

# Across State

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## 'One nation, one election' cleared by Modi cabinet

New Delhi

The union cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday approved the Ram Nath Kovind committee recommendations to holding simultaneous elections in the country through the use of common electoral rolls.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced the cabinet decision and said the agenda of simultaneous elections was passed unanimously and all BJP allies were on board. The minister said the cabinet accepted the panel's suggestions to roll out the plan in two phases.

"In the first phase, simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies will be held. In the second phase, all local body elections will be held within 100 days of the conclusion of the national election so that for the next five years, everyone can work to further the mission of national development," Vaishnaw said.

The government said the "One nation, one election" idea would be implemented through consensus and an implementation committee would be constituted to finalise the rollout plan, which would require legal processes and constitutional requirements to be met.

The Tribune reported on



Tuesday that the government had decided to implement the "One nation, one election" plan in the current tenure of the NDA government.



Vaishnaw, however, did not put a date to the rollout plan but said once consensus was achieved and legal requirements met, the plan would be implemented.

Home Minister Amit Shah had yesterday said the plan would be implemented in this very tenure of the Modi government.

Vaishnaw said the Kovind panel received widespread

support for the simultaneous election plan during its meetings and a large number of political parties also backed the idea, which was mooted much before the 2024 General Election.

Vaishnaw said the simultaneous elections would have a good positive economic impact, strengthen democracy, remove impediments to growth and enhance national progress.

"We call upon everyone to engage in detailed discussions on the plan," Vaishnaw said, adding that the discussions would be held nationally.

The idea received a boost when the parliament committee on law and justice backed it in 2021. "Our country remains in election mode throughout the year. We are of the view that the idea of "One nation, one election" is not new to our country as the first three elections (1952,

1957 and 1962) were held simultaneously," said the panel, giving the government a reason to move forward with the agenda.

Conducting simultaneous elections would entail amendment to the Constitution to have fixed terms for local bodies, legislative Assemblies and the Lok Sabha. Amendments would also be required for common electoral rolls. The government then established a committee under former President Ram Nath Kovind to examine the issue and the panel submitted its 18,626-page report to President Droupadi Murmu in March this year.

As many as 47 political parties sent their suggestions to the Kovind committee, with 32, mainly BJP and allies, supporting the concept and 15 opposing it.

Of the 32 supporters, 26 are part of the ruling NDA coalition. Among the 15 parties that resisted the idea, 10 are from the opposition INDIA bloc led by the Congress.

### Inside...

**Three generations of Nehru-Gandhi family opposed reservation, alleges Bawankule**

[Read Story On page 2](#)

**Maharashtra polls likely in 2nd week of November: CM Shinde**

[Read Story On page 3](#)

**Kejriwal tenders resignation as Delhi CM, Atishi stakes claim to form govt**

[Read Story On page 4](#)

**Women empowerment key to Odisha's development: PM Modi**

[Read Story On page 5](#)

## Three generations of Nehru-Gandhi family opposed reservation, alleges Bawankule

### MUMBAI

Maharashtra BJP chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule on Wednesday accused leaders from "three generations" of the Nehru-Gandhi family, including former prime ministers Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajiv Gandhi, of opposing reservation.

He also said that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi should refrain from giving "anti-India statements", and asked him to clarify his stand on the issue of reservation.

Addressing a press conference here, Bawankule said he does not support the statements made by his party's Rajya Sabha member Anil Bonde and Shiv Sena MLA Sanjay Gaikwad against Rahul Gandhi.

Gaikwad kicked up a row by announcing a Rs 11 lakh reward to anyone chopping off Rahul Gandhi's tongue for his remarks on scrapping the

reservation system, while Bonde said the Congress leader's tongue should be singed.

Speaking about these remarks, Bawankule said, "I do not support the statements made by Shiv Sena MLA Sanjay Gaikwad and BJP's Rajya Sabha member Anil Bonde. They should refrain from making such statements again." "But Rahul Gandhi should also talk carefully and not give anti-India statements. They have this habit, which we have been seeing for three generations. Jawaharlal Nehru had opposed reservation given by Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar to SC/ST communities, saying it is an obstacle in the path of development. Similarly, Rajiv Gandhi had also opposed reservation saying that the brainless need reservation," he said.

Now, a member from

their third generation – Rahul Gandhi- goes to America and says that they will remove reservation, he added.

Bawankule asked Gandhi to clarify his stand on reservation before visiting Maharashtra.

When asked about the BJP's strategy for the upcoming state assembly polls, he said, "We are reaching out to people with the agenda of a double-engine government as the Centre and the state will work for the welfare and development of the 14 crore people of Maharashtra and develop it." The BJP leader accused the opposition of confusing the tribals, and said his party was trying to bring the community into the mainstream.

"Our government has launched many welfare schemes in tribal areas, which they did not get during the Congress rule," he said.

## KEM Hospital to add 300 more beds by Sept end



### Mumbai

KEM Hospital in Mumbai is set to add 300 more beds by the end of September, boosting its total capacity to over 2,500 beds.

Currently, the hospital operates with 2,250 scheduled beds.

In 2023, it admitted 64,520 patients, averaging 177 admissions per day. Its outpatient department saw 17,92,183 visits last year, encompassing both new and returning patients.

"The expansion of KEM Hospital is not just

a response to current pressures but a proactive measure to strengthen its role as a vital healthcare provider in Mumbai," said Dr. Sangeeta Rawat, dean of the hospital.

The expansion comes at a critical time, following significant challenges last year. Four medicine wards and two general surgery wards were closed due to severe disrepair, forcing patients to be treated in makeshift wards at Shivdi TB Hospital.

This necessary but temporary solution strained the hospital's

resources and staff.

Ongoing renovations, which have been in progress for over 14 months, have successfully restored wards 4, 7, and 11, with patient care resuming in these areas.

Repairs on wards 4A, 8, and 12 are nearing completion, with substantial progress made despite the complexities of renovating the hospital's heritage structure.

The addition of 300 beds will significantly enhance KEM Hospital's ability to meet the needs of its large patient base.

Each newly renovated ward will accommodate 90 to 100 patients, compared to the previous capacity of 60 to 75, reducing the hospital's dependence on temporary facilities and improving overall patient care.

## Athawale blames Ajit Pawar for RPI (A) not getting place in Maharashtra cabinet

### Mumbai

Union minister Ramdas Athawale has claimed that due to the inclusion of the Ajit Pawar-led NCP in the Mahayuti government, his party RPI (A) did not get any ministerial berth in the state despite a promise.

He also expressed confidence that the ruling Mahayuti will secure 150 to 160 seats in the upcoming elections to the 288-member state assembly.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment was talking to reporters at Dahanu in the district on Tuesday.

"RPI (A) did not get any ministerial position in the Maharashtra cabinet after Ajit Pawar joined the Mahayuti government. Our party had been promised cabinet positions, chairmanship of two corporations, and roles in district-level committees. But all this could not happen due to Pawar's inclusion," Athawale said.

"For the upcoming Maharashtra elections, the RPI (A) should be given 12 seats to contest. We should also be given representation in the state cabinet," he said.

Ajit Pawar-led NCP joined the Eknath Shinde-led government in the state in July last year.

The RPI (A) is part of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) alliance led by the BJP.

On Maratha reservation, Athawale said his party was the first to raise the issue.

Marathas should be provided reservation under a separate category as including them under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) tag would invite opposition from that group, he said. "The Maharashtra government should study Tamil Nadu's reservation system and Marathas from the economically weaker sections earning less than Rs 8 lakh every year be given reservation," he said.

Athawale extended his support to the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

Highlighting the achievements of his ministry, he said the initiatives undertaken by it benefit 45 per cent of India's population.

The ministry has launched a nationwide de-addiction campaign aimed at combating substance abuse among the youth, he said.

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# Maharashtra polls likely in 2nd week of November: CM Shinde

## Mumbai

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Sunday said the state assembly polls are expected to be held in the second week of November and seat-sharing among the ruling allies would be finalised in the next 8 to 10 days.

A two-phase poll would be preferable for the 288-member state assembly, Shinde said in an informal chat with mediapersons at his official residence 'Varsha' in Mumbai.

The Mahayuti government, comprising the Shiv Sena led by Shinde, BJP and the Ajit Pawar-headed NCP, was focusing on development and welfare measures and was getting good response from people, he said.

"Elections are likely in the second week of November. A two-phase election would be preferable. Merit and good strike rate will be the criteria for seat-sharing among the Mahayuti allies," the CM said. The



seat-sharing will be finalised in 8 to 10 days, he added.

Shinde said he can see support for the government among women and asserted his was a government of the common man. "We have struck a balance between

development and welfare schemes," he said.

The appointment letters have been given to 1.5 lakh youth for jobs under the skilled training programme for which they will get a stipend from Rs 6,000 to

Rs 10,000. The target is to cover 10 lakh youth, the CM said.

Shinde said 1.6 crore women have so far got financial assistance under the government's Ladki Bahin scheme.

"We plan to reach out to 2.5 crore women," he said.

At present, women beneficiaries of the government's flagship 'Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana' get Rs 1,500 per month.

Shinde also said his government aims to make Mumbai slum-free and ensure affordable housing for all.

All government agencies, like the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA), the City and Industrial Development Corporation of Maharashtra (CIDCO) and the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA), have been roped-in for the redevelopment of slums, he added.

## Never aspired to become a chief minister: Uddhav Thackeray



## Mumbai

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday said that he never had an aspiration to become the chief minister of Maharashtra, and added that he will never retire from the politics until the people of the state are with him.

Uddhav's remark came amid opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA)'s decision to not declare the chief ministerial face for the upcoming Assembly polls.

The Sena UBT chief was addressing a gathering of state government employees protesting for the restoration of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) in Ahmednagar district.

In a veiled attack at Chief

Minister Eknath Shinde, Uddhav said that those who betrayed their parent party which enabled their political rise, can also betray the people.

"For this reason, I don't want this government to come to power again. I have no aspirations to be the chief minister now and even that time as well (November, 2019 when the MVA government came to power after elections)," Uddhav said.

Uddhav was sworn in as the chief minister after the Shiv Sena (undivided) parted ways with its long-time ally BJP and joined hands with the NCP (undivided) and Congress after the Assembly elections in

November 2019.

However, he had to resign in June 2022 after Shinde rebelled along with 40 MLAs and toppled the MVA government with the help of the BJP.

Uddhav further said that he won't retire until people of Maharashtra are with him. "No one can make me retire till you support me," he told the gathering.

"Whether I am in power or not, I feel empowered by the support of the people. Balasaheb (Thackeray) never held a position of power but all powers were wrested with him because of people's support," the Sena UBT chief said.

"The power goes and comes back... this time the power will definitely come and I will definitely take it and give you justice," Uddhav told the gathering adding that the OPS will be restored once the MVA comes to power. Uddhav had been insisting on announcing a chief ministerial face for the MVA. However, NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar had stated that there was no need for the MVA to declare a CM face and the chief ministerial candidate would be decided based on which party wins the maximum number of seats in the alliance.

## Sharad Pawar writes to Eknath Shinde over jobseekers' demands, says not getting CM's time despite attempts

## Mumbai

Highlighting the delay in the conduct of competitive exams and appointments in government jobs in Maharashtra, Nationalist Congress Party (SP) president Sharad Pawar has urged Chief Minister Eknath Shinde to call a

to Shinde on Monday.

Five issues that Pawar highlighted in his letter are not announcing new dates of state service examinations postponed in August 2024 due to a clash with IBPS exam; not announcing Group B and Group C examinations, which are usually conducted in April or May; pending placements of successful candidates from the state service, agri-service and police sub-inspector examinations; judicial proceedings over 7,000 clerk posts; and vacant posts of professors all over the state.



meeting on the issue before the model code of conduct for the Assembly polls kicks in.

"More than 32 lakh students prepare for the competitive exams. The only expectation these students have is to conduct the exams on time and they get the placement in stipulated time frame. However, presently delayed placements, pending advertisements of examinations, delay in announcement of exam dates has led to severe discontent within the students," Pawar wrote

Pawar also wrote that his attempts to discuss the matter with Shinde were unsuccessful.

"I have been trying to seek your time to discuss these rightful demands of students for sometime now but it has not been granted. The subject has become sensitive since despite the call for agitation by students the issue is not getting resolved," Pawar wrote, adding that he hoped the chief minister would spare time to hold a meeting on the issues raised by government job aspirants.



## Amit Shah announces: One nation, one election in BJP's current term

New Delhi

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday confirmed government plans to implement the 'one nation, one election' strategy in this very term of the BJP-led NDA government.

"It will happen in this term itself," said Shah answering a question on whether one nation one election will become a reality anytime soon.

Top government sources had said on Sunday that the plan would be rolled out in this term.

The one nation one election idea got a boost when in March 2021 the parliamentary standing committee on law and justice backed it saying, "Holding simultaneous elections will reduce the burden on exchequer, expenditure of political parties and ensure that human resources are utilised optimally. It will reduce voters' apathy towards frequent elections and rather enthuse them, which will ultimately enhance participation in the electoral process."

The panel added that common electoral rolls were necessary to make simultaneous elections a reality.

Headed by BJP's Bhupender Yadav, the panel argued that elections around the year —



whether for local bodies, state Assemblies or the Lok Sabha — put a strain on the state machinery and created hurdles in governance.

"Our country remains in election mode throughout the year. We are of the view that the idea of 'one nation, one election' is not new to our country as the first three General Elections (1952, 1957 and 1962) were held simultaneously," said the panel.

Holding simultaneous elections would entail amendment to the Constitution to have fixed terms for local bodies, legislative assemblies and the Lok Sabha.

Amendments would also be required for common electoral rolls. "But common rolls will be good for the democratic health of our country as these will lessen the burden on exchequer. Wider consultation with all political parties should be held to reach a consensus," the report said.

The government then set up a committee under former President Ram Nath Kovind to examine the issue. The Kovind panel submitted its 18626 page report to President Droupadi Murmu in March.

Congress-led INDIA bloc opposition resisted the plan in its depositions before the Kovind committee.

## Kejriwal tenders resignation as Delhi CM, Atishi stakes claim to form govt



New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal reached the LG Secretariat on Tuesday afternoon and tendered his resignation to LG V K Saxena.

Kejriwal's arrived at the LG Secretariat along with his Cabinet colleagues.

AAP leader Atishi, who was earlier in the day chosen as Kejriwal's successor at a legislature party meeting, was also accompanying him.

Kejriwal announced on Sunday his decision to resign from the post of chief minister of Delhi.

He said then that he would

only sit on the CM's chair when the people give him a "certificate of honesty".

Atishi was named the new chief minister of Delhi, after the AAP MLAs unanimously agreed on Kejriwal's proposal to name her as his successor in a legislative party meeting.

Atishi is a key face of the party as well as the government and holds multiple portfolios, including finance, education and PWD.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Assembly will be convened on September 26 and 27, the party said.

# Goal is to bring back Arvind Kejriwal as Delhi CM: Atishi

New Delhi

Senior AAP leader and Delhi Minister Atishi thanked Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for showing confidence in her and choosing her as his successor on Tuesday.

"I thank Arvind Kejriwal for showing confidence in me. I don't think this could happen in any other party than AAP," she said.

In the legislative party meeting, while, the AAP MLAs asked Kejriwal to continue as CM; he proposed Atishi's name which was unanimously agreed by all legislators.



Atishi will take oath as the next CM in the coming days, after Kejriwal will tender his resignation to Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena.

"I come from a very simple family. If I would have been in any other party, I wouldn't have even got a poll ticket. However, Arvind Kejriwal trusted me, made me an MLA, minister and today gave me a responsibility to become the CM," said Atishi.

"It is a sad day because my elder brother Arvind Kejriwal will resign from

the CM's post," she added.

The Delhi Minister said that Kejriwal's resignation from CM post is unparalleled in the history of the country's democracy.

Atishi said she will work under Kejriwal's guidance, and protect the people of Delhi. "I will work for the next few months towards the goal of bringing back Kejriwal as Delhi chief minister," said the AAP leader.

"Delhi has only one CM and his name is Arvind Kejriwal," she added.



# Women empowerment key to Odisha's development: PM Modi

## Bhubaneswar

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said women empowerment is key to development of Odisha, asserting that the third NDA government at the Centre, in its first 100 days, has taken a slew of steps for their welfare.

Addressing a rally in Bhubaneswar, he said the promises made by the BJP before the election this year were being fulfilled at a "rapid pace".

"In the first 100 days of the third NDA government,



major steps were taken for upliftment of the poor, farmers and youth along with the empowerment of women.

"Women's empowerment is key to Odisha's development," PM Modi said after launching the

state government's flagship Subhadra Yojana, a women-centric scheme of the Odisha government.

Under the scheme, all eligible beneficiaries between the age group of 21-60 years would receive Rs 50,000 over a period of five years between 2024-25 and 2028-29.

"As promised, we opened Ratna Bhandar at Puri's Jagannath temple after coming to power in the state," he said.

PM Modi also announced that the Centre has decided to add 75,000 medical seats in

the country.

"In the first 100 days of the third NDA government at the Centre, we decided to build 3 crore pucca houses for poor people."

PM Modi unveiled railway and national highway projects worth over Rs 3,800 crore in the state.

Modi laid the foundation stones and dedicated to the nation railway projects worth Rs 2,871 crore in the state.

He also launched national highway projects worth Rs 1,000 crore at a programme at Janata Maidan here.

## ISRO ex-chairman to be chief guest at RSS event

### New Delhi

Former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman Dr K Radhakrishnan will be the chief guest at the annual Shri Vijayadashmi Utsav event of the RSS this year. This was stated by the organisation on X.

The event will be held on October 12 at Reshimbagh, Nagpur. RSS chief Mohan

Bhagwat will deliver the annual keynote speech. The Vijayadashmi festival has a special significance for RSS. The RSS came into being in Nagpur in 1925 on the day of Vijayadashmi. As a result, the foundation day celebrations of the organisation are also celebrated simultaneously at the branches along with the Vijayadashmi festival.

## CJI: No dearth of laws to protect women's interests

### New Delhi

Noting that there's no dearth of laws to protect women's interests, Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud on Monday said laws alone can't lead to a just society unless it sheds its "patriarchal attitude".

Speaking at a TV channel's 'She Shakti' event, the CJI said: "There is no dearth of substantive and procedural legal provisions targeted towards protecting the interests of women in private and public situations. Good laws alone do not make for a just society. Above all, we need to change our mindsets. Mindsets must move from making concessions for women to recognising their entitlement to lead lives based on freedom and equality." Justice Chandrachud said: "We must foster institutional and individual ability to look beyond the 'male default'. We must zealously guard against apparently protective laws infringing women's liberties and choices." The CJI said: "Issues of safety, equality of opportunity, dignity and empowerment are not subsets that ought to be discussed in silos. Every one of us in the country has to be a part of this conversation." He said: "Equal participation of women in governance, policy and leadership roles is positively linked to better development outcomes. When we either create or fail to address barriers in the path of women, we are jeopardising our quest for a better society. Indifference is no longer an option."

## State duty-bound to pay relief for land acquisition: Apex court

### New Delhi

Holding that the doctrine of laches does not apply to cases where compensation is sought for land surrendered for public amenities, the Supreme Court has said that the state is duty-bound to grant compensation even if no formal request is made.

The doctrine of laches is a legal principle used by courts to deny relief to anyone for an unreasonable delay in asserting his/her legal claim or right.

"When relief in the nature of compensation is sought, as in the instant case, once the compensation is determined in the form of FSI/TDR (Floor Space Index/Transferable Development Rights), the same is payable even in the absence of there being any representation or request being made," a Bench led by Justice BV Nagarathna said in its September 13 verdict.

The top court directed the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) to complete the process of granting additional FSI/TDR in three months.

"In fact, a duty is cast on the

state to pay compensation to the land losers as otherwise there would be a breach of Article 300-A of the Constitution," said the Bench, which also included Justice N Kotiswar Singh.

Article 300-A mandates that "no person will be deprived of his property save by authority of law".



Emphasising the need for a fair procedure for the acquisition of private property, the Supreme Court had on May 16, 2024 said mere presence of a law authorising the state instrumentalities to acquire land or any other private property was not sufficient in the absence of procedural safeguards.

The petitioners had surrendered portions of their land reserved for public purposes

such as roads to the MCGM after constructing amenities such as roads on these lands at their own cost. They received additional TDR of 25 per cent of the constructed area as compensation for constructing the amenities at own cost.

Following the SC's 2009 verdict in Godrej & Boyce Manufacturing Co. Ltd. v/s State of Maharashtra case that said landowners who constructed amenities such as roads on surrendered plots were entitled to additional FSI or TDR of 100 per cent of the developed area, the petitioners demanded

additional TDR of 100 per cent of the constructed area for the amenities. The litigation started

after the MCGM rejected their claim."

The Bench allowed appeals by landowners whose petitions before the Bombay High Court for additional compensation towards land surrendered for developing amenities were dismissed due to delay and laches. It said not doing so would violate the mandate of Article 300 of the Constitution.

## 2 children among 5 dead in factory explosion in UP's Firozabad



### Firozabad

Five persons, including two children and a woman, were killed in a sudden explosion at a firecracker godown-cum-factory in Uttar Pradesh's Firozabad district, a police official said on Tuesday.

Eleven persons were injured in the incident, they said.

Police said the explosion happened in the factory located in the Naushera area under Shikohabad police station limits on Monday night.

"Five persons including two children were killed in the explosion, which had taken place in a firecracker godown-cum-factory. Eleven persons were injured in the incident," Circle Officer Shikohabad Praveen Tiwari told PTI.

Deepak Kumar, IG, Agra range, who reached the incident spot late on Monday night for inspection had told PTI that a team of fire and police departments, and the district administration are engaged in relief work under supervision of the superintendent of police and CMO officials, he said.

According to local residents, around 10.30 pm, there was a sudden blast in the firecracker godown due to which the walls of the building collapsed and about seven people of the same family living in it got buried under the debris.

According to information obtained from the district hospital, the deceased who have been identified are Meera Devi (45), Aman (20), Gautam Kushwaha (18) and Kumari Ichha (3). The identity of one of the deceased child is yet to be ascertained, police said.

The bodies of the deceased

were sent for postmortem and the injured have been hospitalised, the official said.

UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has taken cognisance of the accident that took place at the firecracker godown in Shikohabad area of Firozabad district, according to UP government.

The chief minister has directed the district administration officials to provide them proper treatment to the injured and has directed the district administration officials to reach the spot and expedite the relief work, it said.

## Congress welcomes RSS chief's 'Hindu is all-embracing' remark

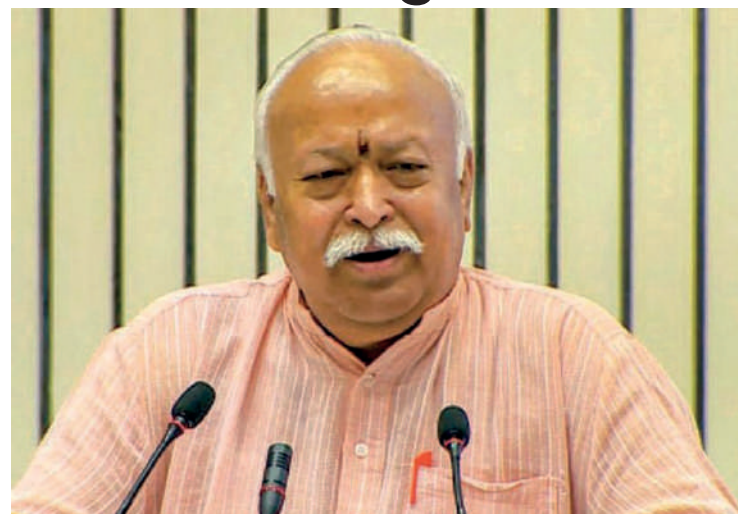
### New Delhi

A day after RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said a Hindu was one who was all-embracing, irrespective of caste, faith or dietary practices, the Congress welcomed the statement and said it hoped the Sangh Parivar was listening.

"I welcome Bhagwat's statement. I sincerely hope that members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, ABVP, Bajrang Dal, BJYM, Hindu Rashtra Sena, Hindu Munnani and other affiliated or frontal organisations of the RSS will learn the important lesson and faithfully abide by it," veteran Congress leader P Chidambaram said.

He added: "Let us see how far Mr Bhagwat's lesson has percolated and influenced the rank and file of the RSS and its affiliated or frontal organisations."

Mohan Bhagwat has of late made terse comments about the state of national politics, covertly even admonishing the ruling BJP to take everyone along and not treat political opponents as enemies.



The RSS supremo has been battling for the need for humility in higher echelons of power in remarks that have been widely seen as meant for the Sangh's political protege BJP.

Bhagwat recently said no one should arrogate to themselves the attributes of God, a comment the Congress said was directed at PM Narendra Modi who, in the run up to Lok Sabha polls, claimed that he was not born biologically.

Bhagwat has also been flagging the persistent law and order challenges in Manipur,

urging for the restoration of peace and had very recently noted that the situation in the state was difficult.

On more occasion than one in recent times, the Congress has found itself concurring with the chief of RSS, an institution party leader Rahul Gandhi continues to flag as divisive.

Speaking in Alwar on Sunday, Bhagwat had said: "Being Hindu means to be generous and show goodwill to everyone, regardless of their religious beliefs, caste or dietary practices."

## Laws alone can't make just society; society must shed its 'patriarchal attitude': CJ

### New Delhi

Noting that there's no dearth of laws to protect women's interests, Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud on Monday said laws alone can't lead to a just society unless society sheds its "patriarchal attitude".

Speaking at a TV channel's 'She Shakti' event, the CJI said, "There is no dearth of substantive and procedural legal provisions targeted towards protecting the interests of women in private and public situations. But good laws alone do not make for a just society. Above all, we need to change our mindsets. The mindsets must move from making concessions for women to recognizing their entitlement to lead lives based on freedom and equality."

Justice Chandrachud said, "We must foster institutional and individual ability to look beyond the 'male default'. Women still have to justify choices in ways their male counterparts are not. Their access to resources — basic resources such as education, employment and advanced resources such as mentorship and social capital are chequered."

He said, "We must zealously guard against apparently protective laws infringing women's liberties and choices. For instance,



laws which prohibit women's employment in establishments where liquor is served... In Anuj Garg v. Hotel Association, the Supreme Court struck down such a law, as it gave expression to oppressive cultural norms which were contrary to the autonomy of women."

Noting that "issues that concern women today are broader issues facing our society, the CJHI said, "They will determine the kind of society we envision for the future. Issues of safety, equality of opportunity, dignity and empowerment are not subsets that ought to be discussed in silos. Every one of us in the country has to be a part of this conversation."

He said, "Equal participation of women in governance, policy and leadership roles

is positively linked to better development outcomes. When we either create or fail to address barriers in the path of women, we are jeopardizing our quest for a better society. Indifference is no longer an option."

Justice Chandrachud said, "The labour force participation of women is 37%. The contribution of women to the GDP is 18%. We have not exactly met the pre-independence hopes about women's economic participation. A part of the reason is the continued gendered allocation of domestic labour. Even as women are entering the workforce, they are never divorced from the domestic realm. They must simultaneously juggle domestic and care-giving chores. They are doubly burdened — almost as a penalty for transgressing the domestic threshold."

He said, "Besides domestic work being unaccounted for in economic terms, it obstructs women's ability to hold on to paid work or take on greater professional responsibility. Reports indicate that gender disparity in employment is on the decline and women's salaried employment is set to increase. It is hoped that this would bridge the gender gap in earnings significantly, if not eliminate it entirely."



# Manoj Kumar Verma named Kolkata Police Commissioner amid uproar over RG Kar rape-murder

## Kolkata

In the first sign of a breakthrough, more than a month after protests began on August 9 over the rape-and-murder of a junior doctor at R G Kar Medical College and Hospital, the West Bengal government on Tuesday named Manoj Kumar Verma as the new Kolkata Police Commissioner.

Verma replaces Vineet Kumar Goyal, who has been transferred and posted as ADG and IGP, Special Task Force, West Bengal.

The development comes a day after Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday announced the removal of senior police and



health officials, including Kolkata Police Commissioner Goyal.

Banerjee made the announcement late on Monday night, after holding the first round of talks with a delegation of junior doctors at her residence in Kalighat. The removal of senior officials was among the demands listed by the protesters.

Emerging from the meeting, the junior doctors said the talks were "positive" but they needed to hold discussions with their colleagues before taking a final call on resuming work.

The protesters had listed a five-point demand: expedite the investigation into the rape-murder and punish the culprits without delay; suspend former R G Kar principal Dr Sandip Ghosh and all others "directly or indirectly involved with tampering of evidence"; removal of Kolkata CP Goyal; adequate security within hospital premises; and "end threat culture prevalent in all healthcare facilities".

# Navy commanders to review key operational issues at meet



## New Delhi

Top Navy commanders will hold a four-day conference from tomorrow to review major operational issues.

The commanders will also discuss logistics, HR, training and administrative activities pursued by the Indian Navy over the past six months and deliberate on key milestones to be met for safeguarding maritime interests.

The Ministry of Defence said: "The conference plays a crucial role in shaping future course of the Indian Navy".

"The conference would witness comprehensive review of the operational preparedness, Navy's capability enhancement plan, promoting national vision of indigenisation, self-reliance and combat effectiveness of Naval forces," the Ministry added.

The conference is an apex-level biannual event of the Navy to facilitate deliberations on significant strategic, operational and administrative issues. The event is being held in the backdrop of evolving geo-political and geo-strategic dynamics, regional challenges and complexity in maritime security situation in West Asia.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will address the commanders on matters pertaining to national security and national expectations. The Chief of Defence Staff, General Anil Chauhan, along with Chiefs of the Indian Army and the Indian Air Force, will engage with Naval Commanders to foster collaborations among the three services across spectrum of conflict and convergence towards theaterisation, the MoD said.

# Current members may be retained in Atishi cabinet, 2 new faces likely



## New Delhi

All sitting ministers will be retained in the new Delhi cabinet led by Atishi while two new members may join the government, AAP sources said on Wednesday, ruling out any "experiment" as elections are just months away.

Sources said while incumbent Gopal Rai, Kailash Gehlot, Saurabh Bharadwaj and Imran Hussain will be retained, Karol Bagh MLA Vishesh Ravi or Kondli MLA Kuldeep Kumar could be among the new faces.

Atishi is likely to take oath as the chief minister of Delhi along with her ministers on September 21.

"Since the Assembly polls are approaching, not much experiment is expected in the selection of members of council of ministers and old faces will most certainly be retained while two new ministers could join in," said a party leader.

Kejriwal on Tuesday tendered his resignation to Delhi Lt Governor VK Saxena and Atishi, who was earlier chosen as Leader of the AAP's legislature party in the Assembly, staked claim to form a new government.

Vishesh Ravi or Kuldeep Kumar could be inducted to fill the vacancy created by resignation of then Social

Welfare minister Raaj Kumar Anand, AAP sources claimed.

Anand resigned from the Kejriwal government and quit AAP in April this year.

Names of party MLAs Jarnail Singh, Durgesh Pathak, Somnath Bharti and Sanjeev Jha were doing the rounds in the party circles as the probables to fill the vacancy created due to the elevation of Atishi to the chief minister's post.

# Kejriwal will move out of official residence in a week

## New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will move out of his official residence within one week, AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said on Wednesday.

At a press conference here, Singh said Kejriwal would also give up all the facilities he enjoyed as the chief minister.

Kejriwal, accompanied by a delegation of AAP legislators, visited the L-G Secretariat to tender his resignation on Tuesday and formally stake claim to form a new government under



Atishi's leadership. "Yesterday after tendering his resignation, Kejriwal said he will leave all the facilities that a chief minister gets, including security, and live as a commoner among the people.

"We tried to persuade him, saying a lot of attempts to harm him physically have taken place in the past but he was not deterred. He said, 'I have lived in jail for six months, God saved me then, God will save me now,'" Singh said.

The AAP leader said it was yet to be decided where Kejriwal will live.

# Rahul Gandhi's tongue should be singed for his 'dangerous' remarks on quota: BJP MP Anil Bonde

## New Delhi

BJP's Rajya Sabha member Anil Bonde has said Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's tongue should be singed as what he said about reservation was "dangerous".

His remark comes in the wake of Shiv Sena's Buldhana MLA Sanjay Gaikwad kicking up a row by announcing a Rs 11 lakh reward to anyone chopping off Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's tongue for

his remarks on scrapping the reservation system.

During his recent visit to the US, Gandhi told students at the Georgetown University there that the Congress would think of scrapping reservation when "India is a fair place", which he said is not the case right now.

Reacting to Gaikwad's statement of chopping off Gandhi's tongue, BJP leader

Bonde said at Amravati in Maharashtra on Tuesday, "The language of cutting tongue is not proper, but what Rahul ji said against reservation is dangerous."

"Hence, if anyone speaks anything absurd in a foreign country, then rather than chopping off his tongue, it should be singed. It is necessary to certainly singe the tongues of such people - be it Rahul Gandhi, Dnyanesh Maharao or Shyam

Manav and people who hurt the feelings of the 'bahujan' and majority," he said.

Maharao, an author, is accused of making derogatory comments on Hindu deities recently, while Manav is an anti-superstition crusader.

A video of Bonde's remarks also went viral on social media.

## 'Of India's 13 cr farmers, only 750 protesting at Shambhu'

## New Delhi

Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said the BJP government in Haryana had been engaging with protesting farmers who were sitting on the Punjab and Haryana border at Shambhu.

Listing measures taken by the BJP-led NDA dispensation to raise farmers' incomes, Shah said India had nearly 13 crore farmers, of which about 750 were sitting on the border at Shambhu. "About 750 of 13 crore farmers are sitting on the border. If you call this unrest, I do not know what to say. Ours is a farmer-friendly government. We have done record procurement at MSP," he said.

He was responding to a Tribune query on the sidelines of a press conference on the first 100 days of Narendra Modi-led NDA 3.0. Shah said the government could also have taken the easy and populist path as the Congress-led UPA by granting a one-time loan waiver to farmers, but it chose to hit at the source of the problem.

"We calculated input costs which small farmers with 2.5 acre land incurred during the farming cycle and arrived at a figure of Rs 5,800. It was based on this figure that PM Kisan Samman Nidhi was rolled out to offer cash support of Rs 6,000 annually into bank accounts of small farmers," Shah said, adding that 82% small farmers of the country do not need to take loans due to cash support.

He added that the government had done record procurement at MSP. "Our procurement rate is 120%, as opposed to UPA's 30%. MSP for kharif crops for 2024-25 has been increased," he said. Farmers agitating at Shambhu border have been demanding legal backing for MSP.

## Rahul's mindset akin to Jinnah's: Hardeep Puri in US

## New Delhi

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, currently in the US, has hit out at Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi accusing him of harbouring a "Muhammad Ali Jinnah like mentality", whereby you either want what you seek or will destroy everything because you can't have it.

Speaking in the US, where Rahul Gandhi in his recent visit claimed that the fight in India was about whether a Sikh is going to be allowed to wear a turban, a kada and visit a gurdwara, Puri said Rahul Gandhi never spoke of the Sikhs in India and he should know better.

"He (Rahul) should be asked -- when you (Congress) were in power, who produced the monsters? I do not wish to delve into details but they need to do some solid introspection to find out why this (Operation Blue Star) happened, who got it done. This (Sikhs in India are insecure) is a narrative anchored in total lies. "I think this is like what Muhammad Ali Jinnah used to do -- either I get what I want or I will destroy everything. This is that kind of mindset. Otherwise we can have ideological differences but the whole beauty of democracy is we address these issues," said Puri.

## Congress files police complaint over statements of NDA leaders targeting Rahul



## New Delhi

The Congress on Wednesday filed a police complaint over the recent statements of leaders belonging to the ruling NDA targeting Rahul Gandhi, alleging that they were aimed at jeopardising his security and disturbing peace in view of the polls in Jammu and Kashmir, and Haryana.

In the complaint submitted to the SHO of the Tughlaq Road police station by AICC treasurer and general secretary Ajay Maken, the Congress cited the recent remarks by BJP leaders Tarvinder Singh Marwah, Ravneet Singh Bittu and Raghuraj Singh, as well as that of Shiv Sena MLA Sanjay Gaikwad.

Maken sought

registration of FIRs against the leaders.

Speaking with the media after filing the complaint, Maken said, "We all know that late Indira Gandhi ji and late Rajiv ji have sacrificed their lives for the country. Even after that, they are giving such threats."

Politics in India cannot stoop to a lower level than this, he said. Not just one BJP leader, but many leaders have said such things, but BJP did not take any action, he said.

"Rahul Gandhi talks about SC, ST, OBC, tribal and minority people. That is why BJP people do not like his words. This is the reason why they are threatening him," he said.

"But let me tell you -- this is the Congress party

and we are not going to be scared or cowed down," Maken said.

In the police complaint, Maken said, "On September 11, Marwah in a BJP event openly issued an assassination threat against Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, wherein he said that 'Rahul Gandhi baaz aaja, nahi toh aane wale time mein tera bhi wohi haal hoga jo teri dadi ka haal hua (you better behave, or you will meet the same fate as your grandmother)'"

It also cited Sena MLA Gaikwad's announcement of a bounty of Rs 11 lakh for anyone who will cut the tongue of the Leader of Opposition.

The complaint cited Minister of State for Railways Ravneet Bittu's remarks, calling the Leader of Opposition the "number one terrorist of the country".

On Tuesday, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had raised with Prime Minister Narendra Modi the issue of "extremely objectionable" and violent statements by ruling alliance members targeting Rahul Gandhi and urged him to discipline his leaders.

In his letter to Modi, Kharge asserted that strict legal action should be taken against those giving such statements so that Indian politics can be prevented from degenerating and nothing untoward happens.



## 'Misinformed, unacceptable': India reacts sharply to Iran supreme leader Khamenei's comment on minorities

New Delhi

India has reacted sharply after Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei included India in the list of places where 'Muslims are suffering'.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said, "We strongly deplore the comments made regarding minorities in India by the Supreme Leader of Iran."

The MEA termed these as "misinformed and unacceptable" and added that "countries commenting on minorities are advised to look at their own record before making any observations about others."

Khamenei's comment sent out in social media said he referred to India, Gaza, and Myanmar and said the Islamic world should not



remain oblivious to the condition of Muslims in these places.

"We cannot consider ourselves to be Muslims if we are oblivious to the suffering that a Muslim is enduring in Myanmar, Gaza, India, or any other place," said Khamenei at

an Islamic event.

He argued for unity between the Shia and Sunni sects of Islam and said, "The concept of an 'Islamic Ummah' must never be forgotten."

## Won't surrender: Trump after surviving 2nd attempt on life



Washington

Former US President Donald Trump escaped another assassination attempt while he was golfing on his course in Florida, a second bid on his life in two months.

US Secret Service agents "opened fire on a gunman located near the property line" of Trump International Golf Club in West Palm Beach, Rafael Barros, the special agent in charge in Miami, said during a news conference, adding that the agency was "unsure whether the individual," who is in custody, "was able to take a shot at our agents." Trump, who was golfing at the club, was unharmed.

In a message to his supporters, Trump said he is safe. "There

were gunshots in my vicinity, but before rumours start spiralling out of control, I wanted you to hear this first: I am safe and well! Nothing will slow me down. I will never surrender!" he said.

Meanwhile, a man suspected in the assassination attempt was charged with federal gun crimes. Ryan Wesley Routh (58) faces charges of possessing a firearm despite a prior felony conviction and possessing a firearm with an obliterated serial number. More serious charges are possible as the investigation continues and the Justice Department prosecutors seek an indictment from a grand jury.

Routh appeared briefly in federal court in West Palm Beach, where he answered perfunctory

questions about his work status and income. The lawyer declined to comment after the hearing ended.

President Joe Biden said he had directed his team to ensure that the Secret Service "has every resource, capability and protective measure necessary to ensure the former president's continued safety". "As I have said many times, there is no place for political violence or any violence ever in our country," Biden said on X, adding that he was "relieved the former president is unharmed".

## Over 1000 Hezbollah members wounded in Lebanon as pagers explode



Beirut

More than a thousand Hezbollah members, including fighters and medics, sustained serious injuries in Lebanon on Tuesday when their communication pagers exploded, Reuters reported.

The incident, described by a Hezbollah official as the "biggest security breach" in nearly a year of conflict with Israel, has sparked widespread panic and confusion.

The explosions occurred amidst ongoing violence between Hezbollah and Israel, which has intensified since the outbreak of the Gaza war last October. The situation remains fluid, with reports of further detonations in southern Lebanon and the capital, Beirut. Meanwhile, Iran's ambassador to Lebanon, Mojtaba Amani, was injured in this pager explosion, according to Iran's Mehr news agency.

There has been no immediate response from the Israeli military regarding the explosions.

A Reuters journalist reported ambulances racing through the

southern suburbs of Beirut, with widespread panic gripping the area. Residents noted that explosions continued even 30 minutes after the initial blasts, with devices also detonating in southern Lebanon.

Groups of people gathered outside buildings, checking on those who might have been injured. Regional CCTV footage showed small handheld devices exploding in various locations, including a grocery store and a market. Lebanon's crisis operations center, managed by the health ministry, has urged all medical personnel to report to hospitals to handle the influx of wounded. The center has advised healthcare workers to refrain from using pagers to avoid further incidents. Hezbollah's missile attacks on Israel began shortly after the October 7 Hamas assaults, with both sides exchanging fire while trying to avoid a full-scale escalation. The ongoing conflict has displaced tens of thousands from towns and villages on both sides of the border.

## PM Modi to visit US from September 21 to 23; to attend Quad, UN summits

New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will undertake a three-day visit to the US from September 21 to 23. The visit will include participation in the Quad Leaders' Summit, attendance at the UN's "Summit of the Future", and meetings with industry leaders focused on cutting-edge technology, particularly in semiconductors.

During the visit, Prime Minister Modi will attend the fourth Quad Leaders' Summit in Wilmington, Delaware, on September 21. This summit, hosted by US President Joe Biden, was originally scheduled to be hosted by India. The White House announced

on September 13 that the event will now take place in the US, with India set to host it next year. The Quad summit brings together leaders from India, Australia, Japan, and the US. At the summit, the leaders will review the progress of the Quad over the past year and set the agenda for the upcoming year to support the development goals and aspirations of countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

On September 23, Prime Minister Modi will address "Summit of the Future" at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York. The theme of the summit is "Multilateral Solutions for a Better Tomorrow".



# One nation, one poll

THE first 100 days of Modi 3.0 have been marked by policy flip-flops prompted by coalition pressures. Dependent on allies for the first time in a decade to stay in power, the ruling BJP has struggled to come to terms with the changed reality. In a desperate effort to assert itself and appear unfazed by its weakened position in the Lok Sabha, the party has gone back to its 'one nation, one election' (ONOE) plank. In his Independence Day address last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi appealed to various political parties to unite in backing this initiative. He reiterated that frequent elections were impeding India's progress. Now, it has been reported that the NDA government is optimistic about implementing this all-important poll reform during its current term.

This optimism, bordering on overconfidence, conveniently overlooks the fact that several Opposition parties have



opposed the idea of holding simultaneous polls. The BJP's renewed push for ONOE is understandable: it continues to be the predominant political party in the country despite the significant gains made by the Congress in this year's Lok Sabha elections. The saffron party stands to benefit the most if voters exercise their franchise once in five years rather than

every two years or so. However, regional parties not aligned with the NDA may be at a disadvantage if the Assembly and parliamentary polls — which are often contested on dissimilar issues — are held together.

A level playing field is a must in a democracy. The BJP would do well to try harder to build consensus on ONOE and dispel doubts raised by stakeholders regarding its feasibility. This will be an uphill task as the Opposition is no longer a pushover. The point that 'one election' will ensure continuity in governance and reduce the burden in terms of manpower and finances is well taken, but the threat it can pose to India's federal structure should not be dismissed lightly.

// satyasya paramarṇ nidhānam //

We would like to hear from you. Please share your comments on [editor.acrossstate@gmail.com](mailto:editor.acrossstate@gmail.com)

*The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart.*

-Helen Keller

## J&K poll battle

### Traditional powers vs Modi's 'new' vision

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AS Jammu and Kashmir approaches its first Assembly elections since the historic abrogation of Article 370, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a fierce attack on the region's established political dynasties during a rally in Doda on Saturday. He targeted the Congress, National Conference (NC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), accusing them of promoting family rule over the interests of the people. He claimed that dynastic politics had 'hollowed out' the region and hindered progress. He positioned the BJP as the only political force capable of uprooting entrenched interests, offering a new beginning with youth-driven leadership and a focus on development.

The upcoming elections signify a watershed moment for Jammu and

change, addressing the high unemployment rate and drawing investments



Kashmir. With Article 370 read down, the BJP seeks to establish itself as the dominant force in the region by presenting voters with a vision for peace, stability and economic growth. Modi underscored that only the BJP could bring in meaningful

to a region long stifled by political instability. His statement that 'terrorism is breathing its last' highlights the BJP's emphasis on security, a critical concern for the region's populace, worn down by decades of militancy.

However, the electoral

outcome is far from predictable. The Congress and regional parties like the NC and PDP have vowed to restore J&K's special status, which was stripped with the revocation of Article 370. The Congress has pledged to reinstate full statehood, while the NC and the PDP focus on preserving the region's identity and democratic rights. Their alliance seeks to counter the BJP's narrative of development, positioning themselves as defenders of regional autonomy, capitalising on local discontent with Central policies. Ultimately, the elections will determine whether voters embrace Modi's vision of a 'terror-free, prosperous' J&K or remain loyal to regional powers.



## Kejriwal's gamble

### Decision to resign a bid to salvage AAP's image

ARVIND KEJRIWAL's decision to resign as Delhi Chief Minister just months before the Assembly elections is a calculated political gamble. After spending nearly six months in custody in the controversial excise policy case, he has chosen to step down and frame the next election as a referendum on his honesty.



By doing so, he aims to counter the BJP's narrative of corruption and regain public sympathy by presenting himself as a victim of political vendetta. His narrative of seeking a 'certificate of honesty' from the people taps into his longstanding strategy of appealing directly to voters.

Also, by seeking early elections — three months ahead of schedule — Kejriwal hopes to catch rivals such as the BJP and the Congress off guard. AAP has already

started its campaign preparations, while other parties remain focused on national politics. This strategy could give AAP a crucial headstart.

However, even as Kejriwal's move echoes his 2014 resignation, which led to a landslide win for the AAP in 2015, the gamble is risky as the stakes this time are higher and the challenges more complex. The 2024 Lok Sabha election setback — the party drew a blank in Delhi — has raised concerns about its waning influence and popularity. Graft allegations against top leaders, including Kejriwal, have damaged its image as a crusader against corruption. Governance issues,

particularly with regard to civic infrastructure, and the BJP's relentless attacks have also chipped away at public trust in AAP. On the positive side, AAP's welfare schemes still resonate with voters. Whether his resignation will once again turn the tide in AAP's favour or backfire remains to be seen, but it has added fresh intrigue to Delhi's political scene, including speculation about who will succeed him as the CM.

## Cool tempers in HP

### Communal flare-up doesn't augur well for hill state

A communal flare-up is a rarity in Himachal Pradesh, which is fondly called Dev Bhoomi ('land of the gods'). After all, gods — and humans — of different faiths have coexisted there for decades, if not centuries. That's what makes the protests against the unauthorised construction of portions of mosques in Sanjauli (Shimla) and



Mandi particularly disturbing. It is lamentable that the authorities failed to pre-empt or prevent a build-up of protesters — including VHP leaders, ex-councillors and panchayat chiefs — at the Sanjauli mosque. Seeking the demolition of the illegal parts, the agitators clashed with security personnel on September 11, breaking through barricades and hurling stones; the police had to use water cannons and batons to disperse them. A day later, members of the Muslim community demolished a mosque's wall that had

been built on encroached government land in Mandi, but that did not stop Hindu groups from taking out a protest march in the town.

Unauthorised structures do not come up overnight, especially at a place of worship. Officials of the administration allow violations right under their noses; citing religious sentiments, they are reluctant to take action. It is this laxity that emboldens encroachers. In the Sanjauli case, this dereliction of duty gave rabble-rousers ample fodder to instigate people.

Encroachments are a bane of HP, which depends primarily on tourism for revenue. However, there should

be no double standards when it comes to illegal construction. Targeting a particular community, which has become the norm in some states, dents the credibility of the authorities. The demand to verify the antecedents of 'outsiders' living in the state can be fraught with serious consequences and will only add fuel to the communal fire. Blessed with eye-catching beauty, Dev Bhoomi cannot afford to let religious tensions spoil its peaceful atmosphere, which is a major draw for domestic as well as foreign tourists.

## Corruption within

### Crooked cops undermine fight against drugs

THE Punjab Police, waging an uphill battle against the drug menace, has been deeply embarrassed after a drug inspector, Shishan Mittal, was arrested for allegedly colluding with narcotic smugglers. The Anti-Narcotics Task Force uncovered Mittal's deep involvement in facilitating illegal drug operations, revealing over Rs 7 crore in laundered funds through his bank accounts. As the man responsible for enforcing anti-narcotics regulations, his betrayal represents a significant crack in the state's already fragile drug-control apparatus.

This is not the first time corruption has compromised the fight against drugs. In 2017, acting on a PIL, the Punjab and Haryana High Court formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe allegations of drug smuggling by senior police officials. The SIT's findings, made public in April last year, were damning. They revealed that Inspector Inderjit Singh,

in collusion with then Moga SSP Raj Jit Singh, had smuggled drugs from Pakistan with the help of dismissed BSF personnel. Inderjit was also



accused of framing individuals by planting drugs to extort money and sell narcotics, but Raj Jit recommended a double promotion for him, despite the charges.

Corruption has plagued Punjab's

drug war, undermining trust in institutions meant to protect society. Bureaucratic inefficiency and systemic loopholes make it easier for such individuals to operate unchecked. The government's reactive approach, including freezing Mittal's assets and launching a belated investigation, highlights the need for stronger preventive mechanisms. Beyond individual arrests, the state needs structural reforms. These include strict vetting of officials, specialised NDPS courts (which has also been emphasised by the Punjab and Haryana Court), enhanced prison monitoring and improved agency coordination. Whistleblower protection and community-level policing should also be prioritised to address both internal corruption and grassroots drug abuse. Without systemic changes, the state's battle against drugs will remain an uphill and, ultimately, losing one.



# Puja curbs & trade ban

## Dhaka's actions could strain ties with Delhi

BANGLADESH's interim government, led by Muhammad Yunus, has issued a directive mandating Hindu Puja committees to stop using musical instruments and sound systems five minutes before and during the Islamic azaan and namaz as the country prepares for Durga Puja. This move, ostensibly aimed at maintaining religious harmony, has the shades of a 'Talibani' order targeting the country's beleaguered minority Hindu population. It is a disproportionate imposition on an already vulnerable community in the garb of ensuring law and order during the largest Hindu festival of the region. The curbs may not only deepen the divide between the communities in Bangladesh, but they can also strain the country's relations with India. The timing is particularly sensitive, given the political situation following the ouster



of Sheikh Hasina as the PM.

Dhaka's decision to ban the export of Padma hilsa — a beloved fish staple during puja festivities in West Bengal — to India could also escalate tensions. This ban is a

reversal of the goodwill established by previous governments through 'hilsa diplomacy'. The symbolic exchange of fish had become a bilateral gesture of friendship.

While these developments

have not yet triggered an official diplomatic response from India, they raise concerns over religious and trade policies under Bangladesh's interim government. In this context, Yunus' statement on Wednesday that his country seeks strong ties with India based on fairness and equality contradicts his government's policies. Though the appeal highlights his government's intent on fostering regional cooperation and mutual respect, it is on an opposite trajectory, thus risking alienating India. The religious restrictions, along with the trade ban, could undermine the historic bond between the two countries. If Bangladesh seeks to maintain peaceful and fruitful relations with India, religious inclusivity and balanced diplomacy must guide its actions moving forward.

## Chip challenge

### Competitive field makes India's task tough

INDIA is nurturing the grand ambition of becoming a global hub of semiconductor manufacturing. The ongoing Semicon India 2024 conference in Greater Noida is showcasing the country's semiconductor strategy and policy. PM Narendra Modi's catchy remark — 'the chips are never down in India' — is an open invitation to industry stakeholders to make big-ticket investments here. Indeed, India's growth story is worth betting on, but the government's sustained support will be required to fulfil the PM's promise of providing an integrated ecosystem to international players.

It is no exaggeration to say that semiconductors power the contemporary world. Chips are everywhere — be it smartphones, cars, washing machines, pacemakers or aeroplanes. That's why this is a highly competitive field. Taiwan, which is home to thousands of semiconductor-related companies and has a robust end-to-end supply chain, is the global numero uno. Among

the other leading nations are South Korea, Japan, the US and China. The Covid-19 pandemic slowed down the manufacture of semiconductors, particularly in Taiwan and China. Amid these large-scale disruptions, India got its foot in the door by launching the ISM (India Semiconductor Mission) in 2021. A critical lesson from the pandemic was that the global supply chain should be diversified.

India is eyeing a bigger piece of the pie, but the road ahead is going to be anything but easy. Even as Asian nations are wooing investors with incentives, the US is projected to triple its domestic semiconductor manufacturing capacity by 2032, a decade after the CHIPS and Science Act was enacted. Beyond the optimism and hyperbole, India needs to set clear-cut timelines for achieving its goals. Ease of doing business holds the key to attracting long-term investments. India's semiconductor ecosystem is no doubt at an early stage, and there should be no reluctance to learn from other countries' experience.

## Acrimonious debate

### Harris, Trump pull no punches

THE US presidential debate between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris was largely about who did better. Did Harris outperform Trump? Yes, she did, but Trump was still better than what a jittery Joe Biden was against him in their June debate. And, of course, Harris was far,



far better than Biden. She did rub it in: 'It is important to remind the former President. You're not running against Joe Biden. You are running against me.' The televised matchup began with a handshake, but the slender hope of cordiality evaporated quickly. Both pulled no punches as they rained insults and barbs on each other.

The twin challenges for Harris were to erase the memory of Biden's debate fiasco, which had forced him to abandon his presidency, and

present herself as the best choice for American voters. She succeeded to a greater extent in doing the first than the second. Harris is gaining ground, according to online prediction market PredictIt, but this is still a race too close to call.

The candidates targeted one another over the Israel-Hamas war and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, but neither offered any specific roadmap to bring both conflicts to an end. They also locked horns over abortion restrictions, again not so convincingly. The fact that debate moderators had to repeatedly inject fact-checks showed that both nominees had no qualms about telling a lie here, a lie there. Trump's trump card was his question: Why has Harris, as Biden's deputy, not done in the past three-and-a-half years what she is promising now? This valid point caught her on a sticky wicket. Nevertheless, she managed to provoke Trump into making the preposterous claim that Haitian immigrants were eating dogs and cats of Ohio residents. This fight is only going to become more fierce and bitter from here on.



## Minister: Buchs putting out 'facts' contradicting Cong's allegations

New Delhi

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said SEBI chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch and her husband Dhaval Buch were defending themselves and putting out facts that contradict the allegations of the Congress. To a question on her assessment of the situation...

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said SEBI chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch and her husband Dhaval Buch were defending themselves and putting out facts that contradict the allegations of the Congress.

To a question on her assessment of the situation



involving Madhabi Puri Buch, the minister said: "Quite a few of the allegations have been answered..."

I think the facts will have to be taken on board." This is for the first time that Sitharaman has spoken on the issue.

On being asked whether she was satisfied with Madhabi Puri Buch's answers, Sitharaman said, "I and not here to judge that."

In a joint statement issued last Friday, SEBI chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch and her husband Dhaval Buch had denied the allegations of impropriety and conflict of interest

levelled by the Congress, saying they are false, malicious and motivated.

## 100 workers of Samsung Chennai plant detained for protest

Chennai

Police have detained around 100 striking workers and union leaders protesting for low wages at a Samsung Electronics plant in Chennai, as they were planning a march on Monday without permission, police officials said.



The detention marks an escalation of a strike by workers at a Samsung home appliance plant near Chennai in Tamil Nadu. Workers want higher wages and have boycotted work for seven days, disrupting production that contributes roughly a third of Samsung's annual India revenue of \$12 billion.

A senior police official of

Kancheepuram district, Sankar Ganesh, told Reuters by telephone that around 100 workers were under "preventive arrest", without elaborating.

Another police officer on condition of anonymity said the detentions were made due to a lack of permission to hold a protest march.

Samsung did not respond to a request for comment.

Workers have since last week been protesting at a makeshift tent near the plant, demanding higher wages, recognition for a union backed by

labour group Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) and better working hours.

Samsung is not keen to recognise any union backed by an outside labour group.

A Jenitan, a union leader of CITU, told Reuters that police also detained one of their senior leaders, E Muthukumar, who was leading the Samsung protests.

## Centre raises basic duty on refined oils to 32.5 %, cuts export duty on onions

New Delhi

In major pro-farmer decisions, the Central Government on Saturday said it had raised the basic duty on refined oil to 32.5%, cut export duty on onions from 40 to 20, increased import duty on edible oils from zero to 20% and removed minimum export duty on basmati.

The decisions come on the eve of Haryana and J-K elections, followed by Maharashtra and Jharkhand Assembly polls which are also due.

"The decision to raise basic duty on refined oils will increase the demand for mustard, sunflower and groundnut crops for refinery oil.

"Farmers will be able to get better prices for these crops and with the increase in refineries in small and rural areas, employment opportunities will also increase there," Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said.

He said due to reduction in export duty, onion-producing farmers will get good prices for their crop and onion export will also increase.

On removal of export duty on basmati, Chouhan said basmati-producing farmers will get fair prices for their produce and



with the increase in demand for basmati rice, exports will also rise.

The minister added, "The farmer-friendly government has taken a decision to increase the import duty on edible oils from 0% to 20%. The total effective duty will be 27.5% after adding other measures. Increasing the import duty will increase the prices of soybean crop and edible oil manufacturers will also be encouraged to buy the crop from domestic farmers. Due to which, farmer brothers and sisters will be able to get a fair price for their crop. This decision will increase the production of soya meal and

it can be exported. Along with this, other sectors related to soya will also benefit," Chouhan said.

Hailing the announcements, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "We are leaving no stone unturned in the interest of our farmer brothers and sisters who work day and night for the food security of the country. Whether it is reducing the export duty on onions or increasing the import duty on edible oils, many such decisions are going to greatly benefit our food producers. While these will increase their income, employment opportunities will also increase in rural areas."

## Bajaj Housing lists at 114% premium



Mumbai

Bajaj Housing Finance Limited became the most valued housing finance company in the country, following a blockbuster market debut today.

Its stock was listed at Rs 150 on the BSE and NSE, reflecting a jump of 114.28 per cent from the issue price of Rs 70.

On the BSE, it zoomed 135.7 per cent to settle at Rs 164.99 — its upper circuit limit. At the NSE, the firm's shares surged by 135.71 per cent to settle at the upper circuit limit of Rs 165.

At the close of trade, its market capitalisation stood at Rs 1.37 lakh crore.



## India's first active pharmaceutical ingredient fermentation unit begins production at Nalagarh



### New Delhi

In a major relief to the pharmaceutical sector, India's first active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) fermentation unit, which will cater to 60 per cent of the domestic demand, has commenced production at Plassra in Nalagarh.

"Set up under the Centrally sponsored production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme, this pharmaceutical raw material manufacturing unit, has achieved up to 6.5 per cent yield in the first few months. To begin with, it is supplying API to states like Gujarat and Uttarakhand," informed Vineet Kumar, member secretary, Industries Department, Nalagarh.

The unit will produce 400 tonnes of potassium clavulanate API annually once it achieves optimum production. Its domestic demand is pegged at 700 tonnes per annum.

Being a key API used in the production of several antibiotics, it will meet around 60 per cent demand of the domestic market.

India is heavily dependent on countries like China and Korea for this API requirement.

As many as 309 people have been employed here, including 252 Himachalis. The project was approved by the State-level Single Window Clearance and Monitoring Authority at a meeting on July 7, 2021, and in-principle approval was granted to set up the plant on July 28 the same year.

The PLI scheme was launched for the promotion of domestic manufacturing of key starting materials (KSMs)/ drug intermediates and APIs in the country a few years ago. It was launched following wide-ranging deliberations on India's dependence on critical resources and risk to supply chain bottlenecks after Covid pandemic disrupted supply chains. It also aims at enhancing the industry's global competitiveness.

The government had identified 48 critical APIs for local manufacturing in its first initiative.

## RBI imposes penalty on BNP Paribas, 3 others

### Mumbai

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a monetary penalty of Rs 31.80 lakh on BNP Paribas bank for non-compliance with certain directions issued by the central bank on "Interest Rate on Advances".

Giving details, it said the statutory inspection for Supervisory Evaluation of the bank was conducted by it with reference to its financial position as of March 31, 2023.

The central bank has also imposed penalties on



Hewlett Packard Financial Services (India) of Rs 10.40 lakh, SMFG India Credit Company (Rs 23.10 lakh), and Muthoot Vehicle & Asset Finance Rs 7.90 lakh) for non-compliance with certain norms.

According to the RBI, the action is based on deficiencies in statutory and regulatory compliance and is not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transaction or agreement entered into by the bank with its customers.

## Complied with guidelines; allegations false: SEBI chief

### Mumbai

Sebi chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch on Friday said she had made all necessary disclosures and complied with recusal guidelines in dealing with companies such as Mahindra Group that hired her husband, as she rejected allegations of impropriety as "false, malicious and motivated".

Buch and her husband Dhaval Buch in a joint statement — the second since US-based short seller Hindenburg Research charged her of not being motivated enough to act on allegations against Adani group due to conflict of interest — also addressed issues raised by opposition Congress over receiving payments from her previous employer ICICI Bank while being a whole time member of Sebi.

The statement said Buch never dealt with any file involving Agora Advisory and Agora Partners — the advisories where she held 99 per cent and continued to earn revenue even after she joined the market regulator body



Sebi in 2017.

According to the statement, she never handled files involving the Mahindra Group, Pidilite Industries, Dr Reddy's Laboratories Ltd, Alvarez and Marsal, and Sembcorp — the firms that had employed her husband at some time during her stint at Sebi — as also that pertaining to her previous employer ICICI Bank at any stage after joining the regulator.

The payments that she got from ICICI Bank while being in Sebi pertained to contributory annuity scheme and exercising of ESOPs at various stages over 10 years.

"Sebi's guidelines permit board members, including the Chairperson, to hold and transact in ESOPs," Buch's statement

said.

While Hindenburg had alleged that the Buchs had previous investments in a fund that was part of network of funds used by two Adani associates to round-trip money and inflate group stock prices, the Congress alleged conflict of interest in dealings with ICICI, where she worked until 2011, as well as with Mahindra Group and four other companies due to consulting fees given by them to her husband Dhaval Buch.

"We are upright and honest professionals and have led our respective professional lives with transparency and dignity," the couple said, describing their work record as "unblemished" and that they will demolish all "motivated allegations even in future".

## Redington to offer iPhone 16 series at 7,000 retail locations across India

### New Delhi

Integrated technology solutions provider Redington Ltd will offer its iPhone 16 smartphones at its retail locations across the country, the company said on Saturday.

US-based Apple Inc., recently unveiled the latest range of smartphones; Apple Watch Series



10, Watch Ultra 2, Air Pods 4 among many others.

In a statement on Saturday, Redington said it would offer the iPhone 16 and iPhone 16 Plus equipped with a host of features at its 7,000 retail locations across the country.

All the new models can be pre-ordered, and they will be available from September 20, 8 am onwards, the statement added.



# Well-developed financial sector critical for growth: RBI Governor

## Mumbai

Finance will continue to play a vital role in the global growth story, particularly for emerging markets such as India, said Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das at an international forum in Singapore on Friday.

A well-developed financial sector is a precondition for the efficient allocation of resources and the exploitation of an economy's growth potential. As such, understanding the dynamic nature of the financial system by way of new sources of financing, savings and investment trends, and even demographic changes, is vital.

"This is an opportune time to enhance the breadth, access and efficiency of financial markets while also protecting consumer interests. A forward-looking approach would require developing regulatory sandboxes,



fostering collaboration with innovators, and ensuring the integration of new players into the regulatory framework without compromising prudence and stability," Das said during his

address at the Bretton Woods Committee's annual Future of Finance Forum.

He added that digitalisation had been a game changer, driving empowerment, entrepreneurial

innovation, productivity, and enabling an irreversible transformation of the economic landscape. Leveraging the digitalisation channel had the potential to bring in improvements in the field of financial inclusion, formalisation of finance and enhancements in cross-border payment systems.

On climate change, Das said it gave us another critical opportunity for innovation. Quest for new climate technologies and harnessing them could be instrumental in fostering energy independence, especially for developing countries. Climate-smart financial solutions, such as issuance of green bonds, also provided avenues for private sector involvement and engagement.

He also stressed that reforming the international monetary and financial and system was crucial for ensuring global economic

stability, fostering growth, and mitigating systemic risks. "The current system, while having supported decades of economic expansion, is increasingly challenged by imbalances and inefficiencies, including the dominance of a few currencies in global trade and finance. While reforms should address these imbalances to enable greater inclusion of emerging economies in global financial governance, they should also focus on strengthening the global financial safety net (GFSN)," he stated.

On India's growth for 2024-25, the RBI projects real GDP growth at 7.2 per cent, with risks evenly balanced around this forecast. This growth outlook reflects the underlying strength of India's macro-fundamentals, with domestic drivers — private consumption and investment — playing a major role.

## Data protection rules likely to be released for public consultation this month

## New Delhi

The rules that will make the digital personal data protection (DPDP) law operational are ready and will be released for public consultation by the end of this month, sources close to the development have said.

"DPDP rules are ready, drafting has been completed. It will be released for consultation before the end of September and consultation period will be more than a month," a person aware of the matter told Moneycontrol.

The DPDP Bill was passed the Parliament nearly a year ago but India's first data privacy law, which brings safeguards to prevent personal data breaches, has still not yet been implemented as many provisions require additional rules.

The law provides specialises protections for children and persons with disabilities, among

others. It defines a child as someone below the age of 18 and Section 9 of the Act mandates that such children have to be verified and parental consent required before processing the data of a



minor.

Earlier, in an interview to Moneycontrol, IT ministry secretary S Krishnan had said notifying the DPDP (Digital Personal Data Protection) Act's rules quickly was a "priority" for the Modi 3.0, which completed 100 days on September 17.

What could the DPDP rules have

Exemptions on the processing of children's data: The government may exempt educational institutions, health establishments, and certain government entities from restrictions on processing of children's data mandated in the DPDP Act

Data breach and data protection board: Any platform processing personal data, whether a private or government entity, must immediately notify the Data Protection Board (DPB) of any breach on getting to know of it.

Onus on platforms to ensure consent: When taking permission to process data of children or disabled persons, the onus may be on platforms to ensure that consent is obtained from the child's parents or legal guardians and the same should be verified with the help of government-mandated IDs.

## Wholesale inflation falls below 2% for first time in four months in August



## New Delhi

Wholesale inflation dropped below 2 percent for the first time in four months, owing to easing commodity prices and food prices.

India's wholesale inflation declined to 1.31 percent in August compared with 2.04 percent in the previous month, according to data released on September 17.

The trajectory of wholesale prices has again diverged from consumer inflation, which rose to 3.65 percent from 3.6 percent earlier.

Sticky food inflation, especially in vegetables, pulses, and cereals, and an uptick in

service inflation contributed to the faster pace of rise in prices of the consumer basket.

Wholesale inflation is likely to dip further if crude prices remain at current levels. Brent crude prices have been hovering near a three-year low of \$70. An earlier analysis by Moneycontrol showed that lower crude oil prices for longer period could upend the government's fiscal math, as it could lead to lower nominal growth than earlier projected.

A \$10 decrease in crude oil leads to a 50-bps or 0.5 percentage point decline in the wholesale price index, constituting nearly 60 percent of the GDP deflator.



# The Promise of Bioeconomy as a Solution for Sustainability



A recent report by the World Economic Forum (WEF) identifies extreme weather events and critical changes to Earth's systems as the top long-term risks to humanity. The urgency of the situation is further underscored by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) COP28 report, which warns that exceeding the 1.5°C warming threshold is becoming increasingly likely and could have devastating consequences. The overdependence on fossil fuels is a significant contributor to these factors. The International Energy Agency's World Energy Outlook 2023 highlights that fossil fuels comprise over 81 percent of the global energy mix, accounting for over 73 percent of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions.

Transitioning to cleaner and greener energy sources is imperative. To achieve this transition, exploring alternative, low-carbon energy sources is crucial. The COP28 UAE consensus includes an unprecedented reference to transitioning away from all fossil fuels in energy systems "in a just, orderly, and equitable manner". Participating nations were urged to triple their renewable power and double their energy efficiency by 2030 to reach net-zero emissions by 2050. Renewable energy sources such as bio-energy, solar, wind, and hydropower will play an important role in achieving this goal.

Bioeconomy has emerged as a promising solution to facilitate sustainable development. Bioeconomy is defined as a knowledge-based system that utilises renewable natural resources such as biomass for the production of energy, materials, and services. India's abundant sunlight, land resources, and agriculture can be leveraged to this end. The annual biomass availability in India is estimated to be around 750 million metric tonnes (MMT), with an additional surplus biomass availability of approximately 230 MMT per year. The installed capacity for biomass production in the country has shown steady growth, achieving 10 gigawatts (GW) by FY22, marking a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4 percent. Bio-based products developed from renewable agricultural resources are environmentally friendly and less toxic compared to their fossil-based counterparts.

**Biofuels for Sustainable Mobility**

The transportation sector is one of the largest contributors (around 20 percent) of greenhouse gas emissions. If left unchecked, greenhouse gas emissions from transportation could increase by as much as 60 percent by 2050. Aviation, which is a 'hard-to-abate' sector, generates approximately one billion tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year, accounting for around 2-3 percent of total global emissions. As part of sustainable climate action,

it is critical to decarbonise transportation by adopting cleaner and greener low-carbon alternatives to fossil-based fuels, such as biofuels.

Biofuels are a crucial socio-economic and environmental enabler. Various types of biofuels, such as ethanol, sustainable aviation fuel, biodiesel, and marine biofuel, are gaining prominence for their renewable and low-carbon characteristics. Biofuels are distinguished by their carbohydrate composition and, when blended with gasoline, serve as effective oxygenating agents, facilitating complete combustion. This results in significantly lower carbon emissions and minimum particulate matter, making a pivotal contribution to environmental conservation. Biofuels also play a transformative role in bolstering rural economies. Farmers benefit by gaining an additional revenue stream through the sale of agricultural residues. Biofuel plants in the vicinity of farmlands contribute to employment creation and entrepreneurship opportunities for rural households. The establishment of a farm-to-wheel value chain amplifies the impact of biofuels on carbon intensity reduction.

**Decarbonising Mobility with Ethanol**

A number of factors contribute to ethanol usage as a biofuel:

**Renewable:** Ethanol is produced from biomass, a renewable resource that can be replenished through sustainable farming practices.

**Gasoline blending:** Ethanol can be blended with gasoline in various ratios (e.g., E10 for 10-percent ethanol) in existing vehicle infrastructure, facilitating a gradual transition away from fossil fuels.

**Oxygenating agent:** Ethanol acts as an oxygenating agent when blended with gasoline, promoting cleaner and more complete combustion, thereby reducing harmful tailpipe emissions.

**Ethanol: Feedstock and Its Impact on Carbon Footprint**

Ethanol production methods are categorised based on the type of feedstock used, with each method impacting its carbon footprint.

**First-generation (1G) ethanol**

is derived from sugary or starchy crops like corn or sugarcane. While offering a lower carbon footprint compared to gasoline, it is categorised as low-carbon ethanol. Studies indicate that sugary feedstock-based ethanol has life-cycle emissions of approximately 34-50 grams of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per megajoule (gCO<sub>2</sub>e/MJ). Typical well-to-wheel emissions, i.e., comprising all emissions related to fuel production, processing, distribution, and use of gasoline, amount to ~94 gCO<sub>2</sub>e/MJ. This translates to a 50-63 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to gasoline.

**Second-generation (2G) ethanol**, on the other hand, utilises lignocellulosic biomass as feedstock. This includes non-food sources like agricultural and forestry residues. Due to its feedstock, 2G ethanol achieves an ultra-low carbon footprint. Studies suggest that 2G ethanol derived from rice straw has life-cycle emissions of ~17 gCO<sub>2</sub>e/MJ, resulting in an ~81 percent reduction in GHG emissions compared to gasoline. This decrease highlights the potential of 2G ethanol as a biofuel with a significantly lower environmental impact.

This distinction explains how the choice of feedstock plays a crucial role in overall carbon-footprint reduction. While 1G ethanol has a positive environmental impact, 2G technology unlocks a greater potential for sustainable biofuel production.

**IOCL's 2G Ethanol Biorefinery**

In August 2022, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled Asia's first 2G ethanol biorefinery at the Indian Oil Corporation Limited's (IOCL) Panipat complex in Haryana. The biorefinery deploys Praj's proprietary 2G technology for the production of ethanol using rice straw as feedstock. The biorefinery is capable of processing two lakh tonnes of rice straw annually to generate around three crore litres of ethanol, which could benefit more than one lakh farmers and create around 1,500 jobs for the rural youth. Importantly, it aims to address pollution from stubble burning by eliminating around 320,000 MT of CO<sub>2</sub> every year, which

is equivalent to replacing nearly 63,000 cars on the road annually. The indigenous production of ethanol is also estimated to result in foreign exchange savings worth INR 55-60 crores every year on imported crude oil. This project will help achieve 20 percent ethanol blending and is aligned with the idea of Atmanirbhar Bharat and the Make in India initiative.

**Bioplastics as a Solution**

The environmental crisis is exacerbated by uncontrolled plastic usage. Global plastic production has skyrocketed, reaching a staggering 400.3 million tonnes annually by 2022. However, less than 10 percent of this plastic is recycled, with the remainder ending up in landfills or polluting ecosystems, threatening wildlife and human health.

**Bioplastics**, being biodegradable and compostable, offer a sustainable solution to plastics sourced from petrochemicals. Bioplastics are produced through the biochemical and thermochemical processing of bio-based feedstock. Examples include polylactic acid (PLA) and polyhydroxyalkanoates (PHA), as well as thermoplastic starch (TPS) and cellulose, which offer functionality advantages for diverse applications. Although their use is increasing, as of 2022, bioplastics constituted less than 1 percent of the annual 400.3 million tonnes of plastic produced. However, global bioplastics production is expected to reach 6.3 million tonnes by 2027—up from 2.2 million tonnes in 2022. South-East Asia is the current hub for bioplastics production due to low production costs and a favourable ecosystem. India, with its cost-effective production environment, government support, and abundant resources, has the potential to be a market leader in bioplastics.

**Policy Recommendations for Biofuels and Bioplastics**

Supportive policy frameworks are required to unlock the full potential of the bioeconomy. For biofuels, policies like the National Biofuel Policy have already been successfully implemented in India. Beginning from a 5-percent ethanol blending programme in five states in 2003, in 2022, India achieved the target of E10 blending six months ahead of time. The earlier target of 2030 for E20 has been advanced to 2025.

**Boosting 2G Ethanol in India**

**Increased viability gap funding:** Extending the PM Jeevan Yojana for "bolt-on" models (bagasse used with 1G plants) will help augment capacity building.

**Differential pricing:** Devising policy that rewards low-carbon ethanol production using 2G feedstocks.

**Assured off-take and export:** Guaranteed purchase by fuel retailers and streamlining of exports will attract project developers to invest in the sector.

**Life-cycle analysis (LCA) and carbon credits:** Introducing

and defining a clear framework for computation of LCA based on different feedstocks can facilitate carbon trading mechanisms.

Further, the introduction of policies for flex fuel vehicles and electric vehicles can help diversify the available sustainable solutions. The hard-to-abate aviation sector accounts for ~3 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions and is expected to grow. However, global mandates such as the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) guidelines and the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) goal to achieve net-zero in international aviation by 2050 have necessitated the use of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF). A national policy to develop industry ecosystem and mandate the use of SAF in Indian skies will help achieve these objectives. Viability gap funding, additional subsidies, and funding for research and development (R&D) can be implemented in the policy framework.

For bioplastics, promoting innovation in biodegradable materials and establishing robust collection and composting infrastructure are critical. Policymakers can also consider introducing and implementing bans or restrictions on single-use plastics and introducing eco-taxes on conventional plastics to encourage a shift towards bioplastics. Strict policy measures to prevent greenwashing and fake imitates should also be introduced.

**Bio-Based Solutions and Global Commitments**

The escalating challenges of climate change and environmental degradation necessitate a paradigm shift towards sustainable solutions. Mainstreaming bioeconomy is fast gaining acceptance as a sustainable climate action. By propagating a bioeconomy that functions on the circularity principle will help strike a balance between people, planet, and profit. Initiatives like the IOCL's 2G ethanol biorefinery demonstrate that the adoption of bio-based technologies not only mitigates carbon emissions but also revitalises rural economies and addresses pressing environmental issues.

In the Global Energy Transition Index released by the WEF on 19 June 2024, India ranked 63rd out of 120 countries surveyed, improving from its 67th position in the previous year. This upward trajectory highlights India's growing commitment to sustainable energy solutions, including bioeconomy practices.

However, the bioeconomy's full potential can only be realised through the implementation of supportive policy frameworks. Policies that incentivise the adoption of biofuels and foster innovation in bioplastics can help pave the way for a sustainable future.



# Nurturing a New Class of Young Women Social Innovators in India



India's young women are more educated and healthier, with higher aspirations than ever before, creating an untapped opportunity for social innovation. Currently, nearly 35 percent of India's women (i.e., 240 million) are under the age of 24. These women are entering a new era of economic growth and socio-economic development in the country, with higher levels of educational enrolment, better health outcomes, and stronger aspirations.

India has achieved gender parity at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, with 104 girls enrolled in tertiary education for every 100 boys. Moreover, India has the highest number of STEM graduates globally, almost half of whom are women. In 2021-22, women constituted nearly 30 percent of graduates and post-graduates in engineering and 53 percent in the sciences.

Young women and girls aged 15-24 years are also experiencing significant improvements in health outcomes. The proportion of young women using hygienic menstrual products increased from 58 percent in 2015-16 to 77 percent in 2019-21. There was also progress in reducing adolescent fertility rates and child marriage rates in this period.

An increasing number of young women are expressing a preference to marry at later ages and to participate in the workforce. According to the Teenage Girls Survey 2018, 73 percent of teenage girls aspired for marriage after the age of 21 and 75 percent aspired to work after the completion of their studies. Nikore Associates, a youth-led think tank, undertook consultations during May 2020-May 2022 with over 100 community-based organisations, social enterprises, and academics focusing on gender equality. Nearly all stakeholders observed an increase in the number of young women who aspire to obtain economically viable skills, reinforced by family support to obtain higher education and skill training. A large section of these young women also wanted to work in their communities to improve the standard of living, especially for women and children.

Despite these developments, gendered social norms and the lack of gender-sensitive infrastructure continue to constrain aspiring young women social innovators. Social innovation is a slow

process. Young women in India experience significant time poverty due to gender gaps in domestic and care work. Nearly 86 percent of young women in the 15-29 years age group perform domestic work and 40 percent undertake care work for household members, compared to 24 percent and 11 percent of young men, respectively. Young women and teenage girls are often entrusted with household work and care for younger siblings, especially when older women in the household participate in the workforce. This results in lesser time for learning, skill development, and employment-related activities for young women, creating barriers to participation in the social innovation sector.

Social innovation requires mobility to travel and understand various social contexts and challenges. However, women's mobility is constrained by safety concerns and social norms across India, with young women's mobility more constrained than that of older women. In 2019-21, a low 26 percent of women in the 15-19 years age group were able to visit nearby markets, health facilities, and places outside their villages and communities, compared to 40 percent in the 25-29 years age group and 55 percent in the 40-49 years age group. World Bank research shows that young women are at a higher risk of sexual harassment than older women, with rates of harassment in public spaces being as high as 90 percent in some cities. Moreover, sexual

harassment has severe negative impacts on the mental health and confidence of young women.

Therefore, young women aspiring to become social innovators may not even be able to achieve the first stage: that of stepping out of their homes. Those who manage to start may find their operations limited to local areas and their own communities. They may not be able to secure funding to scale up, and their innovations may not reach communities beyond their districts.

Social innovation also requires communication and outreach, which in turn necessitates the use of social media, mass media, and technology platforms to communicate ideas, plans, and best practices to a wide demographic. However, in India, women are 15 percent less likely to own a mobile phone and 33 percent less likely to use mobile internet services than men. In 2020, 25 percent of the total adult female population owned a smartphone versus 41 percent of adult men. Additionally, young women are least likely to own a smartphone. This gendered digital divide is compounded for young women, whose online activity is largely monitored by male and older female family members, thereby limiting their participation as social innovators.

Social innovators need to be leaders and negotiators who are able to challenge established social norms and age-old practices while building consensus around new solutions. In order to do this, young women need role models,

particularly other women, who can offer guidance and advice based on their experiences to help the young women navigate challenges and obstacles. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of women aspiring to establish social enterprises, especially in rural areas. Despite this, there are few women leaders in social innovation. Studies estimate that only about 25 percent of social enterprises in India in 2016 were women-led. This paucity of role models limits the ability of women social innovators to scale up their solutions.

The question, then, is how India can channel the energy, skills, and aspirations of its 240 million young women to create a new class of social innovators.

First, there is a need to improve access to sponsorship and mentorship opportunities. Young women aspiring to become social innovators require guidance from leaders in the social innovation space so that they can share experiences and practical, on-ground, demand-driven solutions. For example, Kudumbashree, which began in 1997 as part of the Kerala State Poverty Eradication Mission, is today one of the largest women-led communities in the world, with over 250,000 neighborhood-level women-led enterprises and 400,000 women members across Kerala. The Kudumbashree Community Development Society exemplifies how mentorship from senior, approachable, and local role models can help young women lead their own social enterprises, solving for community-level challenges in areas such as healthcare, education, and livelihood generation.

Second, governments should consider introducing financial incentives for professional incubators to ensure the representation of young women social innovators in their cohorts. For instance, central and state governments may offer tax-based or additional grants to incubators. This could contribute to incubators relying on government financing as well as philanthropic or corporate social responsibility (CSR) financing.

Third, governments can consider introducing additional financial incentives for skill-training institutes for young women social innovators as part of the PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0 program. Governments

can also direct these institutes to partner with private-sector CSR financing, community-based organisations, and other stakeholders to offer additional support for young women social innovators' training, such as by providing transport and creche facilities.

Fourth, government agencies at the city level, such as municipal and public transport authorities, can involve young women in planning processes to enhance their safety and introduce gender-inclusive public transport services. For instance, young women can lead community-level safety audits across cities to inform authorities about dark spots, low visibility zones, and unsafe spaces. Young women can also lead community consultations in planning urban public transport services, highlighting key routes taken by women and girls that are underserved and identifying timings during which services are unavailable.

Fifth, industry associations can be provided financial support by state and central governments to hold career fairs and networking events for young women social innovators to improve market access and make them aware of new business opportunities. These networking events can also be key to enhancing access to finance for young women social innovators, who are often the least preferred borrower by banks. Mann Deshi Foundation, a network of women-led social enterprises in Maharashtra, is a strong example of how access to finance through innovative products helps social innovators upscale their business. During the COVID-19 lockdown, the foundation introduced low-interest smartphone loans, after consultations with its women partners, enabling over 80 percent women to buy their own smartphones and transition to digital platforms for business. This helped them expand their markets and networks and even unlock fintech financing for their enterprises.

Most importantly, community leaders, be they local members of the legislative assembly or Members of Parliament, need to support young women social innovators to ensure their safety and help them navigate political and economic challenges that may arise as they advocate for reforms.



# Why cities experience 'livability atrophy': The case of Bengaluru and Pune

Just as the rise of cities is a complex phenomenon, comprising a multitude of external dynamics and internal factors, their decline, too, contains a combination of external and internal factors. Global climate change, natural disasters, war, shifting power equations, technology, and innovation are forces that can impact cities severely. Unfortunately, individual cities cannot be expected to counter these factors entirely on their own.

However, even in the absence of such factors, local decision-making and man-made disasters could play a decisive role in the fate of cities. For example, Kolkata was once India's foremost centre of economy, commerce, culture, academics, theatre, and the arts. But post-Independence, amongst other factors, decisions inimical to industry and trade that were taken locally led to the city's economic decline. Businesses relocated out of the city and professionals migrated to other parts of the country or abroad. Within decades, Kolkata was eclipsed by Mumbai, which became the beacon of the national economy, wealth, and glamour. However, Mumbai's advantages appear to be suffering an erosion on account of its prohibitive land prices, the lack of affordable housing, overwhelming population density and declining quality of life.

Businesses relocated out of the city and professionals migrated to other parts of the country or abroad. Within decades, Kolkata was eclipsed by Mumbai, which became the beacon of the national economy, wealth, and glamour.

## A tale of two cities

The last two decades saw Bengaluru and Pune stand out as centres of attraction, offering a better quality of life unmatched by other Indian cities. These qualities included better weather, great employment opportunities, an acceptable standard of infrastructure, a green environment, and functioning law and order. In 2018, in a nationwide survey carried out by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Pune was declared the most liveable city in India. Two years later, the city slipped to the second position in the Ease of Living Index survey carried out by the Ministry.

In 2024, Bengaluru topped the list, obtaining the highest score of 66.70 on the Ease of Living Index. The city was acclaimed as the 'Silicon Valley of India', drawing the brightest to take up jobs in the Information Technology (IT) sector. Its cultural and recreational strengths as well as its affordable rents made it the most sought-after destination for those who aspired to

a better quality of life. Pune had similar strengths and competed with Bengaluru in cosmopolitan culture, safe environments, reasonable costs, and a strong job profile. Sadly, these strengths of the two cities seem to be dissipating at some speed.

## Bengaluru

To take the case of Bengaluru, the



city had a population less than 1 million (790,308) in 1951. By 2021, its population had swelled massively to 12.76 million and is currently estimated at 14 million. Along with its population, both its human density and built density have grown per square kilometre. These local factors have had their share, along with climate change, to make Bengaluru a much hotter city. In 2024, the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC) reported that temperatures in the city had crossed 40 degrees Celsius, reaching 41.8 degrees Celsius on 30 April 2024. The KSNDMC further informed that it was not just the day temperature that had shown an upward trend; the city's minimum temperature was also on the rise, adding to the discomfort of the citizens, especially at night. Along with heat in the summer, Bengaluru has been repeatedly visited by floods, disrupting city life, destroying infrastructure, causing huge economic losses and claiming human lives.

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The city is now additionally beset with serious drinking water problems. Last summer, the Karnataka Chief Minister was

on record stating that Bengaluru was short of 500 million litres of water every day, one-fifth of the city's total water demand. A part of the citizenry is forced to have its demand met by purchasing water from tankers. As the city population rises, greater water demand is leading to larger quantities of groundwater extraction. As a consequence, groundwater

levels are dropping and wells are drying up.

To add to the woes of India's Silicon Valley, Bengaluru has a huge traffic congestion problem. Tom Tom, a multinational developer of location technology, in its global Traffic Congestion Index 2023, ranked Bengaluru the most congested city in India and the sixth-most congested in the world. It took 28 minutes and 30 seconds on city roads to cover a distance of 10 kms with an average speed of 18 km per hour. This was one minute longer than in 2022, indicating the worsening of the traffic situation.

The city has also witnessed an increase in crime. Between 2021 and 2023, crime incidents rose from 7,566 to 12,627. Murders increased from 145 to 205, robberies from 364 to 673, and thefts from 1,167 to 2,493. What was worrisome was that crime detection dropped from 47 percent in 2021 to 28.5 percent in 2023. Crimes against women and children also registered an increase. Cybercrime made a remarkable three-fold jump, from 6,422 in 2021 to 17,623 cases in 2023. The city police were under much greater pressure to tackle rising multi-dimensional delinquency.

## Pune

Pune's situation was no better. It has witnessed a demographic explosion, similar to Bengaluru. A city with 0.58 million people in 1950 has added huge human

numbers and is now estimated at 7.3 million. Like Bengaluru, its temperate climate is increasingly becoming a thing of the past. This summer, the Indian Meteorological Department issued advisories for the people to reschedule their outdoor activities and keep hydrated following the temperatures soaring to 43.3 degrees Celsius. In 2024, the maximum temperature crossed the 40 degrees Celsius mark on more occasions than in the past. Clearly, population growth, greater human and built density and deforestation had combined with climate change to radically alter the temperature profile of the city. Additionally, in Tom Tom's Traffic Congestion Index 2023, Pune was placed right after Bengaluru as the seventh-most congested city in the world. It took an average of 27 minutes 50 seconds to negotiate a distance of 10 kms with an average speed of 19 km per hour during peak traffic period.

The handling of the Porche car road crash that killed two young professionals, the murder of a senior citizen out on a morning walk and the slaying of a former corporator by bike-borne assailants have left the city shaken.

While Pune's overall crime figures show no significant changes over a decade per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) annual survey, some recent incidents have raised a sense of alarm and insecurity among citizens. The handling of the Porche car road crash that killed two young professionals, the murder of a senior citizen out on a morning walk and the slaying of a former corporator by bike-borne assailants have left the city shaken.

Pune also had terrible floods this year when parts of the city went under water, severely disrupting normal life and raising concerns about the city's capacity to handle such disasters. Its road system, riddled with potholes, too, is unable to cope with increasing traffic. The overall deficit in road space and the lack of dedicated service roads overcrowd the main arteries of the city. Citizens, required to commute daily, have been openly voicing their annoyance at city road infrastructure.

Overall, the two city governments, handicapped by a fractured governance architecture, stymied by financial feebleness and hammered by the consequences of climate change, seem to be unable to respond to the colossal challenges. Unless the situation is taken seriously and radical steps are initiated by the higher levels of government, Bengaluru and Pune's rankings in the Ease of Living Index may carry no meaning for the unfortunate citizens.



# PMJAY cover for all elderly Indians irrespective of income: a major step towards Universal Health Care

In a major policy development, the Union Cabinet approved universalisation of health coverage under the Ayushman Bharat—Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) to all Indians above 70 years of age on 11 September 2024. Earlier this year, Prime Minister (PM) Modi had announced at the launch of the BJP's election manifesto that the government was determined to include every senior citizen above 70 years of age in the PMJAY scheme. However, with the latest Budget in July 2024 silent on the expansion, there were fears that the implementation of the expansion may get delayed at least by a year. According to government sources, this massive expansion of the scheme is to benefit around 45 million families across India. With upcoming elections in Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana and Maharashtra later this year, this move is expected to reap rich electoral dividends.

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This expansion of the AB-PMJAY into non-poor households can be considered a first step of many to follow offering financial protection to the Indian middle class during health emergencies requiring hospitalisation care. An earlier paper from ORF at the launch of the scheme in 2018 had suggested offering AB-PMJAY policy to non-poor households at an affordable premium. In recent years, various media stories have appeared on plans to include 400 million non-poor citizens into the AB-PMJAY fold, but no concrete decision had been announced until now. What the current cabinet decision has done is subsidise the premium for the most vulnerable within the non-poor population, which is a commendable step.

As shown in Figure 1 exploring the 21st century demographic dynamics in India, the 70+ aged population has grown from 2.8% of the Indian population in 2001 to 4.3% in 2021, and is expected to double by 2031. According to a recent report by the NITI Aayog on senior care reforms, only around one-fifth of the elderly population (60+) in India is covered by health insurance, while nearly 78% remain without any pension coverage. As a result, a substantial proportion of healthcare expenses of the older population in India is financed out of pocket, putting their families at risk of increased vulnerability to financial crises.

While around 20% of the 60+ population is covered by insurance, latest data available at the population



level from the Longitudinal Ageing Study in India (2017-18) suggests that there are substantial differences in insurance coverage among different age categories within the 60+ population. As Figure 2 shows, both 70-79 years and 80+ sub-populations in India had considerably lower health coverage as opposed to the 60-69 population. In addition, as the NITI Aayog report notes, many among the elderly reach old age without sufficient savings or pensions to live on or to support their long-term care. It is estimated that almost 70% of the elderly are dependent for everyday maintenance on family and relatives, putting economic pressure on the households. By offering universal coverage to the 70+ population of the country, the government of India is trying to change the status quo.

The expansion of AB-PMJAY is part of a series of policy initiatives addressing issues of the elderly population. Major reforms within elderly care in India began with the National Policy on Older Persons (NPOP) in 1999, aimed at providing care and protection for vulnerable elderly individuals, along with the constitution of a National Council for Older Persons (NCOP). In 2007, the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act aimed at providing adequate medical facilities and security for the elderly.

Reflecting these two developments, the ministry of health and family welfare launched the National Programme for the Health Care of Elderly (NPHCE) in 2010-11 to address health issues specific to the elderly. In 2011, the National Policy on Senior Citizens expanded the focus of the NPOP to accommodate evolving challenges. The National Council of Senior Citizens (NCSrC),

a more inclusive version of the NCOP, was established in 2012 to monitor these efforts. In 2020, the National Action Plan for the Welfare of Senior Citizens (NAPSrC) was introduced, further strengthening support systems with four key sub-schemes for senior welfare. Provision of adequate medical care to the elderly population was an underlying theme across these initiatives, and the current expansion is a substantial contribution towards addressing this major policy concern.

## Elderly care within the Existing AB-PMJAY

A look at the usage data of AB-PMJAY shows that the elderly population (60+) comprises of 14% of the more than 350 million Ayushman card holders, who have accessed the scheme. At the same time, almost-one-fourth of all authorised hospital admissions, amounting to 69 million, under AB-PMJAY from its inception in 2018, were of patients aged 60 or above. In line with the inclusion criteria of AB-PMJAY till now, these patients were from poor and vulnerable households. With the current expansion into the non-poor households, these proportions are going to go up in the years to come, offering respite to millions of families across the country.

## The way forward

The government of India plans to implement the expansion soon, and the existing AB-PMJAY structures will be used to roll out the scheme. However, concerns about awareness of government health insurance amongst the neediest remains an issue that may aggravate with age. A study based on a pan-India survey from 2021 found that although over 70 percent of households across India reported that they were aware of the PMJAY scheme, scheme

awareness was lowest among households in the bottom two quintiles—precisely the population who need the most assistance. Access to mass media and new media could be a challenge among the elderly, and this existing problem may be amplified with this age group. Awareness among the target populations remains a bottleneck within AB-PMJAY, despite information, education, and communication campaigns, which necessitates starting innovative interventions in low-awareness states.

Latest available data, although from the pre-PMJAY era, underlines these concerns. The Longitudinal Ageing Study in India (2017-18) found that a vast majority of the elderly in India is not aware of health insurance (Figure 5). A substantial proportion of the elderly population of India also found the existing health insurance schemes unaffordable. While making AB-PMJAY universal for the 70+ population is a welcome step to address the latter problem, the awareness deficit may prove to be a binding constraint. Mass campaigns with the help of local governments are needed to reach every household with elderly members who are over 70 years of age.

Interestingly, the Senior Citizen Health Insurance Scheme (SCHIS) launched in 2016 had offered a modest top-up cover of INR 30,000, in line with the then RSBY scheme to every elderly member of the RSBY household, with the additional cover in multiples based on the number of elderly members in the same household.

After the initial results of the implementation of the new scheme come in, perhaps it will be prudent to apply this clause to AB-PMJAY as well, given the increased vulnerability of households with more than one elderly member over 70 years of age, which are relatively low in number. In the future, AB-PMJAY needs to be offered for free to the population aged 60-69 years as well, in line with India's elderly policy objectives. As discussed elsewhere, India's journey towards health for all requires that the hundreds of millions of non-poor population at constant risk of health shocks are offered affordable ways to be part of the AB-PMJAY risk pool. The current expansion of the scheme into the non-poor households through enrolment of the 70+ population at zero cost to the household, will hopefully accelerate policy action on that pending decision.



# Karan Johar to host Indian adaptation of 'The Traitors' for Prime Video

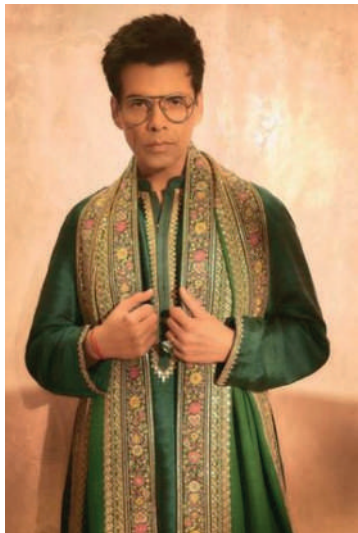
Producer-director Karan Johar is all set to host the Indian adaptation of popular reality show 'The Traitors' for Prime Video, the streamer announced on Tuesday.

The OTT platform has joined hands with independent distributor All3Media International for the BAFTA and Emmy Award-winning global format that is produced by BBC Studios India Productions.

The game show, which has been adapted in over 20 countries, will premiere exclusively on Prime Video in Hindi with subtitles in English.

The show, set as an ultimate game of trust and deception, will see 20 players competing for a cash jackpot at a royal palace. They have to carry on many missions to win the cash prize but unknown to them, a few amongst them will be 'traitors', secretly chosen at the beginning of the show by the host, a press release said.

"The Traitors' is one of the most watched reality series, with its popularity growing all over the world as the audience laps up the riveting drama and entertainment. Having watched the UK and US versions, I have become an avid fan of the format and am



in awe of Claudia Winkleman and Alan Cumming, who are so marvellous in the way they host their respective shows with poise yet suspenseful theatrics that leave you at the edge of your seat.

Building on the very successful relationship with Prime Video, I am thrilled to take on the mantle as the host for the Indian adaptation of the show. And the 20 players on the show are in for an unforgettable and unpredictable journey, especially with me operating in the shadows," Johar said.

Nikhil Madhok, Head of Originals, Prime Video India, said unscripted content continues to be a key focus for us at the streamer as they have witnessed

"an exponential growth in the consumption, attention, and appreciation" in the content for shows such as 'Angry Young Men' and 'Follow Kar Lo Yaar'.

"In our journey of introducing highly compelling and bingeable unscripted content, 'The Traitors' marks a significant milestone for Prime Video. It is a unique reality format that has enthralled a global audience in various regions and languages. An exciting show like this requires an equally exciting host. We are thrilled to have Karan Johar host and commandeer the show. Who better than him to amp up the drama and entertainment," Madhok said.

According to Sabrina Duguet, EVP APAC at All3Media International, 'The Traitors' will create a whole new genre of fandom in India when it premieres on Prime Video. "We're also thrilled to share that following this deal with Prime Video India there are now over 30 versions of 'The Traitors' commissioned worldwide," Duguet said.

Sameer Gogate, GM BBC Studios India Productions, said, "... Keeping true to the international format and scale, the Indian adaptation will appeal to audiences of all ages with varied choices and preferences. We can't wait for them to enjoy this game."

## Aishwarya Rai Bachchan bags Best Actress award at SIIMA

The latest edition of South Indian International Movie Awards (SIIMA) 2024 saw Aishwarya Rai Bachchan clinching the trophy for Best Actress in a Leading Role (Critics). She won the award for her performance in Mani Ratnam's film Ponniyin Selvan 2.

Aishwarya was accompanied by her daughter Aaradhya during her winning moment. Several pictures from the ceremony surfaced online. In the visuals, one can see Aaradhya capturing the special moments of her mom while she received the award on the stage at the ceremony, which was held in Dubai on Sunday.

Kabir Khan presented the award to Aishwarya. In her acceptance speech, she said, "Thank you so

very much SIIMA for honouring me with the award.

It means the world to me because this was a movie so close to my heart, Ponniyin Selvan, directed by my guru Mani Ratnam. And honouring my work for the best actress as Nandini is actually celebrating the work of the entire team."

The mother-daughter duo even walked the red carpet. Aishwarya took selfies with her fans who gathered outside the venue. Aishwarya's co-star Chiyaan Vikram also took home

Best Actor (Tamil) award at SIIMA 2024. Ponniyin Selvan 2, directed by Mani Ratnam, is the sequel to the 2022 film. Actor Kamal Haasan lent his voice to the film's narration. Oscar-winning music composer AR Rahman has composed the music for the film.



## Salman Khan Issues Warning Against Fake US Concert Announcements



Actor Salman Khan has issued a statement warning fans against a fake announcement of his concerts and appearances in the US.

On Tuesday night, the 58-year-old posted an official notice on his official Instagram page regarding the claims.

"This is to inform that neither Mr Salman Khan nor any of his affiliated companies or teams are organizing any upcoming

concerts, appearances in the USA in 2024. Any claims suggesting that Mr Khan will be performing are completely false," the statement read.

"Please do not trust any emails, messages, or advertisements promoting such events. Legal action will be taken against anyone found falsely using Mr Salman Khan's name for fraudulent purposes," it added.

## Zeenat Aman confidently claims 'born to be flamboyant'

Veteran actress Zeenat Aman, dubbed as the 'Queen of Instagram', has shared pictures from her latest photoshoot which she did in Goa.

On Tuesday, the actress took to her Instagram, and shared two pictures in which she can be seen donning a beautiful outfit which consists of a gown paired with a Zebra print cape.

The actress also penned a long note in the caption, and shared how she collaborated with designer Tania Alfonso Fadte, who had earlier styled Priyanka Chopra Jonas for a magazine cover.

The veteran actress wrote, 'Just call me a Bird-of-Paradise. Born to be flamboyant and ever-ready to take wing. As a self-professed home-bird, there is something just so wonderful about home-brewed ideas and projects. The ease and comfort of these are unparalleled. On this last visit to Goa, @zanuski and @carapirinha invited over their talented friends @taniafadte and



@taralouphoto for a morning of dress-up at @birdsongmoira.'

She further mentioned, 'Tania, an exceptionally gifted stylist who just dressed Priyanka Chopra for her gorgeous Vogue India cover, managed to borrow stunning outfits for the shoot in record time, and helped direct this vision. Tara, for her part, shot me guerrilla style with a single assistant, minimal equipment and the sweetest disposition. The six of us traipsed about the empty villa, finding beautiful spots to shoot in, endured the mercurial weather - rain, sunshine, rain - and wrapped up in time to eat a homemade lunch of dahi kadhi chawal.'



# Sunny Deol finds motivation in great outdoors

Actor Sunny Deol shared a combined glimpse as he travels to explore the beauty of nature.

Sunny, who has 3.9 million followers on Instagram, posted a reel in which the actor spoke about his motivation as he witnessed the essence of travelling through various locations.

The 'Apne' fame actor also wrote a caption, 'My Motivation: Spend as much time with Mother Earth as possible' with emojis of mountains and trees.

At the start of the video, Sunny said, "Feeling good. Feeling top of the world. Have a great day" and ended with a flying kiss for his die-hard fans.

Later, the video shows Sunny driving in his winter avatar as the actor is seen wearing a cap, brown coat, and his all-time classy shades as he travels near the snowy mountain path.

The next shot shows a glimpse of the waterfall and later again the clip focuses on the winter background as Sunny eats a roll filled with delicacies. Later, the clip moves forward as Sunny travels to various locations,



simultaneously showing mother earth's beauty.

The video also featured Sunny along with his better half Pooja Deol. In the segment, Pooja is seen throwing snowballs at Sunny. They share a moment of love and joy.

Furthermore, the reel

showcased the star exploring other mesmerising locations as he completely delves into the air of such a soothing and calm phase of life.

Sunny also shared many glimpses while playing with snow which signifies the actor's love for the places that are located

in the hilly regions.

In the final segment, Sunny shared pictures with kids, his father, legendary actor Dharmendra, a group of travellers and the flag of India which was made on the rock and ended the video while eating his favourite sweet dish Jalebi.

Soon after Sunny's breathtaking post went viral, fans and celebrities, including his brother actor Bobby Deol, showered their love in the comments section.

Bobby commented with the numerous heart emojis on the post.

'Udan Patola' fame actor Poppy Jabbar wrote, 'This brought my smile back' with heart emojis.

Sunny is currently gearing up for his next film 'Border 2' which is a sequel to his 1997 film 'Border', helmed by LOC Kargil fame director JP Dutta. As for now, actors Varun Dhawan and Diljit Dosanjh have been roped in for the highly anticipated sequel.

Apart from 'Border 2', Sunny will also become part of 'Lahore 1947' alongside actress Preity Zinta. The film has been bankrolled by legendary actor Aamir Khan under the banner of Aamir Khan Production, which will be helmed by 'China Gate' fame director Rajkumar Santoshi.

## Emmy Awards: 'The Bear,' 'Shogun' lead the pack

"The Bear" is coming back for seconds in a big way at the Emmys, scoring repeat wins Sunday night four times including best actor, best supporting actor and best supporting actress in a comedy.

The star of the FX show Jeremy Allen White won best actor in a comedy for the second straight year, and Ebon Moss-Bachrach repeated as best supporting actor.

A surprise came when Liza Colón-Zayas won best supporting actor over major competition.

"How could I have thought it would be possible to be in the presence of Meryl Streep and Carol Burnett," Colón-Zayas said as tears welled in her eyes as she accepted the award on the stage of the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles.

She is the first Latina to win in the category.

"To all the Latinas who are looking at me," she said, "keep believing and vote".

White said backstage that he was watching in the wings as Colón-Zayas won and "that was just the greatest".

He also shouted out two acting wins the show had already scored at last weekend's Creative Arts Emmy Awards, when Jamie Lee Curtis won best guest actress in a comedy for playing his mother, and Jon Bernthal won best guest actor for playing his big brother.



And the show's creator, Christopher Storer, won best directing of a comedy series, an award handed out by reunited "Happy Days" co-stars Ron Howard and Henry Winkler.

"The Bear" won six times including most of the top comedy categories at the strike-delayed Emmys in January.

While the third season of FX's "The Bear" has already dropped, the trio won their second Emmys for its second, in which White's chef Carmen "Carmy" Berzatto attempts to turn his family's grungy Chicago sandwich shop into an elite restaurant. It could still win more Sunday night including best comedy series.

The father-son hosting duo of Eugene and Dan Levy in their monologue at the top of the show mocked the very dramatic "The Bear" being in the comedy category.

"In honour of 'The Bear' we will be making no jokes," Eugene Levy said, to

laughs. Jean Smart won best actress in a comedy for "Hacks." She has won for all three seasons of "Hacks," and has six Emmys overall.

She beat nominees including Ayo Edebiri, who as co-star of "The Bear" moved from supporting actress, which she won in January, to lead actress.

Coming into the show the big story was another FX show, "Shogun," which had already taken the most Emmys for a show in a single season with 14 at the Creative Arts ceremony.

"Shogun" lost its first chance at winning on the main show Sunday when Billy Crudup took best supporting actor in a drama over Tadanobu Asano for his role on the Apple TV+ series "The Morning Show." "Shogun," the FX series about lordly politicking in feudal Japan, also lost out in the drama writing category to "Slow Horses." But it can still win as many as four more Emmys, including best actor in a drama, best actress in a drama and best drama series.

Veteran screen star Hiroyuki Sanada, up for best actor, Anna Sawai, up for best actress, are in position to become the first Japanese actors to win Emmys.

If "Shogun" faces any competition for the best drama prize, it could come for the sixth and final season of "The Crown,"

the only show among the nominees that has won before in a category recently dominated by the retired "Succession." Elizabeth Debicki took best supporting actress in a drama for playing Princess Diana at the end of her life in the sixth and final season of the show.

"Playing this part, based on this unparalleled, incredible human being, has been my great privilege," Debicki said. "It's been a gift." Netflix's darkly quirky British show "Baby Reindeer" scored big wins in the limited series category, including best writing for the show's creator and star Richard Gadd, and best supporting actress for Jessica Gunning, who plays his tormentor.

"Baby Reindeer" is based on a one man-stage show in which Gadd describes being sexually abused along with other emotional struggles.

"Ten years ago, I was down and out, I never ever thought I could get my life together," Gadd said through tears as he accepted. "Here I am, just a decade later picking up one of the biggest writing awards in television." He added, "no matter how bad it gets, it always gets better." The Associated Press does not typically name people who say they have been sexually abused unless they come forward publicly as Gadd has.



# Gambhir-led coaching staff has different style compared to Dravid: Rohit Sharma

## Mumbai

India captain Rohit Sharma on Tuesday said head coach Gautam Gambhir's style is different from his predecessor Rahul Dravid but insisted he shares a good rapport with the new appointee, and the rest of his fresh set of support staff.

Gambhir, a World Cup-winning former opener, took charge of India in July during a white ball tour to Sri Lanka, and will now helm the team in its first Test series under his tutelage against Bangladesh, beginning here from Thursday.

In Gambhir's first outing as coach, India swept the T20I series against the Islanders 3-0, but lost the ensuing ODI series 0-2.

"Obviously, Rahul bhai, Vikram Rathour (former batting coach) and Paras Mhambrey (former bowling coach) were a different team and it is only acceptable that the new support staff will bring different perspective," Rohit said in the



pre-series press conference here on Tuesday.

"But the matches that we engaged in (with the new staff) in Sri Lanka, they seemed to be sensible and understanding. They began to learn things pretty quickly within the team," he added.

Dravid's tenure ended after India's T20 World Cup triumph in the West Indies and he will next be seen heading

the coaching staff of IPL side Rajasthan Royals.

Rathour and Mhambrey were replaced by Abhishek Nayar (assistant coach) and South African Morne Morkel (bowling coach), while former Dutch all-rounder Ryan ten Doeschate also joined as an assistant coach.

While Nayar joining the team was largely a given, Morkel and Doeschate, who

worked with Gambhir at the Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL, beat former pacers R Vinayakumar and L Balaji in the race to spots among the India support staff.

Rohit used his long association with Gambhir during the latter's playing days, and with Abhishek Nayar in the Mumbai dressing room to underline his comfortable working relation with them.

"It's a new (support) staff for sure, but I have known Gautam Gambhir and Abhishek Nayar long enough. Every support staff has its operating style, and that's what we were expecting.

"I have worked with different coaches over 17 years of my career, and it's vital to understand that all of them have a unique perspective (about cricket), and it's a must that you adjust with them," said Rohit.

While Rohit has never worked alongside Morkel and Doeschate, the 37-year-old

said he has enough knowledge of them from their days as cricketers to strike a comfortable equation.

"I have also played matches against Morne Morkel and Ryan ten Doeschate. I have some close encounters with Morkel, but not so much with Ryan, may be a couple of matches. But that doesn't matter.

"As of now, there have been no issues or problems as such (with the new set of support staff). We have a great understanding of each other.

"Good understanding is important, and I have that with them," he added on his dynamics with the new head coach and his team.

In his first media interaction after taking charge in July, the 42-year-old Gambhir had also rejected apprehensions about his equation with the team's senior players by citing his familiarity with them during his playing days.

## Team working on mental strength: Harmanpreet Kaur

## Mumbai

Indian players have been working on their mental strength for a "long time", which should help the team in overcoming hurdles, said skipper Harmanpreet Kaur ahead of the upcoming women's T20 World Cup next month.

India, who finished as runners-up in the 2020 edition of the tournament, are placed in Group A along with six-time winners and defending champions Australia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and New Zealand.

Kaur said that the Indian players have been working on the mental aspect to bring out their best in crucial moments.

"We have been working on mental strength for a long time. The last three-four overs are the most crucial. T20 cricket is not a small format, at the end of the day, you are playing 40 overs," Kaur said.

"In the last four-five overs, the team that is mentally strong wins the match. We have been focusing on this for a while. If we can remain mentally stable

in those final five overs, we can execute what's best for us."

India's performances in summit clashes have featured in discussions given the team lost in the 2020 final by 85 runs to Australia, while England had pipped them by a mere nine runs in the 2017 ODI World Cup final.

Even in the 2022 Commonwealth Games, Australia eked out a nine-run win to clinch the gold medal despite a spirited show with the bat from India in the final, with Kaur's team settling for the silver.

"We are working on those aspects, and hopefully, we will overcome this hurdle in the tournament," she said.

India's campaign begins on October 4 against New Zealand followed by the clash against arch-rivals Pakistan on October 6.

India, who lost to Sri Lanka in the women's Asia Cup final earlier this year, will take on the team from the island nation on October 9 and each of their first three group stage matches will be played in Dubai.





## Arsenal beat Spurs in London derby



Arsenal are leaving arch-rivals Tottenham's stadium with a win for the third season in a row after Gabriel Magalhaes' second-half header settled a feisty and physical north London derby in the Premier League.

Tottenham had Arsenal pegged back for much of the game but couldn't make their chances count as the visitors weathered the pressure before Gabriel secured a 1-0 win by scoring in the 64th minute. The Brazilian centreback lost his marker and met a corner from Bukayo Saka with a thumping header from the middle of the box.

The goal came largely against the run of play but secured a vital victory for Arsenal, who are already two points behind defending champions Manchester City and could ill afford to drop more points ahead of a trip to the Etihad Stadium next weekend. The visitors were slightly fortunate not to be trailing early, though, as Tottenham took full advantage of Arsenal's weakened midfield to boss proceedings for much of the opening hour. Without the suspended Declan Rice and the injured Martin Odegaard, Arsenal never looked comfortable against Tottenham's press.

## Indian F2 driver Kush Maini survives scary crash in Baku, penalised post race

Indian driver Kush Maini on Sunday survived a horrifying crash after he stalled at the start of the feature race in Formula 2, a support race to Formula 1.

The scary incident occurred on the opening lap of the Formula 2 race which preceded the Formula 1 Azerbaijan Grand Prix.

The 23-year-old Indian had nowhere to go at the race start as his car's engine stopped working suddenly. That left fellow drivers Josep Maria Marti and Oliver Goethe unsighted, leading to a massive collision. The rear of Maini's car was totally destroyed by the impact of the crash and fortunately, he came out of it unscathed.

Maini's father Gautam confirmed to PTI that his son is doing fine. "He is doing okay. As part of the standard protocol all medical check-ups were conducted on Kush and all reports are normal," he said. Maini, representing Invicta Racing in his second Formula 2 season, is 11th in the standings. The race was won by Richard Verschoor of Trident.

Following the investigation of the incident, the stewards handed the Indian a 10-second time penalty for causing the collision.

"After the race, the Stewards heard from the Team Representative and examined available video evidence before determining that the driver of Car 9 had failed to engage the Start Set Up Procedure for the start of the race, an error that led to the car stalling on the grid causing the subsequent collision.

## India-Bangladesh Test series: Indian players sweat it out in muggy conditions with high-intensity drills

Rohit Sharma and Co had another extensive training session in the build-up to the first Test against Bangladesh with all 16 squad members turning for practice at the Chepauk here today. After a day off, the squad members took part in their third training session since their arrival here last week. The first Test begins on Thursday.

As it is often the case, Virat Kohli was among the first set of batters to hit the nets. In the adjacent net was southpaw



Yashasvi Jaiswal as both he and Kohli faced Jasprit Bumrah and home hero R Ashwin. The next set of batters included skipper Rohit, Shubman Gill and Sarfaraz Khan, the last named player arriving here after taking part in the second round of the Duleep Trophy in Anantapur. The captain focussed on playing spinners, keeping Bangladesh's slow bowling attack in mind.

India will have two more practice sessions scheduled before the series opener against Bangladesh, who are riding on the confidence of their series sweep in Pakistan.

The Chennai surface usually favours the spinners and there is a likelihood of India going into the game with three spinners and two pacers. The spinners expected to feature are Ashwin, Jadeja and Kuldeep Yadav while Bumrah and Siraj will share the workload in the pace department. Axar Patel, despite his impressive all-round returns across formats, may have to sit out.

On the batting front, Rishabh Pant is expected to make his Test return after a gap of almost two

years.

Fielding coach T Dilip was impressed with the intensity of the unit despite the punishing Chennai weather. "Today, the idea was to get everyone together for a team drill with two segments to it. Taking humidity into account, we made sure that the volume was less but intensity was more," Dilip said.

"We split teams into two groups and had competition in catching. It was Virat's team that won today," he added.

Dilip, the only support staff from Rahul Dravid's team who is part of Gautam Gambhir's entourage, also spoke about players coping extreme weather and giving it their all during the session.

"Overall, I feel it was a fantastic session, considering the overhead sun. One great part about this team is throughout all stations the intensity was top notch in this weather," Dilip said.

After a stellar first season, Yashasvi Jaiswal is looking to beat the second season blues. And the youngster gets to face Jasprit Bumrah in the nets to

ensure that he stays on his toes. During Monday's net session, Bumrah repeatedly made short work of the Mumbai youngster, often sending his off-stump cartwheeling. Jaiswal would hope that his sketchy form in the nets wouldn't be carried in the opening Test against Bangladesh. Jaiswal scored 1000-plus runs in his first 9 Tests, with 700 plus coming against England in a single series.







# Lakhs Of Devotees Say Goodbye To Lalbaugcha Raja

## MUMBAI

In all its grandeur and grace, Mumbai's iconic Ganpati Lalbaugcha Raja was immersed in the Arabian Sea at Girgaon Chowpatty on September 17th. The vibrant procession began at noon, weaving through the bustling streets of Mumbai for hours, drawing thousands of devotees eager to pay their respects to Ganpati Bappa. As the idol journeyed towards its visarjan spot, the atmosphere was filled with chants of "Ganapati Bappa Morya," accompanied by traditional music and fervent dance. The sea of devotees, adorned in colorful attire, showcased the city's rich cultural tapestry and deep-rooted devotion. Ganpati Visarjan 2024 poignant reminder of community spirit and faith. Touching visuals captured during the visarjan highlight the emotional farewells and the unity among devotees, making it a truly unforgettable experience for all involved.

The 'visarjan' procession of Lalbaugcha Raja, Mumbai's most famous Ganesha idol, drew lakhs of devotees as it was taken to the Girgaon beach. The procession began on Tuesday (September 17), the last day of Ganesh Chaturthi, while the idol was finally immersed in the Arabian Sea on Wednesday (September 18) around 10.30 am.



## More than 37,000 idols have been immersed

### Mumbai

Idol immersions continued in Mumbai on Wednesday, a day after Anant Chaturdashi, with 144 Ganesh idols being immersed till 12 pm, showed data released by Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

As many as 37,208 Ganesh idols have been immersed since Tuesday, the BMC data further showed.

A BMC official told The Indian Express that the final stage of Ganesh idol immersions is underway and processions of big samitis, including Lalbaugcha Raja, are complete. The 11-day festival started on Ganesh

Chaturthi (September 6) and ended on Anant Chaturdashi (September 17).

The official added that immersions may continue till late Wednesday evening.

"The idols being immersed today (Wednesday) in the (Arabian) sea are the big ones. Therefore, these can't take place haphazardly. Mandals have been given slots and based on that, they are reaching the immersion spots and carrying out their rituals," the official said.

Meanwhile, the BMC data also shows that 11,419 Ganesh idols or 30 per cent of the immersions till now have been

carried out in artificial lakes. Last year, around 37 per cent of the idols were immersed in artificial lakes.

Naresh Dahibhavkar, president of Brihanmumbai Sarvajnik Ganeshotsav Samanvay Samiti (BSGSS), said, "Immersions usually continue till the next day of Anant Chaturdashi and this year too we are witnessing the same. Between 2020 and 2022, for three years, the number of sarvajnik samitis had reduced temporarily due to the Covid-induced pandemic. Thus, the number of public immersions that took place during that period was comparatively less."

