile, a study based on the elderly in Uganda observed that the reporting behaviour of NCDs was generally higher in the 60–69 years and 70–79 years age groups, and within these age groups, the likelihood was higher among older women. In China, diabetes, hypertension, and dyslipidaemia were more prevalent among men, and osteoporosis was more common among women. While the prevalence of diabetes, osteoporosis, and hypertension increased with age among both men and women, this was the case with obesity and dyslipidaemia only among women.

A study of employees in a large company in Iran suggests that the prevalence of diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, osteoporosis, and cancer increased with age among both men and women. Similar results were found in a study in Qatar, where prevalence increased with age, and this rise was highest in the 30 to 49 age group. Another study, this time of Canadian adults, found that women's poorer health (measured in part by the presence of chronic illnesses like arthritis and high blood pressure) is partially attributable to their reduced access to social and material conditions that enable good health, and to the everyday stressors associated with women's social roles.

Women are more likely to have lower incomes, be single parents, carry a "double day" (working full- or part-time and carrying out household duties for their family), and work in lower-status occupations. A cross-country analysis of the elderly in the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, and Spain, found that time allocated to paid work, household work, and active leisure activities was associated with favourable health among both women and men; the gender gap, however, was higher in Germany, Italy, and Spain.

The link between NCDs and health risk behaviours, and the gendered prevalence of the latter, is well-documented. A study conducted among the poor elderly in rural Brazil found that among both men and women, consumption of alcohol with smoking, and physical inactivity with smoking, were the most prevalent cluster of risk factors. They also concluded that men were more physically inactive than women. Another study of the elderly in Brazil revealed that the most frequent health risk cluster among women and men was physical inactivity and excess weight. A community-based study in

Ethiopia noted that the co-occurrence of multiple behavioural risk factors like harmful drinking, physical inactivity, and poor fruit and vegetable intake was more prevalent among women than men.

It is observed that while pension coverage for those aged over 50 years was 51 percent, it was 79 percent among those aged above 65 in South Africa. Research further notes that pension status was associated with a higher frequency of outpatient visits and treatment of hypertensive status; however, it was not associated with self-reported health. A study of Vietnamese households suggests that individuals who had reported NCDs as well as health insurance were twice as likely to utilise outpatient care compared to their counterparts without insurance. However, no significant association was found between having health insurance and the status of household members with reported NCDs.

The Indian Context

Similar trends are occurring in India. The prevalence of NCDs among women is 62 per 1,000, as compared to 36 per 1,000 men. Hypertension, depression, gastrointestinal illness, and diabetes are the most common NCD morbidities in the country. A 2012 study examining the health status of elderly women in rural India showed that hypertension is the most common NCD (78 percent of respondents were reported to have the disease), followed by osteoarthritis (73 percent), diabetes (66 percent), and bronchial asthma (77 percent).

Data from the first Longitudinal Ageing Study in India (LASI), released in 2017, reveal sex differences in the prevalence, and socio-demographic and risk factors for NCDs among older adults in India. Studies have established the gender gap in self-rated health outcomes among the elderly. The same LASI report shows that poor self-rated health is twice as common among adults aged 60 years and above as compared to those between 45 and 59. Elderly women are also more likely to report poor self-rated health.

A study of elderly Indian women categorised into three age groups—60–69, 70–79, and above 80—found that the prevalence of diabetes and cancer increases with age. In a study of the health of women in eastern Indian states, mild anaemia was found to be most prevalent among the adolescents ever-married and least among the younger never-married; moderate anaemia was highest among the younger never-married and adolescent ever-married; severe anaemia was most prevalent among the older never-married; and least so among younger ever-married women.

How can climate resilience be 'inclusive' at the municipal level?

There are increasing social, economic, and political inequalities in Indian cities which lead to underserved populations getting pushed to city peripheries in environmentally degraded or hazardous areas. Multiple studies have proven that these areas are most vulnerable to climate disasters.

When climate actions are targeted in these locations, various challenges are faced on the ground. Through WRI India's engagement in select vulnerable neighbourhoods in Mumbai, it was realised that several gaps in the existing governance systems in such areas pose a major hurdle to inclusive climate actions.

Two of these locations were in the P/N and M/E wards of Mumbai, where an attempt was made to upgrade open spaces with nature-based solutions for climate adaptation. Both these wards have high-density populations, insecure tenures, and inadequate amenities, and are also most vulnerable to consistent climate disasters caused due to flood and heat risks.

The common necessity that was highlighted was the need for a safe public space for recreational activities including playing, group studying, congregating, and walking amongst others.

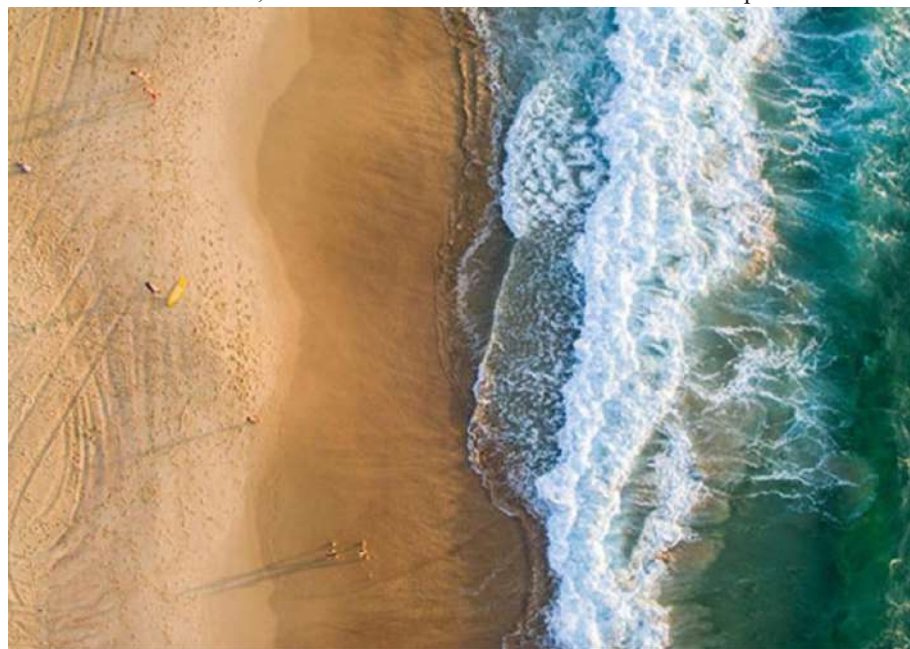
The WRI India's project objective was to increase the green cover of dense residential settlements and integrate nature-based solutions to increase the resilience of these areas, build recreational spaces, and in the process create a road map for inclusive climate adaptation actions. It partnered with Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA) and Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) as local partners active in the ward. Their previous experience of working in the neighbourhoods helped leverage existing friendships with the communities to co-create a plan to address climate issues. Through workshops with community youth groups, society federations, co-operative societies, and women's organizations, WRI India was able to understand residents' needs and inadequacies in infrastructure services. The common necessity that was highlighted was the need for a safe public space for recreational activities including playing, group studying, congregating, and walking amongst others.

Urban greening was identified as a strategy which resonated with the youth, through which they could claim the space[1] for recreational needs. The project involved working on six sites in R&R colonies, informal settlements, and municipal schools to transform underutilised, derelict areas into safe, vibrant, accessible, and shaded public spaces. There were challenges in addressing the existing lack of services such as water, drainage, solid waste management, footpaths, etc. in the process.

Apart from the lack of per capita

open space provision in low-income areas which BMC attempts to acquire by implementing the Development Plan (DP) 2014-34, there are various on-ground upgradation initiatives by communities that are instrumental in upgrading smaller plots and interstitial spaces that may not be captured in a DP. Supporting such initiatives can help strengthen community cohesion, create hierarchies of open spaces that are well-knit and ensure long-term climate resilience.

The project involved working on six sites in R&R colonies, informal settlements, and municipal schools to transform underutilised, derelict areas



into safe, vibrant, accessible, and shaded public spaces.

Following are some suggestions that municipal entities can play a key role in encouraging community-led open space upgradation projects at the local level, thereby increasing inclusive effort:

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) through a community cell: For the development of public open spaces, several departments can get involved at the ward-level such as gardens, stormwater drainage, solid waste management, sewerage operations, roads and traffic. These may also include education, or the health department based on the intent of the project. It would help to have a single window at the ward office and an SOP to guide community representatives in a stepwise manner to help them realise their vision. This community-facing cell, through the SOP, could guide community representatives in validating the plan, help in understanding which departments would be relevant to their project, answer FAQs, collaborate to oversee the progress and include contacts of resource persons.

Awareness and feedback drives: A platform to invite inputs from the larger neighbourhood needs to be organised before commencing the pre-

conceptualisation stage of the public project. Depending upon the scale of the project, awareness of its initiation can be announced in the relevant catchment zone. For example, for a plot less than 500 square meters, a catchment of 500 mts around the plot can be targeted to spread awareness and invite suggestions. These could be communicated in the form of signages outside the plots, published on official websites and spread through local intel, giving contact details of project leads. This would help in gathering support and seeking opinions about the realistic needs of the neighbourhood.

Stakeholder workshops for conflict

resolution: In-person stakeholder workshops with community members can be hosted by relevant municipal departments. For example, during the projects at P/N and M/E wards, the Garden department and Tree Authority hosted a couple of stakeholder workshops and consequent smaller meetings with community representatives, NGOs, design and biodiversity experts and other relevant departments to resolve challenges on ground. This helped garner confidence amongst the communities in achieving success.

Formally appointing NGOs/CBOs as community mobilisers: NGOs, community mobilisers, and expert negotiators need to be an integral part of carrying out public projects, to make sure that community concerns are raised and opportunities for decision-making are available at every stage of the project. Often, after initial meetings with community members, projects are implemented without further community engagement during the execution stages. This distance, from vision to execution and project realization, creates a sense of doubt and in turn, causes detachment from the project. This can eventually lead to a lack of ownership and consequently affect long-term sustenance.

Participatory budget and funding: Ward-level participatory budgeting processes can be formally introduced to reflect on the priorities of community members through needs-based assessments. For example, adequate provision of recreational spaces may take precedence over road widening activities based on local needs and should therefore be reflected in that ward's budget. Budget heads that are directed towards aiding maintenance and awareness can be appropriately used for low-income areas that need them the most. CSR funds or donations that are received by the municipal corporation can be pooled and channelised in prioritized locations. A dashboard to transparently display these pledges can be created by the corporation, to ensure that the grant recipients are deserving of this support.

Inclusive tendering: Government tender documents for the development of large public plots, should be cognizant of local SMEs getting priority if they belong to the neighbourhood. Contractors that employ service staff like gardeners and gatekeepers, local artists and designers, and local labour should be given priority in the tendering process to encourage generating local livelihoods.

Representation of diverse individuals: It is important to identify whether the local community organisations are themselves inclusive, in terms of caste, class, religion, language, culture, colour, race, gender, age, and ability. A socially inclusive environment needs to be created right from the composition of the organisation, to creating equitable processes for active participation or feedback from diverse groups, across all phases (conceptual, preparatory, design, execution and continuous monitoring) of the project.

Monitoring impact due to inclusive processes: A monitoring and evaluation framework and system needs to be set up, with indicators in the SOP, to check the impact of the implementation of how successfully climate resilience is created through social cohesion and environmental enhancement.

Achieving climate resilience through inclusive measures at the municipal level requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the social, economic and political inequalities prevalent in our cities. Climate adaptation in vulnerable areas underscores the importance of community engagement, local partnerships, and tailored strategies. Enhancing green spaces, integrating nature-based solutions, and addressing infrastructure deficiencies such as water and waste management with inclusive tendering practices and robust monitoring mechanisms are essential to empower underserved populations. It can also aid in fostering climate actions that prioritise the needs of vulnerable communities and building resilient urban environments for all.

Endorsing the Internationalist

Through the last five years, India has managed to maintain its sway and place in the new world order despite challenges, such as the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, and increasing Chinese aggression and border intrusions. As India—the world's largest democracy—heads to elections this year, it is important to capture an all-encompassing public opinion of Indian youth on foreign policy. The third iteration of the Observer Research Foundation's (ORF) Foreign Policy Survey intends to cover this gap. The survey is an annual initiative that captures how Indian youth, comprising 60 per cent of the country's population, perceive and think of India's foreign policy. The survey was conducted among 5,000 Indians between 18 and 35 years in 19 different cities and 11 languages from August 7 to September 15, 2023.

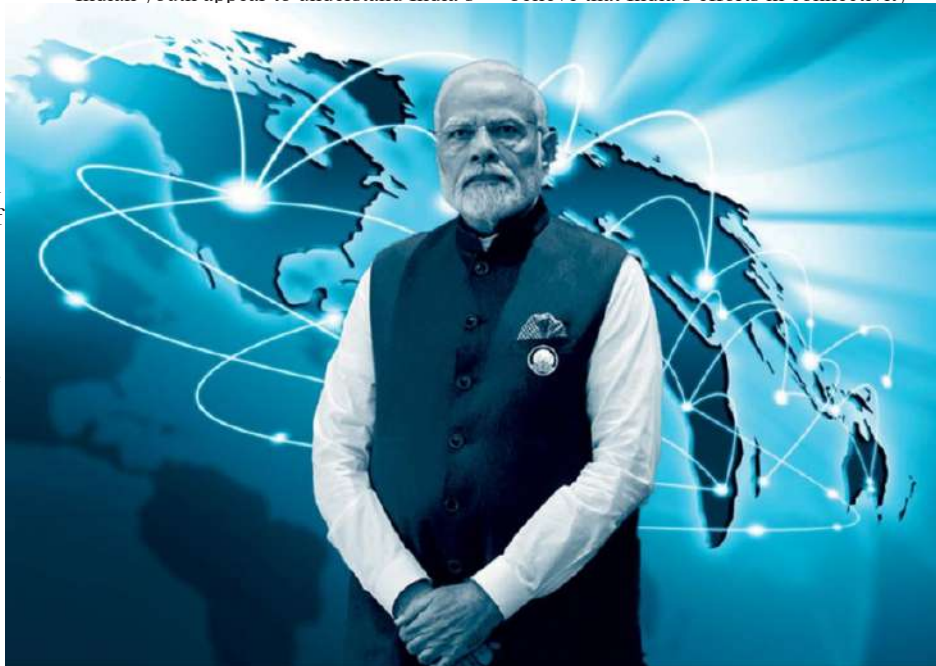
The 2023 survey indicates strong public support for the government's foreign policy (83 per cent). The positive perception is likely due to India's successful G20 presidency and public diplomacy. Eighty-three per cent of respondents believed that India's G20 presidency has been successful compared to the 2022 survey where 74 per cent were in fact unaware of the grouping. India's deft handling of G20 seems to have also revived some faith in multilateralism. For instance, when asked about issues that India's G20 presidency prioritised and issues that multilateral organisations should prioritise in the post-pandemic world, healthcare and food security were the top responses. The young also aspire for India to be part of exclusive platforms. They advocated for a permanent membership at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (88 per cent) and a permanent invitee status at the G7 summit (83 per cent).

While more than half of the respondents have advocated for better economic relations with China, India's urban youth see that country as a significant challenge to India. The Galwan clashes of 2020 have severely depleted their trust (80 per cent) in China. Border conflict with China was seen as a significant challenge by 84 per cent; threats related to China like global pandemics (90 per cent), economic slowdown (86 per cent), and cyber security (85 per cent) were recorded as some of India's biggest challenges. Eighty-six per cent of the youth have expressed concerns about Chinese debt trapping and salami slicing in India's neighbourhood, and 77 per cent agreed that Chinese encroachments and disputes are a development and security concern for India. Given that China's aggression and assertiveness have increased in the last few years, only 29 per cent are satisfied with the current state of the relationship, and a mere

34 per cent believe that China will likely be India's partner in future.

Indian youth appear to understand India's

Prime Minister Modi's Neighbourhood First policy is also well received. Respondents believe that India's efforts in connectivity



strategic shift and see China as a prominent and emerging threat when compared to Pakistan. Eighty per cent of respondents agreed that border conflict with Pakistan is a significant challenge, which is a 2 percentage point reduction from the 2022 survey. Other challenges from Pakistan like terrorism (88 per cent) are deemed a significant concern for India too. As a result, 81 per cent expressed distrust, and 74 per cent deemed relations to be poor with Pakistan. Only 17 per cent stated that relations improved in the last five years. Sixty one per cent of respondents even opposed any kind of assistance to Pakistan at the time of its economic crisis. Concerns about terrorism have also contributed to an increase in negative perceptions of Afghanistan. Distrust for the country has increased from 31 per cent in 2021 to 56 per cent in 2023, and the proportion of respondents with negative perceptions about the current state of relations has increased from 23 per cent in 2021 to 45 per cent in 2023.

The young are optimistic about India's relations with other neighbours. Nepal has retained the position of most-trusted neighbour for the second consecutive year (72 per cent), closely followed by Thailand and Bhutan (63 per cent). Sixty-seven per cent of urban youth consider India's relationship with Nepal good, and 62 per cent feel that the relationship has improved in the last five years. Urban youth believe India's development cooperation with neighbours has been adequate (83 per cent), and support India's assistance to Sri Lanka (80 per cent), Nepal (76 per cent), and Bangladesh (56 per cent) at times of economic difficulties. The push for robust connectivity under

are adequate across all sectors (76-86 per cent), with technology and people-to-people and transport connectivity sectors taking the lead. Seventy one per cent of respondents also agreed that India should relax the list of restricted commodities on its Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) while trading with its neighbours.

The year 2023 has been crucial and India's urban youth seems to be standing solidly behind the Modi government's foreign policy agenda, underscoring a rare convergence between societal aspirations and state response

Growing India-US relations are contributing to an optimistic perception of the US. Eighty one per cent of respondents are satisfied with the current state of relations with the US, and the same percentage sees the country as India's top preferred partner. Increasing Chinese aggression and assertiveness have also boosted positive perceptions of the US. A significant majority agreed that India and the US should cooperate as tensions with China escalate; they advocated strengthening the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), and technology and information sharing to deter Chinese aggressions. Compared to 2022, there is a 3 percentage point increase in respondents preferring cooperation with the US (44 per cent) as tensions between the US and China worsen, and a 6 percentage point increase in India and the US strengthening the Quad.

Russia—India's traditional partner—continues to enjoy a positive opinion among young Indians. Seventy seven per cent of respondents are satisfied with the current state of relations, and the same percentage

of respondents has registered Russia as a preferred partner in future. In essence, Russia is seen as India's second-most preferred partner. Respondents have also indicated support for India's strategic autonomy and balancing; nearly 80 per cent of them agree that India should remain neutral during the Russia-Ukraine war, and 51 per cent believe that India should remain neutral as tensions between the West and Russia escalate. However, concerns persist about the future of India-Russia relations. Eighty-two per cent opined that India should diversify its defence relations. Nearly 75 per cent are concerned about diverging partnerships between India and Russia and the growing closeness between Russia and China. Concerns about the growing proximity between Moscow and Beijing have increased by 8 percentage points.

The other Quad partners—Australia and Japan—are not far behind Russia. Seventy-six per cent were satisfied with the current state of relations with Australia, and 77 per cent of them saw Australia as India's leading partner in future. On Japan, 75 per cent are satisfied with the state of bilateral relations, and 76 per cent see the country as India's reliable partner in future. It is with this trust for Quad partners, that the Quad itself has been very popular among young Indians. The Quad was the most preferred organisation (74 per cent) for promoting India's interests. This is followed by initiatives like India-France-Australia, India-Indonesia-Australia, India-Italy-Japan, and India-Israel-US-UAE, where India is cooperating with fellow Quad partners.

India's increasing economic growth and partnerships, and the need for resilient supply chains have likely motivated the majority of Indian youth to be pro-trade. Respondents are most optimistic about India's economic engagements with North America (73 per cent), Europe (69 per cent), and Central Asia (66 per cent). Nearly 75 per cent of respondents believed that FTAs increase job opportunities and standards of living, and 73 per cent agreed that FTAs with the European Union (EU) and the UK will be beneficial for India. Seventy one per cent of respondents further agreed that FTAs help supplement India's quest for self-reliance and strengthen multilateral organisations. Nearly 72 per cent of respondents also agreed that G7's de-risking strategy will be beneficial to India when compared to their decoupling strategy.

The year 2023 has been crucial for India. The country has exceptionally managed its G20 presidency, navigated new strategic challenges, and positioned itself as a major player in the new world order. With a population that is significantly young, it is important to understand how youth look and

Role of prosumers in renewable energy adoption in India

Draft amendments to the Electricity Act 2003 (EA 2003) in the Electricity Amendment Bill 2014 (EA2014) suggested, among other things, the separation of carriage and content, with the goal of increasing consumer choice in electricity procurement and promotion of renewable energy (RE) based electricity consumption. The separation of carriage and content meant separating the distribution and supply function that was expected to promote competition in electricity retail. RE-based electricity promotion in EA 2014 included a number of incentives at the supply end, along with complementary provisions at the demand end. Under EA 2014, RE-based electricity generation and supply would not require a licence, and cross-subsidy for open access would be eliminated.

Although EA 2014 is yet to become law, the provisions of EA 2003 that were prerequisites for introducing competition at the retail end have not yielded the expected results. Open access is faltering because of high cross-subsidies and a lack of infrastructure. The parallel distribution licensee model has also failed to pick up, as it requires distribution companies to distribute power “through their own distribution system within the same area.” This means duplication of capital-intensive infrastructure leading to higher costs. The distribution licensee model adopted in Mumbai stands as testimony to this outcome.

The parallel distribution licensee model has also failed to pick up, as it requires distribution companies to distribute power “through their own distribution system within the same area.”

In this context, distributed production and consumption of RE by households and industries, primarily using solar photovoltaic (PV) systems, is projected as a potential driver of RE generation and consumption. In 2023, the cumulative capacity of roof top solar PV installation capacity was 10 GW (gigawatts) which was about 7.5 percent of total installed capacity of RE and 13.8 percent of the total solar installed capacity in November 2023. In India, over 75 percent of rooftop installations are by commercial and industrial entities. Those with solar rooftop installations are both producers and consumers of RE and can drive RE adoption with the support of the right infrastructure and financial incentives provided by distribution companies (discoms). However, caution is recommended as this option may impose costs on the economically challenged households in India.

Incentives for Prosumers

Prosumers are end-use consumers of electricity who also produce their own electricity at the point of consumption to meet their own electricity needs and export

surplus electricity to the grid. Increasing the number of prosumers could boost RE consumption and also substantially reduce transmission and other system losses. These potential benefits are particularly important at the city level, where a large share of electricity is consumed, and where consumption is set to rise with rapid rates of urbanization. The major policies that enable the development of prosumers are capital subsidies for installation of solar PV systems, net-metering and feed-in tariffs (FiTs).

Capital subsidies allow middle-class households and small commercial and industrial entities to adopt solar roof-top systems. Net-metering which is the most lucrative billing system for prosumers, allows customers (residential, commercial and industrial) who generate their own electricity from solar power to feed electricity they do not utilise into the grid. Under net metering, the value of electricity the prosumer feeds into the grid is the same as the value of electricity the prosumer imports from the grid. The bill

metering could overvalue the prosumer's electricity supply, but from a climate action perspective, this valuation may be justified on the grounds that it promotes the decarbonisation of the electricity grid.

Challenges

There are many barriers to the expansion of solar PV prosumerism in India, including high initial costs, insufficient support mechanisms and legal frameworks, resistance by incumbent discoms to provide support, inadequate levels of training and skill of technology providers, poor information, and a host of administrative or financial barriers. Subsidies for the production and use of solar PV can overcome these barriers, but there are limits to subsidising RE adoption, as the case of Spain shows. In the late 2000s, Spain implemented generous support for RE adoption. Under this support mechanism, the prosumer was able to choose between selling electricity generated with solar PV under a FiT mechanism or selling it in the free market that offered market price plus a feed-in premium.

This increased solar roof top adoption substantially. However, in 2012, this support scheme was suspended as payment to prosumers exceeded expectations. In 2016 and 2017, the government called for technology agnostic RE auctions. Wind power won as it

sought no additional premium apart from the market price. In 2015, Spain imposed a “sun tax,” under which systems up to 100 kilowatt (kW) were not allowed to sell surplus electricity to the grid, and systems above 100 kW required registration to sell to the spot market.

Subsidies for the production and use of solar PV can overcome these barriers, but there are limits to subsidising RE adoption, as the case of Spain shows.

The speed and degree of prosumer growth may be influenced by several economic and non-economic factors. In India, the growth of prosumerism could be motivated purely by the economic self-interests of end-users to reduce their costs of energy and constrained only by defined limits to the logistic growth of technological expansion. Affluent urban households that imitate the lifestyle and ideologies of the West could initiate grassroots movements motivated by

increasing urgency for climate action, facilitating neo-communal prosumerism. Other drivers for export-oriented services and industries to become prosumers could include compulsion to turn green to navigate trade barriers imposed by developed countries.

The increase in the number of prosumers in the electricity system brings a host of challenges to discoms, the most significant is loss of revenue while maintaining investment in grid security and stability. The impact of growing number of prosumers on reliability and resilience raise concerns. This means additional investment in monitoring, forecasting, aggregation, automation, and control. This is a challenge for financially challenged discoms.

A recent paper reviews the idea of a “death spiral” for discoms, where electricity consumers self-sort to become prosumers, thereby leaving consumers who are financially unable to convert to prosumers bear increasing energy costs pushing more consumers to become prosumers, which drives the price up further. In India, the poor without proper homes with roofs, home renters with no access to space for PV systems, and those who cannot afford PV systems would have to bear the cost of prosumerism. The irony to note here is that consumers who cannot afford to become prosumers pay prosumers to sustain the attraction of prosumerism. Another study on the Spanish case found that most prosumers will not disconnect from the grid, even when they have installed back-up systems and are able to meet their consumption needs comfortably when the incentive system for selling green electricity to the grid are attractive. Prosumersim is in a nascent stage in India. This provides an opportunity for India to weigh the costs and benefits of prosumerism and adopt a model that is relevant for Indian social and economic conditions. Given that residential PV generation is much more expensive than utility-scale PV generation, the subsidy cost per kWh (kilowatt hour) of residential PV generation is substantially higher than the per-kWh subsidy cost of utility-scale PV generation. There is no compensating difference in benefits and thus there is simply no good reason to continue to provide more generous subsidies for residential-scale PV generation than for utility-scale PV generation. Policies for supporting RE generation and consumption need not offer higher subsidies for rooftop residential PV systems than utility-scale PV generation. What is required is a system for recovering distribution costs of discoms that reflects network users' particularly prosumers' impacts on those costs.



Rakul Preet Singh, Jackky Bhagnani nuptials kick off with sundowner haldi near Goa's Arossim beach



Rakul Preet Singh, Jackky Bhagnani nuptials kick off with sundowner haldi near Goa's Arossim beach

Bollywood star couple

Rakul Preet Singh and Jackky Bhagnani's wedding festivities have begun with their Haldi ceremony in Goa.

According to a source close

to IANS, the couple, who are all set to tie the knot on February 21, are having their Haldi ceremony in the luxurious ITC Grand Goa, near Arossim Beach.

The couple are having a sundowner Haldi, which will be attended by their closest friends and families.

A picture from the wedding festivities are doing the rounds, where a coconut featuring their initials "R" and "J" can be seen. For the ultimate day, the couple will be having "gluten free, sugar free and healthy treats" along with other cuisines, keeping fitness in mind.

They chose Goa as the venue as the two had reportedly fallen in love in the same location. After dating for a few years, Rakul and Jackky will be having an eco-friendly wedding and will be resuming work right after getting married.

Asif Kapadia to make feature-length documentary on final 12 days of Federer on court



British filmmaker of Indian origin Asif Kapadia has been greenlit by Amazon Prime Video to do a feature-length documentary chronicling the final 12 days of tennis legend Roger Federer's professional career. The as-yet-untitled documentary was originally planned as a home video never intended for public viewing.

Featuring interviews from Federer's rivals and friends, notably Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray, the documentary captures Federer at his most vulnerable and candid self, "as he says goodbye to a game and the fans that shaped his life for the last two decades," a Prime Video press statement said.

Kapadia, an Oscar and BAFTA winner for his celebrated Amy Winehouse documentary Amy (2015), has won BAFTAs for his biographical documentaries on car racing champion Ayrton Senna (Senna; 2010) and the Argentine football legend Diego Maradona (2019).

His debut film, The Warrior (2001), featured Irrfan Khan playing a warrior in feudal Rajasthan who serves a ruthless tyrant and attempts to give up the sword.

'Banegi Apni Baat' actor Rituraj Singh dies of cardiac arrest

TV actor Rituraj Singh passed away in the wee hours of Tuesday. He was 59. The actor was discharged from hospital after he was admitted following a stomach infection, but his health deteriorated on Monday night and he suffered a heart attack.

Actor Amit Behl said, "Rituraj was admitted to the hospital and was discharged. Last night, at 12.30 am, he got a cardiac arrest."

"He was admitted to the hospital for a stomach infection," the actor said. Asked about the cremation, Amit said he had no details about this. Meanwhile, actor Arshad Warsi expressed grief over the death. In a post on X, Arshad wrote, 'I am so saddened to know that Ritu Raj passed away. We lived in the same building, he was a part of my first film as a



producer. Lost a friend and a great actor... will miss you brother....'

With a career spanning over three decades, Rituraj was known for his work in shows like 'Banegi Apni Baat', 'Tehkikaat', 'Kutumb', 'Jyoti', 'Beintehaa' and 'Anupamaa'.

He also featured in the movie 'Yaariyan 2' in 2023 and web series 'Made in Heaven' in 2022.

Riteish Deshmukh to direct, act in film on Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj

Actor-director Riteish Deshmukh on Monday announced his next directorial venture titled 'Raja Shivaji', based on the life of Maratha empire founder Shivaji.

The Marathi-Hindi bilingual is set to bring to life the journey of a young Shivaji, who rebelled against the mighty powers and went on to become the revered Raja Shivaji, according to a press release issued by the makers.

The 45-year-old will also play the titular role of Maharashtra's greatest warrior, he said, adding that it was his dream to make a film on Shivaji.

"Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is not a mere historical figure; he is an emotion, a timeless saga of valour, and a beacon of hope that has illuminated hearts for over three and a half centuries. A rebel whose courage knew no bounds, he didn't just rule land, he conquered hearts, earning the endearing title of 'Raja Shivaji'," Deshmukh, said in a statement.

On the eve of Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj jayanti on Sunday, the actor also unveiled the poster of 'Raja Shivaji'.

The historical action drama is produced by Jio Studios and Deshmukh's home production banner Mumbai Film Company.

Deshmukh's actor wife Genelia, who serves as a producer, said bringing the life story of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj has been their "biggest dream".

"We embark on a noble quest, not merely to produce a film, but to weave a narrative thread



that enriches the tapestry of our culture and history. 'Raja Shivaji' is our biggest dream and we couldn't have found a better partner than Jyoti Deshpande and Jio Studios. It's not only a huge honour but immense responsibility, and we seek your good wishes as we pursue our calling," Genelia said.

RIL's President of Media and Entertainment Jyoti Deshpande said they are proud to associate with Riteish and Genelia in bringing the story of 'Raja Shivaji'.

"Raja Shivaji embodies this vision, it's not just a regional tale, it's a culturally rooted narrative designed to transcend languages and regions," Deshpande said.

The cinematography is by Santosh Sivan and noted music composer duo Ajay and Atul will score the music for the movie.

According to the makers, the filming of 'Raja Shivaji' will begin this year.

Oppenheimer wins seven prizes; Poor Things takes home five

Atom bomb epic Oppenheimer won seven prizes, including best picture, director and actor, at the 77th British Academy Film Awards on Sunday, cementing its front-runner status for the Oscars next month. Poor Things took five prizes and Holocaust drama The Zone of Interest won three.

Christopher Nolan won his first Best Director BAFTA for Oppenheimer, and Cillian Murphy won the Best Actor prize for playing physicist J Robert Oppenheimer, the father of the atomic bomb.

Murphy said he was grateful to play such a “colossally knotty, complex character.” Emma Stone was named Best Actress for playing the wild and spirited Bella Baxter in Poor Things, a steampunk-style visual extravaganza that won prizes for visual effects, production design, costume design, and makeup and hair.

Oppenheimer also won trophies for editing, cinematography and musical score, as well as the Best Supporting Actor prize for Robert Downey Jr

Da’Vine Joy Randolph was named best supporting actress for playing a boarding school cook in The Holdovers.

The Zone of Interest — a British-produced film shot in Poland with a largely German cast — was named both best British film and best film not in English — a first — and also took the prize for its sound, which has been described as the real star of the film.

Ukraine war documentary 20 Days in Mariupol, produced by The Associated



Press and PBS Frontline, won the prize for best documentary.

The awards ceremony, hosted by Doctor Who star David Tennant — who entered wearing a kilt and sequined top while carrying a dog named Bark Ruffalo — was a glitzy, British-accented appetizer for Hollywood’s Academy Awards, closely watched for hints about who might win at the Oscars on March 10.

The prize for original screenplay went to French courtroom drama Anatomy of a Fall. Cord Jefferson won the adapted screenplay prize for the satirical American Fiction. The historical epic Killers of



the Flower Moon had nine nominations for the awards, officially called the EE BAFTA Film Awards, but went home empty-handed.

There also was disappointment for Leonard Bernstein’s biopic Maestro, which had seven nominations but won no awards. Neither did the grief-flecked love story All of Us Strangers with six nominations, and barbed class-war dramedy Saltburn, with five.

Barbie, one-half of 2023’s ‘Barbenheimer’ box office juggernaut and the year’s top-grossing film, also went home empty-handed from five



nominations. Barbie director Greta Gerwig failed to get a directing nomination for either the BAFTAs or the Oscars, in what was seen by many as a major snub.

The Rising Star award, the only category decided by public vote, went to Mia McKenna-Bruce, star of How to Have Sex.

I was grateful but being famous was horrible: Kate Winslet on ‘Titanic’

Kate Winslet became an overnight star with “Titanic” in 1997 but the actor still cannot shake off the scrutiny that she faced in her twenties.

In an interview with Net-A-Porter, the 48-year-old actor recalled the constant media attention that came with the success of the James Cameron-directed film which featured her alongside Leonardo DiCaprio. The film won 11 Oscars.

“I felt like I had to look a certain way, or be a certain thing, and because media intrusion was so significant at that time, my life was quite unpleasant,” Winslet said.



“Journalists would always say, “After ‘Titanic’, you could have done anything and yet you chose to do these small things.” And I was like, “Yeah, you bet your f***ing life I did! Because, guess what, being famous was horrible.”

I was grateful, of course. I was in my early twenties, and I was able to get a flat. But I did not want to be followed literally feeding the ducks,” the actor said.

Winslet, who went on to build a successful career and won the best actress Oscar for her role in “The Reader”, said she has become accustomed to her fame over the years.

“I wear it really lightly. It is not a burden, any of it. ‘Titanic’ continues to bring people huge amounts of joy. The only time I am like, ‘Oh god, hide’, is if we are on a boat somewhere,” the actor said.

Varun Dhawan, Natasha Dalal expecting their first child

After three years of marriage, Varun Dhawan and Natasha Dalal are all set to embrace parenthood.

On Sunday, Varun took to Instagram and shared the good news with their fans and followers.



The image captured Varun planting a kiss on Natasha’s baby bump and at the back their pet dog Joey posing for a camera.

Sharing the picture, he wrote, “We are pregnant, Need all your blessings and love #myfamilymystrenght.” As soon as this exciting news was shared, fans and industry members flooded the comment section.

Varun tied the knot with his longtime girlfriend Natasha on January 24 in 2021. The wedding

was a close-knit affair with very few guests in attendance due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Varun and Natasha, a fashion designer, have known each other since sixth grade. However, the duo fell head-over-heels in love with each other after a couple of years.

Meanwhile, on the work front, Varun Dhawan will be seen in upcoming action thriller film Baby John.

'Yashasvi Jaiswal learnt from his upbringing, not from you': Nasser Hussain slams England opener for bizarre comment

Rajkot

Former England skipper Nasser Hussain has responded emphatically to Ben Duckett's comments on India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal's aggressive batting.

Duckett asserted that Jaiswal played an aggressive style of cricket as a result of England's much-discussed 'Bazball' approach in the game's purest form.

Jaiswal's attacking approach has yielded runs in tons for him across the three Tests played so far in the five-match series between India and England.

However, Duckett remarked that England deserve "some credit" for the way Jaiswal has adopted an attacking brand of cricket in Tests. The 29-year-old England batter has faced plenty of backlash for the comment.

Speaking about Jaiswal's effort after the third day's play, Duckett stated, "When you see players from the opposition playing like that, it almost feels like we should take some credit that they're playing differently than how other people play Test cricket."

The opening batsman's opinion did not sit well with ex-England captain Hussain, who chastised Duckett for his statements and urged England



players to "self-reflect" when it comes to supporting 'Bazball'.

"He's not learnt from you. He's learnt from his upbringing, all the hard yards he had to put in growing up. If anything, lads, look at him and learn from him. I hope there's a little bit of self-introspection going on. Otherwise it becomes a cult - and, at times, Bazball and this regime has been described as such, where you cannot criticise within or externally," Hussain told Sky Sports.

Jaiswal has scored the most runs in the series so far, with 545 in six innings at an average of 109. The left-hander scored double-centuries in consecutive Tests and finished unbeaten on 214 in Rajkot.

Hussain said that England's optimism is admirable, but he bemoaned a lack of realism considering their lofty aspirations. "When you're living in an environment in a bubble that has got so much good messaging and positive vibes, you go into a press conference and you're never going to step back and go, 'they may have got too many and we're just going to play for a draw'.

I enjoy their positivity but there has to be a little bit of realism in there as well. Obviously, chasing 600 in India batting last is not a particularly good option to look," he added.

With a 2-1 lead in the five-match Test series, India will face England in the fourth game in Ranchi from Friday.

8-year-old Indian-origin boy from Singapore beats Polish grandmaster, breaks record

Singapore

An eight-year-old Indian-origin boy defeated Polish chess grandmaster (GM) Jacek Stopa at the Burgdorfer Stadthaus Open in Switzerland on Sunday, becoming the youngest player to defeat a GM in classical chess.

Ashwath Kaushik, who represented Singapore, defeated Stopa, who at 37 is nearly five times older than him, according to a Channel News Asia report.

The previous record was set only a few weeks earlier when Serbia's Leonid Ivanovic, who is several months older than Ashwath, beat 60-year-old Bulgarian grandmaster Milko Popchev at the Belgrade Open.

Currently ranked World No. 37,338 on FIDE, the international chess federation, the Indian citizen, who moved to Singapore in 2017, said, "I felt proud of my game and how I played, especially since I was worse at one point but managed to come back from that".

Singaporean grandmaster and CEO of the Singapore Chess Federation Kevin Goh lauded Ashwath's feat on X, saying, "Dad is super supportive, boy is dedicated, school allows flexibility and of course he has natural talent."

"Remains to be seen how far

he can go as interests can change as the boy gets older. Still, we are hopeful."

Goh also joked that as he is only eight years old, Ashwath still "needs a booster cushion to reach the other side of the board".

He also attributed Ashwath's success to the "many other coaches and supporters" on his journey. Goh also hopes that Ashwath's success can inspire



more children to pursue chess at a competitive level.

"I think his achievement shows that with the right amount of talent and support, a young player has every chance of achieving success in chess," Goh said.

Ashwath made waves in 2022 after emerging as a triple champion in the chess variations — classic, rapid and blitz — at the under-8 Eastern Asia Youth Championship.

Sriram Kaushik said in a post on X that his son's upset win over Stopa was "one of the proudest moments of my life".

After outburst, Indian women's hockey team chief coach Janneke Schopman's days numbered?

New Delhi

Indian women's hockey team chief coach Janneke Schopman's days are numbered as she is unlikely to get an extension after her contract expires in July for failing to produce results, including the side's failure to qualify for the Paris Olympics.

Schopman, who was the analytical coach at the Tokyo Olympics, took over the reins after Sjoerd Marijne's departure just after the quadrennial event.

"Her contract ends in July-August (till the Olympics). Let us see what happens, I can't tell anything at this point of time," a Hockey India source said.

It is, however, learnt that Schopman is unlikely to get an extension. Under Schopman, India won bronze at the 2022 Commonwealth Games and last year's Asian Games.

Schopman's relationship with HI secretary general



Bholanath Singh soured after the team failed to qualify for the Paris Games. It became worse after her outburst in the media following India's last FIH Pro League game at

home against USA. Schopman claimed that she didn't get the respect from some quarters of the national federation.

Schopman, an Olympics gold medallist, also claimed that she felt "alone a lot in the last two years", and was critical of the differential treatment meted out to the women's team compared to the men's side.

Hockey India, however, completely denied the allegations, stating that she was provided everything that she wanted. "I don't know why she is saying these things. There is no discrimination in Hockey India. We treat both the men's and women's teams equally," the HI source said. "Neither Hockey India nor the Sports Authority of India has treated her badly. We have always given due respect and recognition to her."

Schopman's next assignment is the European leg of the Pro League in May.

End of an Era: Five domestic stalwarts bring curtains to illustrious Ranji careers

New Delhi

The ongoing Ranji Trophy season marks the end of an era in domestic cricket with five heavyweights bidding adieu to the game, leaving a huge void to fill.

Bengal legend Manoj Tiwary, Jharkhand duo of big-hitting Saurabh Tiwary and express pacer Varun Aaron, Mumbai stalwart Dhawal Kulkarni and Vidarbha's Ranji Trophy-winning captain Faiz Fazal have decided to bring curtains to their illustrious domestic careers.

The reasons for their retirement are varied, ranging from not having anything to play for (IPL contract or national call-up), to embarking on new adventures or focussing on politics.

For Aaron, Manoj and Faiz life came a full circle as they said goodbye at the same venue they began their domestic journeys. But needless to say, domestic cricket will be poorer without the quintet turning out.

One of the doyens of domestic cricket, Bengal's Manoj Tiwary said goodbye to his "beloved 22 yards" after leading his state to a comprehensive win over Bihar



on Monday.

Tiwary served his state for over 19 years, the 38-year-old had taken Bengal to the finals of the Ranji Trophy last season.

An aggressive batter, he has over 10,000 first class run in his kitty. As a captain, he always led from the front, helping Bengal become a force to reckon with.

The absence of the supremely experienced duo Aaron and swashbuckling Saurabh Tiwary will be a big void Jharkhand will have to fill.

Tiwary, a left handed middle order batter, made his first-class debut while he was still a teenager in the 2006-07 Ranji

Trophy season. Over the last 17 years, the Jharkhand captain became a prolific run-getter in domestic cricket, playing 115 first-class matches amassing 8030 runs in 189 innings at an average of 47.51 including 22 hundreds and 34 fifties.

"I think, if you are unable to make in the national team or IPL, it is best time to leave space for talented youngsters," Tiwary said while announcing his retirement last week.

One of the country's fastest bowlers, Aaron has been unable to realise his potential due to persistent injuries that included a series of stress fractures in the

back and the legs.

But the pacer, who grabbed everyone's attention with the 153kmph delivery in the 2010-11 Vijay Hazare Trophy final, still managed to snare 173 first class wickets in the 66 games he played at an average of 33.27.

"This might be my last game in front of my family and the people of Jamshedpur, because we don't often play white-ball games here (Keenan Stadium).

"I had started my career here, so this is quite emotional for me," Aaron, who wrapped his red-ball career with a match haul of five wickets, was quoted as saying by ESPNCricinfo.

Fazal hangs his boots after 21 years' service to Vidarbha, having contributed immensely to their legacy. The elegant opener famously led them to their maiden Ranji Trophy title in 2018. He was the side's leading run getter that season.

Fazal began his first-class career with a bang, scoring 151 on debut in Plate Group match against Jammu and Kashmir in December 2003. Since then the southpaw has been ever-present at the top of the Vidharbha batting order thanks to his impeccable

technique.

He collected 9183 runs in first class cricket, 3641 runs in List A games and 1273 in T20s and retires as Vidarbha's leading run-getter in both List A cricket and first-class cricket.

The 38-year-old also played one ODI for India in 2016, against Zimbabwe, scoring an unbeaten 55 but never got selected for the national team again.

Known for his swing, movement and accuracy with the new ball, Mumbai's Kulkarni quickly established himself as one of the most reliable seam bowlers in domestic cricket.

A big-match player, Kulkarni eked out several outstanding performances in his 17-year domestic career including five-fors in three Ranji Trophy finals.

So important is Kulkarni's experience in the team that the Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) requested the medium pacer to put off his retirement until the end of the season.

The 35-year-old played 95 First-Class matches and has taken 281 wickets at an average of 27.31.

How Sarfaraz mastered spin: 500 balls per day in nets and a 1,600-km car journey

New Delhi

Sarfaraz Khan's dominating performance against England's spinners in just his debut Test was no fluke. It was the culmination of over 15 years of hard work that involved playing 500 deliveries everyday under the watchful eyes of his zealous father Naushad Khan.

With two confident half centuries in his debut Test in Rajkot, Sarfaraz has shown that he is here to stay in the Indian team. The 26-year-old got his Test cap after years of toiling in the domestic circuit and also honing his skills at his father's 'Macho Cricket Club'.

The hard work and systematic planning of the past few years, especially during the two COVID-19 lockdowns, paid off against the likes of Tom Hartley, Joe Root and Rehan Ahmed in Rajkot.

"It has taken playing 500 deliveries per day from off, leg and left-arm spinners across Oval, Cross and Azad Maidans in



Mumbai," said a coach who has seen the Mumbai's growth from close quarters.

"...during (COVID) lockdown, he undertook a car journey covering 1600km. From Mumbai to Amroha, Moradabad, Meerut, Kanpur, Mathura and Dehradun, he travelled and played on proverbial 'akhadas' where the ball turns square

with one shooting up and few staying down," he added.

The Sarfaraz that was manoeuvring the spinners with ease, honed his skills the tough way. The credit for the final product lies not just with Naushad though.

Coaches of Bhuvneshwar Kumar

(Sanjay Rastogi), Mohammed Shami (Badrudin Sheikh), Kuldeep Yadav (Kapil Deo Pandey), Gautam Gambhir (Sanjay Bhardwaj) and father of India A captain Abhimanyu Easwaran (RP Easwaran) have also contributed in their little way to make Sarfaraz a finished product.

They all arranged for Sarfaraz's net sessions against spinners, especially during the COVID lockdown.

"During lockdown, Naushad called me as we are both from Azamgarh and we played club cricket in Mumbai when I was employed with the Indian Navy. So, when he wanted his son to get practice, I felt it's my duty," Kapil Pandey told PTI.

"During lockdown, Sarfaraz played Kuldeep a lot at our Kanpur Academy. They did lot of net sessions together. I would arrange T20 matches as that season, Mushtaq Ali T20 was main tournament," he said.

अक्रॉस स्टेट एंटरटेनमेंट प्रस्तुत

निर्माते
संजय मंगेश भैरे
सुचिता संजय भैरे

शिवगिरी

सोहम

दिग्दर्शक पुंडलिक यशोदा लक्ष्मण धुमाळ
 छायांकन करण तांदळे संकलन विजय पांडुरंग खोचीकर क्लिपटव्ह निर्माता मांतेस जमादार
 संगीत आणि पार्श्वसंगीत रवींद्र खरात नीत विपीन जाधव सहदिग्दर्शक शंकर धुलगुडे
 नायक सुरेश वाडकर, अनुसाधा पौडवाल, ज्ञानेश्वर मेश्राम, सायली कांबळे, सुहास सावंत रंगभूषा माधव म्हापणकर, मयुरी चव्हाण
 डी. आय. कलरिस्ट हितेंद्र परच घनिअरेखन केविन गाला कास्टिंग डायरेक्टर वैभव वाघ
 व्हिज्युअल प्रमोशन अरीयमर्मेयक क्रिएटर्स जाहिरात रचना मिलिंद मटकर पोस्ट प्रोडक्शन डिजिटल स्टुडिओ मुंबई

लवकरच सिनेमागृहात