

PM Modi arrives in Poland, 1st visit by Indian Prime Minister in 45 years

Tejinder Kaur Babbar

Warsaw, August 21: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday arrived in Poland on the first leg of his two-nation visit during which he will also travel to the Ukrainian capital Kyiv and share perspectives with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict. Prime Minister Modi's visit to Poland is the first trip by an Indian Prime Minister to

Modi said. Prime Minister Modi's discussions with the Polish leadership during his two-day visit will allow the two sides to exchange views at the top level on a variety of subjects and it will be a kind of real "useful exchange" of views, Indian Ambassador to Poland Nagma Mohamed Mallick told PTI Videos here. From Warsaw, Modi will travel to Kyiv on the first visit by an Indian prime minister to Ukraine since the country became independent in 1991. "From Poland, I will be visiting Ukraine at the invitation of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. This is the first-ever visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Ukraine," he said. "I look forward to the opportunity to build upon earlier conversations with President Zelenskyy on strengthening bilateral cooperation and share perspectives on peaceful resolution of the ongoing Ukraine conflict," he said.



the country in the past 45 years. During his stay in Poland, Modi will meet President Andrzej Sebastian Duda and hold bilateral talks with Prime Minister Donald Tusk. "My visit to Poland comes as we mark 70 years of our diplomatic relations. Poland is a key economic partner in Central Europe," he said. "Our mutual commitment to democracy and pluralism further reinforces our relationship. I look forward to meeting my friend Prime Minister Donald Tusk and President Andrzej Duda to further advance our partnership," Modi said in his departure statement earlier today. "I will also engage with the members of the vibrant Indian community in Poland,"

"As a friend and partner, we hope for an early return of peace and stability in the region," he added. Modi said he was confident that his visit to Warsaw and Kyiv "will serve as a natural continuation of extensive contacts with the two countries and help create the foundation for stronger and more vibrant relations in the years ahead". The prime minister will travel to Kyiv from Poland in a 'Rail Force One' train that will take around 10 hours. The return trip will also be of the same duration. Modi's visit to Kyiv comes nearly six weeks after his high-profile trip to Moscow which triggered criticism from the US and some of its Western allies.

Bharat Bandh against Supreme Court order

Simmi Kaur Babbar

New Delhi/Patna, August 21: The daylong nationwide strike called by some Dalit and Adivasi groups against the Supreme Court's verdict on the sub-classification of Scheduled Castes affected normal life in Bihar and Jharkhand as well as tribal areas of various states. Police baton-charged and used water cannons on protesters in several districts of Bihar, including Patna, Darbhanga and Begusarai, to remove rail and road blockades, while in Jharkhand and Odisha public transport services were partially affected. The response was tepid in other parts of the country even as several INDIA bloc parties as well as other non-BJP outfits extended their support to the bandh. The Chhattisgarh unit of the Congress said the government should consider the "legitimate demands" of the protesters sympathetically. However, the BJP's prominent tribal leader Fagga Singh Kulaste accused the opposition of politicising the Supreme Court's ruling on the issue. Twenty-one organisations

across the country had called for the Bharat Bandh against the apex court's order, which they said would harm the basic principles of reservation. The protesters put up rail and road blockades

The RJD and other partners of the INDIA bloc extended their support to the bandh. Independent MP Rajesh Ranjan alias Pappu Yadav, led demonstrations in Patna and other areas, criticising the NDA government's stance on SC/ST quota and alleging that it wants to undermine reservations. In Patna, police chased away crowds who blocked traffic at Dak Bungalow Chowk. Five people were detained in Jehanabad district following clashes between protesters and security personnel. In other districts, including Madhepura, Muzaffarpur, Saran, Begusarai, Hajipur, and Purnea, protesters attempted to block traffic and burned tyres, but were dispersed by security forces. East Central Railway Chief Public Relations Officer Shrawati Chandra confirmed that train services were disrupted in Ara, Chausa (Buxar), Darbhanga, Begusarai, and Rajgir, but the situation was promptly controlled. Public buses stayed off the roads and schools remained closed in Jharkhand where the call for the bandh was backed by the state's ruling alliance.



in several districts of Bihar, and police used batons and water cannons to disperse them. Darbhanga and Buxar witnessed disruption in train services while traffic was blocked in Patna, Hajipur, Darbhanga, Jehanabad, and Begusarai districts.

Withdraw my security cover, deploy these personnel to protect people: Supriya Sule

Mumbai, August 21: NCP (SP) leader Supriya Sule on Wednesday said the law and order situation in Maharashtra has become critical over the past few months, and said the state government should withdraw her security cover so that these police personnel can be deployed for protection of common people. The Baramati MP also sought an immediate review of the security provided to persons across the state. In a statement, she said that a significant portion of the police force goes in providing security to sitting and former lawmakers, including herself. However, given the current strain on law enforcement, it is inappropriate to maintain such security arrangements, she added.

Kolkata doctor murder: CISF asked to take over security of RG Kar hospital

Sanjay Kumar

New Delhi, August 21: The Union Government on Wednesday asked the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) to take over the security of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata, official sources said. The directions from the Ministry of Home Affairs came on the directions of the Supreme Court. The Union Home Ministry on Wednesday wrote to the West Bengal chief secretary seeking deployment of CISF at RG Kar hospital, official sources added. A CISF team, led by a DIG rank officer, Wednesday morning surveyed the hospital where a 31-year-old doctor was allegedly raped and murdered earlier this month. The force will also secure the residents hostel. An armed team of the paramilitary force will be deployed soon. The medic's body was found in a bloodied state in the hospital's seminar room on the morning of August 9. A civic volunteer, who was an outsider frequenting the hospital premises, was arrested the next day in connection with case. The incident has since rocked medical services across the country, with hundreds of doctors on strike under different banners demanding safety of medics through a central law. The Supreme Court on Tuesday constituted a 10-member task force to formulate a national protocol to ensure safety and facilities for doctors. The task force will submit its interim report within three weeks and the final report within two months. The Kolkata Police has suspended three of its officers in connection with the vandalism at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital here last week, officials said. A group of people had entered the medical facility and vandalised its emergency department, nursing station, and medicine store in the early hours of August 15.



Former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar's fraud not only against UPSC but also public

Naresh Malhotra

New Delhi, August 21: The UPSC on Wednesday opposed in the Delhi High Court an anticipatory bail plea by former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar, accused of cheating and wrongly availing OBC and disability quota benefits, and said she committed a fraud against the commission and the public. The Delhi Police also sought dismissal of the pre-arrest bail plea on the ground that any relief to her would hinder its probe into the "deep rooted conspiracy" and that the case has wider implications on public trust as well as the integrity of the civil services examination. Justice Subramonium Prasad listed the matter for hearing on August 29, and extended the interim protection from arrest granted to Khedkar in the meantime. In its reply filed in court, the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) said Khedkar's custodial interrogation was necessary to unearth the magnitude of the "fraud" that could not have been done without the help of other individuals. Therefore, her pre-arrest bail plea should be dismissed, it said. "The grav-

ity of the fraud committed is unprecedented in nature having been committed against not only a constitutional body—the complainant—whose traditions are untrammelled and unparalleled but also against the public at large, including the citizens of this country who have utmost faith upon the credibility of the UPSC as well as persons who could not be appointed despite being duly eligible and qualified due to illegal means employed by the applicant to seek appointment," the reply filed through advocate Vardhman Kaushik said. The court granted time to Khedkar to respond to the stand of the UPSC as well as the Delhi Police. Khedkar allegedly misrepresented information in her application for the UPSC Civil Services Examination-2022 to get reservation benefits. The Delhi Police, in its status report, asserted that investigation had revealed that she was not entitled to benefits as an "OBC+Non-Creamy Layer" candidate but she hatched a conspiracy with other persons to get that benefit by showing that her parents are divorced. The circumstances, however, suggest that Khedkar's parents were living together, and that she made a false declaration to a PwBD (Persons with Benchmark Disabilities)+OBC candidate, i.e. 9 attempts by CSE-2020 itself. Therefore, as per CSE Rules, she was not eligible to appear further for CSE-2021 and subsequent CSEs, police said in its status report. "However, despite exhausting all the permissible attempts she appeared in CSE-2021, CSE-2022 and CSP-2023 by intentionally changing her name and making incorrect or false statements regarding the number of attempts already availed and suppressing material information which she was duty bound to furnish true and correct," the report stated. The report stated that while Khedkar claimed no connection with her father and showed her mother's income as being below the threshold to get the benefit of "OBC+Non-Creamy Layer" candidate, her family owns 12 vehicles, including a Mercedes car, BMW car and a Thar SUV. It stated the family owns "23 pieces of immovable properties valued crores of rupees" in different locations in Maharashtra.

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tion with respect to her previous number of attempts while writing the Civil Services Examination (CSE)-2021 under a changed name, the agency said. "She had already exhausted all the permissible attempts avail-

Won't quit politics, open to floating new outfit: Former CM Champai Soren

Ranchi, August 21: Former Jharkhand chief minister Champai Soren on Wednesday said he would not quit politics, asserting that an option to float a new political outfit was always open to him. Soren said he was firm on his plans after "facing humiliation at the hands of leaders of JMM", a party to which the veteran leader claimed that he devoted his entire life. "It is a new chapter of my life. I won't quit politics as I have received lots of love and support from my followers. I had mentioned three options - quitting politics, organisation or friend. I



will not quit politics. The chapter (of quitting politics) has closed, I may form a new outfit," the senior Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader said shortly after he reached his ancestral village Jhilingora in Seraikela-Kharsawan district. The 67-year-old tribal leader has earned the nickname 'Jharkhand's Tiger' for his contribution to the fight to create a separate state in the 1990s. "No one from JMM contacted me. This is the land of Jharkhand...I have struggled since my student life. I participated in the agitation for a separate Jharkhand state under the leadership of party supremo Shibu Soren," Champai Soren said. The JMM leader said he might join hands with any outfit if he gets a like-minded organisation or a friend during his next journey. "I will strengthen the party, a new party and if I meet a good friend on the way, then I will move ahead with the friend...", he said. Referring to his post on X on August 18, the former chief minister said, "I posted what I felt was proper. The entire country is aware of what I thought." Amid speculation that he might join the BJP, the veteran politician had said he experienced "bitter humiliation" as chief minister, which compelled him to seek an alternative path.

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News box

Two tigers die of poisoning in Gudalur

NILGIRIS: An adult and a sub-adult tiger were found dead at the Sussex Estate in Bitherkad forest range in Gudalur on Tuesday. Postmortem examination revealed they had consumed a wild boar that had been poisoned. Sources in the forest department said its staff spotted the carcass of the sub-adult tiger in the pathway of the tea estate. The animal had external bleeding injuries. Following National Tiger Conservation Authority guidelines, the staff perambulated a 500m radius area and found an adult tiger, believed to be the mother, dead in a swampy marsh. The team also noticed the carcass of a wild boar within 200m. "The big cats had consumed a portion of the wild boar. During postmortem, veterinarians found wild boar flesh in their stomachs. As per the statement given by veterinarians, both tigers may have died due to poisoning. This may have happened after the tigers ate poisoned wild boar. The bleeding injuries may have been caused when they fought over the prey," said Gudalur Forest Division DFO Venkatesh Prabhu. "The veterinarians also observed samples of rice and tapioca from the stomach of the tigers, which may have been consumed by the wild boar," he added.

D Venkatesh, field director of Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR), said "The sub-adult tiger could have died on Monday evening, and the adult on Tuesday morning. The colour of the internal organs has changed drastically, indicating poisoning. The tigers died one after another since they had taken secondary poison, that is from the wild boar." A case has been registered, and two special teams were formed to probe the incident.

Government school kids in Tamil Nadu break piggy banks for Wayanad

TIRUCHY: In a heartwarming display of compassion, 12 students of Government Adi Dravidar Welfare (ADW) Primary School in PK Agaram of the district donated Rs 10,668 from their piggy bank savings to aid rehabilitation efforts in landslide-hit Wayanad. Over the past six months, students of Classes 1 to 5 have been saving their pocket money in piggy banks provided by the school. When news of the devastating landslides in Kerala reached them, the children decided to pool their savings to help those in need. With the support of their parents, the students marched to the local post office two days ago, accompanied by their headmaster AM Anburaj, to send the money to affected areas through post.

"My daughter always insisted on getting her pocket money daily, and now her savings are going to help those in need. I am proud that, through our children, we could contribute in some way to the relief efforts," said J Christy Devayani, a parent. "This act of generosity by our students is a testament to the values of empathy and kindness we strive to instill in them. Parents and teachers were also inspired to contribute additional funds," said Anburaj.

Social media push to revive tourism in disaster-hit Wayanad

KALPETTA: Residents, traders and tourism stakeholders in Wayanad have joined forces on social media to revive the district's tourism sector that took a massive hit following the devastating landslides on July 30. Posts and reels tagged #VisitWayanad are doing the rounds online, in a bid to attract tourists.

Almost everyone who depends on tourism suffered after all the centres under the District Tourism Promotion Council (DTPC) in Wayanad were closed following the calamity. There was mass cancellation of bookings in resorts and homestays during the Independence Day-August 15 holiday. Most resorts now have zero bookings for August. This has hit autorickshaw-taxi drivers, tourist guides, small traders, shopkeepers and hotel operators hard. Hough spots such as Pookode lake, Karlad lake, Sultan Bathery Town Square, Wayanad Heritage Museum at Ambalavayal, Pazhassi Raja Landscape Museum in Pulpally, Karapuzha dam and Banasura dam are open now, the footfall is less. "Tourism in Wayanad will endure only if tourist centres under the DTPC as well as the forest department are opened. We demand the intervention of the disaster management authority to reopen at least those tourist places that are safe soon," said Suresh P, a homestay owner in Padinjaraithara.

In February, all eco-tourism centres under the forest department in Wayanad were closed due to recurring wildlife attacks. "At the time, our only relief was the fact that tourism centres under DTPC were open. However, with the onset of monsoon, functioning of all tourism centres came to a standstill," said Mohanan Pallikkal, an autorickshaw driver in Sultan Bathery.

After Wayanad rescue operations, off-road enthusiasts seek relaxation of laws

Alteration in the tires and lights of the vehicles, mainly by the youth who engage in stunts, is against the law and also a growing concern for the MVD; However, during landslides they emerged as unlikely saviours.

PATHANAMTHITTA: During the rescue operations of the Wayanad landslide tragedy, a group of off-roaders emerged as unlikely saviours who rushed to the rugged terrain despite the Motor Vehicle Department's (MVD) restrictions against them for modifying automobiles. Alteration in the tires and lights of the vehicles, mainly by the youth who engage in stunts, is against the law and also a growing concern for the MVD. However, the modified off-road vehicles having tires with more width and size than the average ones, were widely used by various collectives in Wayanad for rescue operations and even for the shifting of dozens of victims' bodies through the broken ground.

Offroaders in Pathanamthitta

After the commendable role of expert off-road

drivers who joined in Wayanad rescue operations with their modified vehicles, Naranamoozhi Grama Panchayat in Pathanamthitta has passed a resolution to relax the law for off-road vehicles. Advocate Samji Edamuri, a panchayat member and state general secretary of the Youth Congress, who presented the resolution said, "The resolution has been passed considering the need for modified off-road vehicles in areas affected by recent landslides, floods, and other natural disasters where conventional vehicles cannot reach."

The modified off-road vehicles are seen as essential for emergency rescue operations, for navigating difficult terrains, and for fulfilling various occupational and agricultural needs in the region. Given that



off-road vehicles have often been the only means of rescue during such natural disasters, the resolution requests the legislative assembly to provide legal relaxations for these vehicles," he said, adding that the resolution has been sent to the Assembly and the panchayat members will meet the Opposition leader on Wednesday. The district has also preserved

some heroic tales about off-road vehicles that served during the 2018 floods to shift people from stranded houses in Ranni and adjoining places. Milan, a resident of Ranni and off-road enthusiast, had volunteered in the 2018 flood relief operations. With his modified CRDe 4x4 AC of Mahindra Thar, he rescued several people from the flood-affected areas. However, after the flood operations, he was heavily fined, he said, following which he sold his vehicle.

Policy needed for offroaders

Aji Jabbar, an offroad expert and owner of Malamanda, a mountain camp in Kuttikkanam, said at least a few vehicles in a panchayat could be permitted given the unprecedented natural calamities in the state. He also said the state government could support the establishment of such a policy.

One dead as heavy rains lashed Hyderabad, other districts

HYDERABAD: Heavy rains lashed Hyderabad and several districts in the state on Tuesday morning inundating low-lying areas. Many areas in the city received over 100 mm rainfall in a short span of time in the morning, with Saroornagar recording 132.3 mm. The city witnessed another spell of rain in the afternoon and intense downpours in the evening leading to traffic jams as several roads were flooded. The body of a person who was suspected to have been washed away in floodwater was found at Parsigutta as rains pounded Hyderabad and Secunderabad on Tuesday morning. The victim, identified as Vijay, was washed away while he was crossing the road in the morning. Heavy rains, which began around 3 am, continued for two to three hours in many parts of the twin cities and outskirts of Hyderabad. Waterlogging on several roads disrupted the movement of traffic while authorities declared a holiday for educational institutions in Hyderabad. A man riding a two-wheeler was seen being washed away in Ramnagar area in Musheerabad constituency before being rescued by locals.

Above 100 mm rain lashes several areas in Hyd

Several areas like Ameerpet, Somajiguda, Punjagutta, Khairatabad, Jubilee Hills, Banjara Hills, Nampally, Basheerbagh,

Hyderguda, Himayatnagar, Abids, Balkampet, Quthbullapur, Balanagar, Serilingampally, Kukatpally, Gajularamaram, Jagadgiri, Suraram, Kompally, Pet Basheerabad, Jeedimetla and parts of Old City received torrential rain. Saroornagar recorded 132.3 mm rainfall, Khairatabad 126.8 mm, Uppal



125 mm, Rajendranagar 122.8 mm and L B Nagar 122 mm by 8.30 am on Tuesday. Marredpally, Bahadurpura, Golconda, Nampally, Charminar and Mallapur also reported rainfall exceeding 100 mm. According to the daily weather report of the TGDPS, very heavy rainfall occurred at a few places in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri and at isolated places in Jogulamba Gadwal and Narayanpet. Heavy rainfall occurred at many places in Hyderabad, a few places in Medchal Malkajigiri, Wanaparthi and at isolated places in Hanamkonda, Khammam,

Mahbubnagar, Nagarkurnool, Nalgonda, Nizamabad, Rangareddy, Siddipet districts.

Yadagirigutta in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri received the highest rainfall of 17 cm, followed by Maddur (14 cm) in Narayanpet district. Several areas in the city and the districts received moderate to heavy rainfall on Tuesday afternoon and evening as well. According to TGDPS, the highest rainfall recorded between 8.30 am and midnight on Tuesday was at Chegunta and Shankarampet in Medak (79.8 mm), followed by Pochampally in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri (75.8 mm). The city witnessed heavy rains again in the evening. Khairatabad recorded 60.3 mm rainfall followed by Ameerpet (55 mm) and Balanagar (51.3 mm) between 8.30 am and midnight on Tuesday. Meanwhile, the Meteorological Centre, Hyderabad has issued a yellow alert for Hyderabad and the neighbourhood for Wednesday and Thursday. Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by gusty winds up to 30-40 kmph are likely to occur in the city. The IMD said that heavy rain is very likely to occur at isolated places in Adilabad, Kurumambheem Asifabad, Mancherla, Nirmal, Vikarabad, Sangareddy, Medak, Kamareddy, Mahabubnagar, Nagarkurnool, Wanaparthi, Narayanpet, Jogulamba Gadwal districts till 8.30 am on August 21.

Telangana urges court to close illegal phone tapping case after extensive probe

HYDERABAD: Outlining the gravity of the crime and the extensive investigation undertaken by the state authorities into the illegal phone tapping case, Special Chief Secretary of Telangana Home department, Ravi Gupta, submitted a counter affidavit on Tuesday and urged the court to close the suo motu case. He argued that a thorough investigation is going on and that the legal process is now progressing, with the magistrate having taken cognisance of the case. Gupta described the illegal phone tapping as a severe crime against society that undermines the foundations of



democracy, and assured the court that the investigation has been conducted in an unbiased and thorough manner, targeting all individuals involved, including senior police officers. He informed the court that the investigation officer has secured permission to pursue further inquiries based on new evidence and to take action against absconding accused persons. A supplementary charge sheet will be filed soon, reflecting the additional evidence gathered.

The affidavit emphasised that despite the accused being police officers with in-depth knowledge of how to obscure their crimes, the investigation team made strenuous efforts to collect all available evidence. Gupta stated that the charge sheet against the accused has already been filed and is currently under review by the magistrate.

Odisha: Post-recess Assembly session starts with Opposition ruckus

Congress members demanded student union elections this year instead of 2025 as announced by Law minister Prithiviraj Harichandan.

BHUBANESWAR: The second half of the budget session of the Assembly got off to a noisy start on Tuesday with the Congress members creating a ruckus in the House demanding students union elections this year instead of 2025 as announced by Law minister Prithiviraj Harichandan. As the House commenced after a 19-day recess, Congress members trooped into the well after the obituary references were over and demanded that elections be held this year as there is enough time for preparation for the polls. Senior MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati told mediapersons that youth and student Congress activists will launch agitation across the state if the government does not hold elections this year. "The previous BJD government avoided college elections as it knew the BJD will be defeated. Now, the BJP government is reneging on its promise to hold elections," he alleged. The BJD members were also on their feet to draw

attention of the government to three issues. The first was for expunging the demand for arrest of leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik for leading a walkout during the Governor's address on July 22. The second was placing the status report on the case in which Governor's son has been accused of assaulting a Raj Bhavan staff, and the third, announcement of 10 per cent reservation for Agniveers in all uniformed services of the state by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi outside the Assembly. "We had raised all these issues in the first half of the session but there was no response from either the state government or the BJP. We raised the issues again today," Opposition deputy chief whip Pratap Deb told mediapersons. Speaker Surama Padhy adjourned the proceedings of the House for one hour from 10.41 am to 11.41 am and again till 4 pm following the uproar by Opposition members.



Odisha: Ratna Bhandar almirahs to be shifted to Niladri Vihar museum



BHUBANESWAR: The empty almirahs and chests in both the chambers of the Ratna Bhandar of Shree Jagannath temple will be shifted out of the treasury on August 23. They will be transferred to the Niladri Vihar museum located on the premises of the 12th century shrine. Public 'darshan' of the Trinity will be prohibited during the exercise. This was decided at a meeting of the 11-member core committee on reopening of Ratna Bhandar on Tuesday. Committee chairman Justice Biswanath Rath said the members have decided to enter the Ratna Bhandar after the rituals are completed at 2 pm on Friday. A medical team, snake helpline members and a group of iron grill cutters will be kept in readiness within the shrine. Justice Rath

informed that almost all the wooden almirahs in both the chambers are in severely dilapidated condition and some even broke while being moved to check the presence of anything behind them, on July 18. Since the team only has a three-hour period to shift the containers, it plans to tape the broken wooden parts of the almirahs before taking them to the museum. They will be repaired at a later stage. The state government, in its SOP for shifting of the containers, has allowed cutting of the outer door of the Bahara Bhandar to take the chests out as all of them are wider than the door. If required, we will cut the door frame of the Bahara Bhandar for taking the chests out. The door frame will be brought back to the same position and shape, as per the SOP, after the chambers are repaired

and new almirahs containing the precious jewels and ornaments brought back to Bahara and Bhitara Bhandars from the temporary storerooms," Justice Rath informed.

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Press Area, ITO, New Delhi
Editor-in-Chief
Gurcharan Singh Babbar
Mob : 965407232, 9971359517
Website : www.sikhimesindia.in
Email : sikhimesindia@gmail.com
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Legal Advisors:

Advocate Mohd. Sajid
Advocate Dr. A.P. Singh
Advocate Manish Sharma
Advocate Pooja Bhaskar Sharma

News box

Ex-cop convicted in George Floyd killing moved to Texas prison

Washington. Derek Chauvin has been transferred to a prison in Texas, the US Federal Bureau of Prisons said on Tuesday...

KEY QUOTE

"We can confirm Derek Michael Chauvin was transferred to a prison in Texas, the US Federal Bureau of Prisons said on Tuesday...

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Chauvin was stabbed about 22 times last year while incarcerated in Tucson, the US Justice Department said in December. Chauvin was seriously injured but survived.

Chauvin is serving 22.5 years for murder after being convicted in April 2021 of killing Floyd, a verdict widely seen as a landmark rebuke of the disproportionate use of police force against Black Americans.

CONTEXT

Floyd's death in 2020 unleashed protests worldwide against police brutality and racism after Chauvin, who is white, knelt on the neck of the handcuffed Black man for more than eight minutes in a murder caught on cellphone video.

Thomas Lane, a former Minneapolis officer convicted of aiding and abetting second-degree manslaughter in the Floyd killing, was released from federal prison in Colorado on Tuesday after serving a sentence of over three years.

Obama praises Biden at Democratic Convention: Proud to call him my President



New Delhi Former US President Barack Obama praised US President Joe Biden for his "decency, resilience, and unshakable belief."

It was not the US President that the world had witnessed over the years who took centre stage at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. As opposed to earlier, Joe Biden, with hands on the podium, stood a little straighter and tried to hold back the tears as everyone stood up in a rousing ovation.

"Donald Trump calls America a failing nation," Biden said, and added, "He says we're losing. He's the loser; he's dead wrong."

World's 'largest solar precinct' approved by Australian government

NEW CASTLE. An ambitious plan to build a massive solar farm in remote northern Australia that would transmit energy by submarine cable to Singapore is a step closer after the Australian government granted environmental approvals for the 30 billion Australian dollar (\$19 billion) project Wednesday.

"This massive project is a generation-defining piece of infrastructure," Plibersek said in a written statement on Wednesday. "It will be the largest solar precinct in the world - and heralds Australia as the world leader in green energy."

Bangladesh authorities file 9 more cases against Sheikh Hasina, total reaches 31

Dhaka. At least nine more complaints were filed on Tuesday against deposed former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her aides, taking the number of cases against her to 31, including 26 on charges of murder, four on charges of crimes against humanity and genocide and one for abduction.

to the recent violence centring on the quota reform movement. Separately, eight more cases were filed against the Awami League chairperson on Tuesday across the country, accusing her of killings committed during the recent protests, the newspaper said.



Roy and former army chief Aziz Ahmed.

Besides them, some unnamed ministers, state ministers and lawmakers, unnamed individuals from law enforcement agencies and the then policymakers of some electronic and print media were accused in the case.

Tribunal in March 2010 to try those who committed war crimes in 1971. A second ICT was formed later. Five Jamaat-e-Islami and a Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leader were executed following the verdicts of the two tribunals.

Mpox not the new Covid-19, says WHO official

Berlin. A World Health Organization (WHO) official stressed on Tuesday that mpox, regardless of whether it is the new or old strain, is not the new Covid, as authorities know how to control its spread.

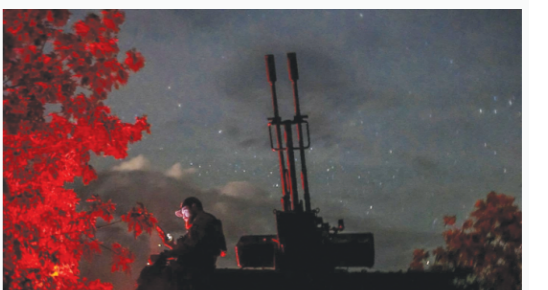


routine close contact. A case of the variant was confirmed last week in Sweden and linked to a growing outbreak in Africa, the first sign of its spread outside the continent.

that the focus on the new clade 1 strain will also help in the fight against the less severe clade 2 variety that has spreading globally since 2022, allowing Europe to improve its response through better health advice and surveillance.

Ukraine launches drone attacks on Moscow, claim Russian officials

Moscow Ukraine launched a widespread drone attack on Russia on Wednesday, with air defence units destroying three drones some 38 km south of the Kremlin, and 15 over the border Bryansk region, Russian officials said.



border Bryansk region in Russia's southwest, Alexander Bogomaz, the governor of the region wrote on Telegram. Russia's RIA state news agency reported also that two drones were destroyed over the Tula region, which borders the Moscow region to its north.

Hillary Clinton seeks Trump revenge, through Kamala Harris

World. It was a night for Vice President Kamala Harris, but veteran Democratic Party leader Hillary Clinton got the loudest cheers and applause. It was a moment of revenge for Hillary, a former rival of Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump, when the crowd at the Democratic National Convention (DNC) erupted in chants of "lock him up".

The standing ovation that Hillary received after her speech said it all. The applause lasted for 1.5 minutes and was louder than what Kamala Harris received, according to the New York Post.

and Kamala's mother could see us. They would say, keep going," NY Post reported Hillary as saying. HARRIS AND HILLARY VSTRUMP Hillary Clinton then went on to contrast prosecutor Harris with the "criminal" Trump.

What's behind jailed Imran Khan's bewildering Oxford chancellor bid

World Former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan is doing more than just stare at jail walls. He has applied to be the Chancellor of Oxford University. In jail for a year now, Imran Khan's surprise move to run for the elections for the Oxford top post could be a bid to attract global attention while his party holds rallies in Pakistan on the anniversary of his jailing.

February. Imran's journey in Pakistan's politics started with his promise of "Naya Pakistan" or "new Pakistan". He is now languishing in jail, facing several charges, which his supporters allege are part of a political conspiracy. IMRAN KHAN: THE CHANCELLOR OF OXFORD UNIVERSITY? "It's a ceremonial post but one with the utmost prestige and importance and Imran Khan, being one of the larger or more popular names coming out of Oxford, it would be brilliant to see him as chancellor," Bukhari told AFP.



the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (Movement for Justice). The party has now been banned. He was removed as PM through an army-backed vote of no confidence in Pakistan's parliament and has been in prison for the past one year.

eight years, from 2005 to 2014. If he does become the Chancellor, this time of Oxford, will he bid adieu to Pakistan's politics? Or is this a signal to Pakistan's powerful military, which he had taken on as the PM, that he is moving on? CAN IMRAN KHAN MAKE IT IN THE UK? Imran Khan is also a graduate of Oxford, where he studied politics, philosophy and economics at Oxford's Keble College in the 1970s.

UK Sperm Exports Lead To Global Increase In 'Half-Siblings': Report

Source: Bureau A legal loophole is allowing sperm donated in the UK to be exported to other countries, potentially leading to the creation of large numbers of donor-conceived children worldwide. This practice violates the UK's strict 10-family limit that applies within its fertility clinics, as there are no restrictions on exporting sperm or eggs abroad.



(ARCS). "There is data showing that some of the children who find the really big families struggle with that," he added. by Taboola Sponsored Links You May Like "Once you've frozen sperm it doesn't get any older," said Mr Kirkman-Brown.

up with donor siblings older than your parents, which is not somewhere we've been yet," he added. TRENDING NOW Prof Nicky Hudson, a medical sociologist at De Montford University, said, Donations are "presented to donors as a beautiful gift to help someone create a family, not as, 'We're going to maximise the number of births from your gametes and make as much money as we can from that.'"

"As the HFEA has no remit over donation outside of HFEA licensed clinics, there would be no monitoring of how many times a donor is used in these circumstances," said Rachel Cutting, director of compliance and information at the HFEA. According to the reports by The Guardian, until five years ago, the United Kingdom primarily imported sperm, mainly from the US and Denmark.

News box

Four designs shortlisted for new Telangana HC complex

HYDERABAD: The judges committee has reportedly shortlisted four out of nine designs submitted by Roads & Buildings department officials and a private architect consultancy firm for the construction of the new Telangana High Court complex. According to sources, these four designs will now be sent to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and R&B Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, after which the Chief Justice of the High Court and the CM will finalise a design. The government has allotted 100 acres of land in Rajendranagar in Rangareddy district for construction of the new High Court complex. Apart from the court building, the complex will have a total of 40 structures, including residential buildings for judges, State Bar Council, High Court Bar Association, an auditorium, Legal Services Authority, filing sections, record rooms, parking slots and other facilities. It may be mentioned here that as many as 19 architect firms have come forward to provide construction designs for the new HC building. After the foundation stone was laid for the new complex, the High Court Building Committee has selected one company, which prepared the designs and presented them to the committee. After finalising the design, the government would invite tenders for construction of the complex. It may be recalled that the Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud and Chief Justice of Telangana High Court Justice Alok Aradhe laid the foundation stone for new HC complex on May 27.

The authorities are planning to complete the construction in 18 months. The sanctioned strength of judges for the Telangana High Court is 42. The government is expecting that this number may increase in future and hence building the new complex keeping the future needs in mind.

Seven detained over spurious liquor incident, 21 in hospital in Berhampur

BERHAMPUR: A day after 21 persons were taken ill following consumption of spurious liquor in Chikiti, K Nuagaon police on Tuesday detained seven people, including a woman for their alleged involvement in the illicit liquor trade in the area. The victims, belonging to Jenapur-Karabalu under Chikiti notified area council, developed symptoms like loose motion, vomiting and dizziness and were initially admitted to local community health centre (CHC). Fourteen of them were later shifted to MKCG medical college and hospital (MCH), with 12 in the general medicine ward and two admitted to the ICU. The affected people reported that after finishing their cultivation work around 5 pm, about 30 people gathered in Maundpur and consumed liquor, leading to the onset of the symptoms within a few hours. Family members of the victims claimed that the liquor was illicitly brewed in a forest near Bhalughai and sold in nearby areas.

Ganjam collector Dibyajyoti Parida, who visited the patients at MCH, stated that the condition of those under treatment, including the two in the ICU, is stable. He assured that strict measures are being taken to curb illicit liquor trade in the district, with an awareness campaign already underway in rural areas.

Excise commissioner Narasingha Bhol, who also visited the affected area, confirmed that liquor samples have been collected for laboratory testing. "A joint action team comprising police and excise officials will be formed to intensify raids on illegal liquor operations in the district," he added. Meanwhile, the incident sparked a political blame game, with BJD leader Srirup Deb holding the ruling BJP responsible for proliferation of spurious liquor in Chikiti. "The area never witnessed spurious liquor circulation which is now flourishing at the behest of ruling BJP," he alleged.

Sanitary pads procured under Khushi scheme lying expired in Cuttack DHH

CUTTACK: Khushi scheme, launched by the previous BJD government in February 2018 to provide free sanitary pads to girl students of classes VI to XII and reduce their dropout rate, seems to have failed to serve its purpose in Cuttack district as lakhs of such napkins are found lying undistributed at the district headquarters hospital here. The matter came to the fore five days back when the old building of the hospital was being demolished for construction purpose. With their expiry dates already lapsed in 2021, the pads worth lakhs of rupees are lying in damaged condition and stinking. This raises the question as to why steps were not taken for distribution of the pads before their expiry and who is responsible for the loss incurred. "Had the hospital authorities dispersed the sanitary napkins on time, they would have not gone into waste," rued a local resident. Meanwhile, hospital superintendent Dr Arun Kumar Sahu said the hospital is not to be blamed for the damage of the sanitary pads. He said the DHH had in February 2019 received around 3 lakh sanitary pads procured through Odisha State Medical Corporation Limited (OSMCL) from a company.

Seven EB staff die in 20 days in Tamil Nadu; questions arise on safety, manpower

Wiremen and helpers play a vital role in fixing power failures, but a large number of their posts are vacant across TN.

COIMBATORE: At least seven Tangedco workers, including four wireman, had died of electrocution while attending to power failure complaints in the last 20 days across the state, bringing into focus the risky conditions under which they work and poor safety standards and compliance.

According to Tangedco staff union sources, victims Anand of Nilgiris, Aththiyappan of Kallakurichi, Selvaraj of Vazhpadai, and Samuthiram of Kadayannalu were wireman, while the other three — Dinesh and Naveen of Tiruppur district and Senthilkumar of Jayankondam — were gangmen. While officials said rules regarding the mandatory use of 'safety app' and uploading of photos showing usage of safety gear at work are honoured more in breach than in compliance, workers blame the manpower shortage for rising fatal and non-fatal accidents in the department. Wiremen and helpers play a vital role in fixing power failures, but a large number of their posts are vacant across TN. This makes the staff force gangmen who are not well-versed in technical work to take up fieldwork, and they are the ones who frequently become victims of accidents.

'Poor training, work pressure also reasons for accidents'

Increasing work pressure, poor training of personnel, and rising vacancies are the



other reasons for the accidents, said Tangedco workers.

Officials, however, said that wireman and helpers, particularly gangmen, fall prey to accidents and lose their lives due to negligence in using belt rope, hand gloves and earth rods, which would give them protection from electrocution.

"Supervisors have been advised to ensure that field staff use safety gear without fail while attending to electricity failures. They have also been asked to upload photos with the detail of the work being done on the app to ensure monitoring and safety compliance," a senior Tangedco officer said.

As per protocol, the supervisor who monitors the work has to upload all details, including their name, role, circle name, section name, workers' name and work description on the Android Application Package.

While taking photos, the app also registers the latitude and longitude of the location for record maintenance. If there is any mishap due to negligence, the supervisor would be held responsible, sources said. However, some members of the staff union said that uploading photos and details consumes mobile data and want the corporation to bear that expense for better compliance.

Telangana HC orders publication of Margadarshi investigation in multiple languages

HYDERABAD: A division bench of the Telangana High Court, comprising Justice Sujoy Paul and Justice Namavarapu Rajeshwar Rao, has instructed the court registry to publish in Telugu, Hindi and English newspapers to ensure broad awareness of the ongoing investigation into the Margadarshi case among depositors who did not get back their deposits. This decision comes as part of an inquiry initiated by the Supreme Court. During the hearing on Tuesday, former MP Undavalli Arun Kumar, who is the petitioner in the case, along with senior counsel Siddhartha Ludra, representing Margadarshi Chit Funds,

attended the session virtually. Ludra sought a two-week extension to respond to a counter filed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). In response, Arun Kumar argued that the RBI had determined that Margadarshi Chit Funds' collection of deposits from subscribers was illegal under Section 45(S) of the RBI Act, emphasising the need for a thorough investigation at the grassroots level and for those responsible to be held accountable. Arun Kumar further urged the court to direct Margadarshi to submit the details of its 70,000 subscribers, which had previously been provided to the Supreme Court, to the High Court in a digital format.

However, the bench advised Arun Kumar to file an affidavit seeking these details. The governments of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have been instructed to submit their counters within two weeks, with the next hearing scheduled for September 11. In its recent submission, the RBI reiterated its stance that Margadarshi cannot avoid legal scrutiny by contending that Section 45(S) of the RBI Act does not specifically apply to Hindu Undivided Families (HUFs). The RBI argued that Margadarshi, by operating under an HUF, should be classified as an "association of individuals" under the Act and is therefore prohibited from accepting

public deposits. The central bank further asserted that Margadarshi Financiers, owned by the late media mogul Ch Ramoji Rao, is liable for prosecution due to its violation of regulations by collecting funds from the public. The RBI also opposed the petitions filed by Margadarshi and Ramoji Rao, which sought to quash cases initiated in 2008 by the Andhra Pradesh government. In its counter-affidavit, the RBI cited multiple judgments from both the Telangana High Court and the Supreme Court, arguing that the petitions should be dismissed as the actions of the petitioners appeared to meet the criteria for the alleged offenses.

Charming montage woven out of four traditional dance forms

KOCHI: The importance of the Ramayana in Kerala's tradition is evident from the innumerable stories told by various classical art forms. The lessons of righteousness and eternal wisdom imparted by Ramayana have a significant influence on the state's cultural sphere. Bhavayami, a dance drama directed by kathakali artist Kalamandalam Vaisakh, a teacher at RLV College, conveys the essence of the Ramayana in one hour and 45 minutes. An elegant fusion of the classical dances of kathakali, bharatanatyam, koodiyattam and yakshagana, Bhavayami explores the colourful makeup, elaborate costumes and codified theatrical language of these art forms, unfolding a celestial world in front of the audience. Bhavayami is a confluence of creative influences and myriad traditions of Kerala and draws inspiration from Bhavayami Reghuramam, a Carnatic Keerthana composed by Swathi Thirunal. Vaisakh drew inspiration from a bharatanatyam



performance by artist Rajashree Warriar based on the Keerthana Bhavayami Reghuramam at Kalamandalam eight years ago. He was working as a teacher at Kalamandalam at that time. "The complete story of Ramayana is performed in kathakali through eight plays which take eight days to perform. As we don't get an audience for such elaborate plays I thought of a concise story selecting important incidents in the Ramayana. I conducted extensive research exploring the possibilities of various traditional art forms. After I joined RLV College of Music and Fine Arts, I presented the idea

before our principal R Rajalakshmi. We selected a group of students and teachers at RLV and had a two-month training session to realise the dream. It was staged at the Samabhavana Art Festival at RLV College on August 13, 2023, for the first time," said Vaisakh. The story starts with the birth of Lord Ram and concludes with his coronation as the King of Ayodhya. The descriptive part is presented through bharatanatyam, while important events like Sita Swayamvaram, the abduction of Sita by Ravana, the battle between Bali and Sugreeva, the killing of Jatayu, the burning of Lanka by Hanuman and Pattabhishekam (the coronation of Lord Ram) are depicted through kathakali. The character of Soorpanakha, the sister of Ravana, is presented through Koodiyattam while the character of Ravana is portrayed through yakshagana. The meeting of Soorpanakha with Ravana after mutilation by Lakshman is presented exploring the possibilities of ninam in kathakali.

No water supply for two months, say residents of TN's Punnakayal

THOOTHUKUDI: Residents of Punnakayal urged the district administration to ensure water supply to their hamlet during the public grievance redressal meeting here on Monday. District Revenue Officer S Ajay Seenivasan presided over the meeting,

following the transfer of District Collector G Lakshmi pathy, and received over 570 petitions. According to the petition given by the residents of Punnakayal, the Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage Board (TWAD) and the panchayat has not supplied water for the past two months. Over 10,000 people live in the hamlet, mostly seafarers. Despite every house having a connection under the Jal Jeevan scheme, they are yet to get water, forcing them to buy water for 10 per pot. The villagers urged the district collector to ensure water supply for them.

'Former BDO siphoned funds'
In another petition, Srivaikuntam union chairman S Vasantha, also the AIADMK district deputy secretary, alleged that one

Sivarajan, who served as the block development officer (BDO) for the union between March 8, 2023, and June 14, 2024, mishandled funds and fraudulently allotted houses meant for 2023 December flood victims to others. To restore flood damages in the villages in

petition stated. Hence, the audit report had been withheld during the recently held union councillor's meet.

Vasantha told media persons that the district collector must order an investigation into the misappropriation of funds by the BDO and other officials,

and recover the money.

'Probe illegal allocation of land patta'

Activist Gandhi Mallar alleged that the former Thoothukudi tahsildar illegally issued a patta for land allotted for a playground, which is at least worth Rs 10 crore. The suspected landowners had produced bogus documents while applying for the patta. He also charged that the town planning officials arbitrarily approved the layout without obtaining necessary permission from the Thoothukudi corporation, which has authority over the playgrounds. The district administration must initiate necessary action against the officials and others involved in the scam, the activist said.



Srivaikuntam union, Rs 1.55 crore had been utilised from the union general fund, as per the cash book.

During the block-level meeting, Sivarajan presented the expenditure details for only Rs 1.27 crore, which is Rs 27 lakh less than the amount withdrawn. The mismatch revealed a huge scam, the

Address overcrowding in SC, ST hostels: Karnataka HC

BENGALURU: The Karnataka High Court on Tuesday directed the state government to address on priority the issue of overcrowding in state-run hostels for scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students, and sought details on the steps taken to fill up vacant posts of wardens. Hearing a sou motu public interest litigation registered in 2023 on the issue, a division bench of Chief Justice N V Anjaria and Justice K V Aravind orally observed that a "chaotic situation" was created in hostels.

Referring to the report submitted by the state government, the court pointed out that out of the total sanctioned strength of 1,890 posts of senior



wardens, 548 were vacant, and out of 518 sanctioned junior warden posts, 53 were vacant.

Citing the number of students in various hostels as per the report, the court noted that more students were admitted than the actual capacity of the hostels. In a post-metric hostel in Sirsi of Uttara Kannada district, 151 students were admitted against the sanctioned strength of 50. In Koppal, 214 students were admitted, against the 75 sanctioned strength. The other two hostels in Koppal are not better since 250 students were admitted against the 100 sanctioned strength, the court pointed out.

Therefore, the state government should submit the details of the steps taken to fill up the vacant posts of wardens, and the measures to be taken to ensure that there is no overcrowding in hostels, the court said, adjourning the hearing to September 30.

Wayanad landslides: Final rehabilitation plan after obtaining stakeholders' opinions

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The state government is proceeding with the rehabilitation of landslide victims in Wayanad, said Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. The chief secretary has been assigned to discuss the different aspects of rehabilitation with disaster response experts and people's representatives from the affected areas, he told media persons here on Tuesday. The final plan will be formulated after obtaining the opinion of all stakeholders, said the CM. Initially, there were 729 families in rehabilitation camps. Except for 219 families, the rest of them moved to rented houses or relatives' homes. The government will give monthly rent to all these families. The government has repaired 75 government quarters where 83 families will be rehabilitated. The government has identified 177 houses where victims can be rehabilitated. Of them, 123 are ready to be occupied. As many as 105 houses have



already been sanctioned to victims and 22 families have started living there. The CM said some of the victims have sought more time to move out of the rehabilitation camps. So far 179 dead bodies have been identified. As many as 17 families were totally wiped away in the disaster. They comprised 65 members. Reports say that 119 persons are still missing. The government could not find the next of kin of five persons. Samples have been sent for DNA tests in such cases. Relatives of 59 deceased received Rs 4 lakh from the State Disaster Response Fund and Rs 2 lakh from the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund. An immediate assistance of Rs 10,000 was given to 691 families. Additionally, 172 families were given Rs 10,000 as funeral expenses.

The CM said the support of banks was inevitable to provide livelihood to the affected families. Agriculture was the source of income for the majority. Most of them had taken loans for farming, education and housing. "But they have lost their houses and farmlands. A large number of people have become lonely. The government, in this context, asked the State Level Bankers Committee meeting to write off the loans of landslide victims," he said.

There's more to the Preamble than a

AS I reflect on the recent controversy over the reported removal of the Preamble to the Constitution from select NCERT textbooks, I realise once again the significance of the politics of knowledge. Possibly, it is not easy for the ruling regime to free itself from the alliance of religious nationalism and market fundamentalism, or the politics centred on the cult of a narcissistic/potentially authoritarian personality. Not surprisingly, you and I need not be surprised if the establishment feels somewhat uncomfortable with the grand egalitarian/secular ideal the Preamble articulates.

However, as a teacher with a keen interest in pedagogic practices, I do not want to remain confined merely to what has been deleted from school textbooks. My question is whether the prevalent pattern of classroom transaction is capable of making the young learner understand and internalise the significance of the Preamble, even if it is included in these textbooks. As teachers and educationists, we should reflect on this pedagogic question more seriously rather than getting carried away by the rhetoric of the debate between the government and the Opposition. In this context, I feel tempted to refer to the experience of a workshop in which I got an opportunity (thanks to Vikash Sharma of the Shiksha Swaraj initiative) to interact with a group of Class-XI students in the hinterland of rural Bihar. Well, their NCERT text of political theory begins with the Preamble. I asked them to read and feel every word of the beautifully written Preamble: "We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic..." Well, they read it; and I was not sure whether they could make sense of it. In a culture of rote learning and exam-centric education, this grand vision of the kind of India we wish to make, I feared, has already been reduced to a mere 'fact' — soulless, and without any enchanting power, or just a two-mark question in the board examination. But then, I didn't give up; I sought to intervene; and I wanted them to think and reflect. I asked them a simple question: "Do you see democracy in your family, or in your village?" They remained silent for quite some time. It was not surprising. The teacher's monologue in the classroom in most of our schools, or the disappearance of lived experiences from our classrooms creates a culture of silence. Seldom do the students get an opportunity to see beyond the frozen words stored in the textbook, articulate their own experiences and ask new questions.

I was aware of this difficulty. Yet, I kept trying. And eventually, some of these students began to speak. "There is no democracy in my family. My father takes every decision. We have no voice," a girl finally spoke. This gave me an opportunity to make them reflect on patriarchy and how it negates the spirit of democracy — democracy as dialogue, art of listening and the process of collective decision-making. Furthermore, I wanted to make them think whether democracy as a way of life can exist in the grand political system if it is not practised in our families, villages, schools and society. Yes, this conversation began to stimulate them. And this time a Dalit girl came forward and asserted confidently, "There is no equality in my village. We are looked down upon; we are stigmatised" — her voice convinced me that education is about asking critical questions and interrogating the taken-for-granted world. In the process of this free-floating conversation, they brought the experiences of lived realities and felt encouraged to see beyond bookish knowledge. At this juncture, I asked them yet another question: "Do you think that the Preamble is just a garland of noble words, and the way our country operates is far from this grand vision?" Initially, they were silent or possibly confused. I kept waiting for their response. And then, a girl began to speak: "There is economic inequality in India; there is 'Hindu vs Muslim politics'; and there is caste oppression. But then, India should try to become like what the Preamble visualises." And this inspired me to make a couple of observations and conclude the session.

India should engage more with Taliban

Delhi must accept reality of Afghan situation without according diplomatic recognition to the regime

THREE years after the Taliban recaptured Kabul on August 15, 2021, and, for the first time, gained control over all Afghan territory, they remain firmly in the saddle. This is even though their emirate is not internationally recognised and their government is 'interim'. Top leaders of the erstwhile Afghan republic are, except Hamid Karzai and Abdullah Abdullah, scattered outside the country; they have no capacity of mounting an anti-Taliban revolt, violent or non-violent, within Afghanistan. There have been reports of some small actions, but these do not constitute a threat to the Taliban. The initial general international response towards the Taliban after their victory was to demand (i) the formation of an 'inclusive' government representing all sections of the Afghan polity, (ii) the Taliban should prevent terrorist groups to operate from Afghanistan and (iii) follow internationally accepted standards on gender issues. The US, smarting from its defeat in the 'forever' war, also froze more than \$9 billion Afghan assets. Over the past three years, some countries have intensified contact with the Taliban individually. Indeed, China has sent a new ambassador. The international community's engagement is through the 'Doha process' initiated by United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG) Antonio Guterres. Its third round concluded in Doha on July 1. The demand for the formation of an inclusive government, a non-starter to begin with, has been abandoned. The focus is now on conditions set out in (ii) and (iii). There is global unanimity on (ii) because it impacts all countries. It is here that the Taliban are playing a skilful game. They are seeking to counter terrorist groups that are oriented against countries showing sympathy to their regime, including Russia and China, but are encouraging those they need to use as a card. In the latter category is the Tehreek-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan (TTP). The Taliban are also against the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP), the Afghan branch of ISIS. ISKP's presence is a thorn in the Taliban side but is not a threat to their structure.

On gender issues, various countries are making the right noises but the Taliban are aware that all countries do not place the same degree of emphasis on them. Certainly, it is not a priority for China and

Russia. On its part the Taliban's theological position on them has not changed but its application on the ground is not as harsh as it was in the 1990s. Women wearing the hijab move around in Kabul, and, as of now, male doctors are permitted to attend to female patients if their families permit. A recent development is the placement of mullahs in major hospitals; doctors and staff are expected to attend their short daily discourses. Discriminatory practices against women from the middle level in



education is being practiced. United Nations reports on the Afghan situation persistently note the continuing impoverishment of the people. In his report to the UN Security Council in June this year — the latest on conditions in Afghanistan — the UNSG noted "Nine out of 10 households were struggling to feed themselves adequately..." Low-level economic activity is taking place, but the situation continues to be dire. Consequently, those Afghans who can leave the country are doing so even as Pakistan has forced the return of a large number of refugees living for decades there. Opium cultivation, a source of income for Afghan farmers in some provinces, has been banned and its production has fallen but not eliminated. Ephedrine is also produced to prepare methamphetamine, which is smuggled out of the country through Iran to the wider world. Tensions within the Taliban interim government continue. The principal fault line is between the Haqqanis, whose power base is in the east, headquartered in Khost province, and the traditional Pashtun leadership based in Kandahar. By now, the latter, under the supreme leader, Mullah

Haibatullah Akhundzada, has been able to establish its sway. The Kandahari leaders are more hardline and less exposed to the world. They can be expected to resist any dilution of their interpretation of the Sharia in running the administration, though on the ground, practical ways are found by the people in major cities to deal with their decrees.

The Taliban's regional and foreign engagement has continued, though at a low level. Their relations with neighbours are stable, with the exception of Pakistan. The Pakistani establishment clearly feels that the Taliban leadership has shown scant concern for its core interests because it has not tightened the screws on the TTP. The Taliban are unlikely to change their position on the TTP, at least in the near future. Consequently, bilateral Pakistan-Taliban ties will continue to be rocky. India should shed its inhibitions in opening full ties with the Taliban. The term 'full ties' does not imply diplomatic recognition. India's interests demand that China should not be allowed to gain primacy in Afghanistan. The Taliban have been urging India to enhance its interaction with them. Indeed, India has taken some 'practical'

steps. It should now openly clothe them formally. This could begin with calling the Technical Team what it actually is — the Indian embassy — and its head should be called a charge d'affaires. Doing so would not mean a move towards diplomatic recognition of the Taliban but accepting the reality of the Afghan situation. Also, India has already given humanitarian assistance to the Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. It should now resume project assistance. This can be done keeping the security of personnel, if they have to be sent to Afghanistan, in mind. The training of Afghan professionals should be resumed. The most important step India has to take relates to resuming the grant of visas to Afghans who wish to visit India, for instance, for medical and educational purposes. Naturally, security concerns would have to be addressed while doing so. The stoppage of visa issuance has deeply hurt Indian interests. The policy needs an immediate review. It was inexplicable to begin with and a foreign policy-oriented clarification on why it was undertaken needs to be given.

PM's Ukraine visit

Tightrope walk for Modi under Russian gaze

THE government's announcement that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Ukraine later this week comes amid reports of the death of a Kerala man in a Ukrainian attack on a Russian military camp. The Indian fatalities — around 10 so far in the nearly 30-month-old war — are a pressing reason why the PM is likely to tell Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy what he told Vladimir Putin last month: Moscow and Kyiv should resolve their conflict through dialogue and diplomacy. And Ukraine is expected to reiterate that it wants India to play a significant role for restoring peace, even though Delhi has deftly confined itself to being a messenger between the warring sides rather than a mediator.

In an assertion of its strategic autonomy, India has made no effort to conceal its pro-Russia leanings, but at the same time it has continued to engage with Ukraine.



Zelenskyy had not minced words when he described PM Modi's July visit to Russia — and a hug with Putin — as a 'huge disappointment and a devastating blow to peace

efforts'. Apparently, it was this criticism that prompted the PM to do a balancing act — he lamented the loss of innocent lives in a missile strike on a children's hospital in Kyiv, a response that wasn't music to Moscow's ears.

Even as Russia will closely observe the PM's upcoming meeting with Zelenskyy, the hard fact is that the discharge of Indians from the Russian military remains a work in progress. PM Modi had reportedly got an assurance from Putin in this regard last month, but not much has happened on the ground. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar told the Lok Sabha on August 9 that of the 91 Indian nationals recruited in the Russian army, 69 were awaiting discharge. Exerting pressure on Moscow to ensure their expeditious return should be a top priority, but India also has to tread warily so as not to antagonise its all-weather friend.

Regime change can impact Bangladesh's defence ties with India

Faced with a crisis of legitimacy and the backsliding of democracy, Hasina's port of call was New Delhi.

IN a conversation with me after Pakistan's surrender at Bogra in the 1971 Liberation War, Maj Gen Nazir Hussain Shah, General Officer Commanding of the 16 Pakistan Infantry Division, had said prophetically: "Bangladesh will be a disturbed desh." Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, head of the 16-member non-political interim advisory council that has two student leaders, has described Sheikh Hasina's exit as "the second Liberation". It has also been referred to as the 'third revolution', a redux of the 2006 Nepalese revolution and 'Arab Spring on steroids', and likened to the 2022 Aragalaya (uprising) in Sri Lanka. There are conspiracy theories attached to last month's Anti-Discrimination Students Movement. A warning by Bangladeshi filmmaker and philanthropist Chanchal Chowdhury about an impending US-led coup has gone viral on social media. The immediate fallout from Hasina's eviction will be for India, which has historically put all its eggs in the Awami League basket. Faced with a crisis of legitimacy and the backsliding of democracy, Hasina's port of call was New Delhi, which welcomed her with a bit of nervousness. The mayhem that marked the violence and revenge killings was similar to those witnessed during the regime change in Afghanistan in 2021. The army under Gen Waker-Uz-Zaman, praised by the US, carried out a coup, the fifth in 53 years.

During a lecture tour to the Centre for the Study of Genocide and Justice at the Liberation War Museum in Dhaka last November ahead of the January 2024 parliamentary elections, I failed to read the graffiti (read writing) on the wall: 'Hasina go'. And so did India. My driver told me that if a free and fair election were held, the Opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by Begum Khaleda Zia, would sweep the polls. This was echoed by an officer of the

Indian High Commission in Dhaka and several journalists. Still, India backed Hasina to the hilt. The civil-military relations seemed harmonised, with both sides marking their red lines. During several visits to Bangladesh since 1971, one saw the Awami League focus on two areas: the glorification of the legacy of the Liberation War and strengthening India-Bangladesh relations despite the lurking anti-India sentiment. The battle between the two Begums (and the proxy war between their sons Sajeeb Wazed and Tarique Rahman) was clearly manifest in their love-hate approach towards India. During the BNP's rule, the India connect with the Liberation War diminished. And when the Awami League regained power, especially in the last 15 years, emphasis was laid on reviving the cult of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the war. Therefore, the image of a student defacing Mujib's statue in Dhaka and the public hangings of Awami League workers illustrate the vicious cycle. India's Eastern Command, which oversaw the 1971 war, commemorates the Liberation War with Mukti Jodhas from Bangladesh every year in December. And Dhaka reciprocates with warmth through a lavish felicitation of Indian veterans of the conflict. That ritual was sanctified by the construction of a war memorial for India's 1,670-odd martyrs (similar to the one for the Indian Peace-Keeping Force in Colombo) at Ashuganj. It was to be inaugurated later this year by PM Narendra Modi and Hasina. Scholarships, medical schemes and myriad welfare facilities have been introduced for the dependants of Mukti Bahini personnel, and free medical treatment has been made available for members of the Bangladeshi armed forces.

The rise in military-to-military relations is a stellar achievement, given that the Bangladeshi military used to wargame scenarios with India as an enemy

until recently. Almost everyone, other than the military and the beneficiary families, seems to have forgotten about the Liberation War. Enhanced defence cooperation between the two nations is marked by the \$500-million line of credit extended by India. There are tri-service interactions with institutionalised staff and training-level dialogue. Visits by military leaders are common. Gen Zaman was to visit India later this month. Last year, personnel of the Bangladesh Air Force had visited



Dimapur, where it was christened in 1971. Bangladesh was also supposed to take part in the Tarang Shakti multi-national air exercise with the Indian Air Force this month. Joint exercises and sea patrols are rising. Service chiefs presiding over passing-out parades in each other's military academies is a regular feature. Non-kinetic military equipment has been sold, as the armed forces division responsible for modernising Bangladesh's military

has categorised defence acquisitions under A, B and C groups. While India still falls in the C category, China — the mainstay of military hardware — comes under A. How much of the enhanced defence ties will survive the regime change is crucial for India.

Anti-India sentiment, a familiar refrain in the neighbourhood, has become a metaphor for New Delhi's unflinching support to Hasina. Some Indian leaders have repeatedly called for the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act/National Register of Citizens and described Bangladeshis as 'insects' and 'infiltrators'.

The China Media Group, along with Pakistan's ISI, is encouraging the banned Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing, Islami Chhatra Shibir, to fuel anti-India sentiments. Bangladesh shares its border with five Indian states. The turmoil along the India-Myanmar border, coupled with simmering unrest in Manipur, can wreck India's Act East and Neighbourhood First policies if an unfriendly regime returns to Dhaka. The threat from China to the Siliguri corridor will also reappear. The BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) will also be destabilised as a regional grouping. Consequently, the role of the Army will be the key to maintaining India's strategic interests and ensuring stable and friendly relations with Bangladesh, given the love and labour that have gone into building them. India must send the right feelers to the keepers of the keys in Dhaka. A great deal is at stake for New Delhi, which took its eyes off the neighbourhood.



5 sights to tick off in

Gulmarg

The country's premier, and possibly only bonafide ski resort town, Gulmarg and its pine-fringed meadows encircled by Mount Agharwat and surrounding snow-capped mountains have been part of popular culture and Bollywood since aeons. Even today, the 'meadow of flowers,' attracts droves of visitors in the summer who come here to ride in the world's second highest cable car, play golf, and take hack rides to the glaciers at Khilanmarg and further up to Al Pather Lake. In the winter, Gulmarg transforms into a faux Alpine ski resort with its famed powder attracting extreme skiers from across the world. Gulmarg is a four hour drive from

Srinagar.

Maharani Temple

With its bright red sloping roof framed against the snowy peaks in the background, this small Shiva temple presents a striking picture in a corner of the main meadow in Gulmarg. Its claim to fame is derived from Bollywood: the site where the popular 'Jai Jai Shiv Shankar,' song in yesteryear's hit 'Aap Ki Kasam,' was shot, it's a popular spot with visitors for a photo-op. It's also a big destination during the festival of Shivratri.

Gulmarg Golf Club

The Gulmarg Golf Club, is amongst the most

spectacular courses in the country, possibly the world, to tee it up at. With 18 holes stretching over 7505 yards, including the 665 yard par-5 fourth hole, coupled with the elevated tees, up and down fairways, and penalising rough, it presents a severe test of physical and golfing abilities. It is also the highest green course in the country and indisputably the most authentic Scottish links-style layout in the land.

Al Pather Lake

A gorgeous alpine lake, accessible after an arduous trek past a ridge of Mt. Agharwat (reached via the cable car) Al Pather remains frozen for most of the year. While serious

trekkers can contemplate making the entire trek from Gulmarg—a one-day affair—most people will find the taking a pony ride up adventurous enough. Al Pather Lake's environs are freezing, even in the summer, and susceptible to sudden showers. It's essential to carry woollens and adequate protection against the elements.

Khilanmarg

You can trek up from the Gulmarg bus stand if you like but a more prudent way up involves perching yourself on the back of a pony. After a bone-crunching hour long ride, Khilanmarg emerges in view as a carpeted meadow of flowers in the summer, and a frozen expanse of snow in the winter. There's some ice in the upper reaches even in the summer months and there are sled-operators who'll take visitors on hair-raising ride from one end to the other. Scenic views abound from almost any corner—the southeast edge affords magnificent vistas of the twin peaks of Nun and Kun.

Gulmarg Gondola

A huge attraction: lines start forming at the gondola ticket office almost two hours before it opens in the morning. The cable car takes visitors all the way up to Mt. Agharwat Mountain (3747 metres) from where you can get panoramic Himalayan views including major peaks like the Nanga Parbat. The ride has two phases: those who're not comfortable with heights can opt to come back from the Kondoori valley a mere 400 metres up the mountain. Tickets can also be booked at the tourist office in Srinagar or online.



The clear azure sky suddenly changes colours and a darker shade of grey begins to envelop the atmosphere. It looks as if the sky was perennially missing the floating grey clouds in its vicinity. The rainiest place on planet earth for a substantial period in the past, Sohra in local parlance or Cherrapunjee as the world knows, creates a heavy concoction of flowing rivers, cool breeze, swaying trees and hot noodle soups. There is a thick cover of mist that greets anyone whose footsteps cross these undulating green valleys. Cherrapunjee still retains the charm of a British summer retreat with solitary dilapidated bungalows and remnants of colonial churches dotting the verdant valleys in between the prolific number of hotels that have conjured up recently in these parts. Cherrapunjee is the second largest town after the capital city of Shillong in Meghalaya and lies at a distance of close to 56 km from Shillong. There are regular cabs available from Shillong for a 2 hour drive to Cherrapunjee. The sight of the waterfalls in the monsoon season from July-September is the prettiest but this place also offers cosy retreats and nature walks during the winter months from October to February.

Dainthlen Falls



About 2 km away from Cherrapunjee, one comes across this fall which is just 5 km away from the road. The splendour of this falls is enhanced by the presence of large number of natural potholes, much bigger in size and dimension than the regular ones on the metallic roads. The view of this waterfall tumbling down from a height of close to 80-90 m is from its source and provides a good opportunity to follow the path all the way to the bottom. There is a small legend associated with the name of this fall. According to locals, there was a huge demon python by the name of Thlen who was drenched in greed and power. Some brave men caught the animal and destroyed its hood with a huge stone near this fall. Some of the marks present on the stones are still reminiscent of the violent struggle of that snake, say the naysayers. As a result, this fall got this name. The turbulence of this fall gathers a lot of steam during the monsoons compared to the rest of the year.

Mawmai Cave

To the south of Cherrapunjee Market, about 6

km away, lies the village of Mawmai. At the village, a small clearing in the grasslands amidst the forests surrounding it leads to the entrance of this cave. This is a popular cave among the tourists and beginners alike. This cave is not very long and provides ample opportunity to see the stalactite and stalagmite formations of water dripping along the limestone walls. This is fully lighted and divided into old and new sections. A small entrance fee is charged from the tourists for entering this cave. A torch would be extremely handy in regions of narrow openings where the main source of light gets obstructed by the close proximity of the people in the queue. For the caving enthusiasts, there are some technical and challenging caves in Jaintia Hills where proper caving gears are required to do explorations. The population of bats inside the cave is almost negligible here due to excessive lighting and heavy visits of the regular tourists here.

Kynrem Falls

Kynrem Falls, located at a distance of 12 km from Cherrapunjee in the East Khasi Hills district is a three-tiered waterfall covering a distance of 305 m vertically. The base of the falls passes through the motorable road that goes all the way to Bangladesh and a small bridge provides movement for vehicles and people across this waterfall. The fall spreads out in two different streams or rivulets with each of them gaining momentum by getting merged while flowing down the last leg of the third tier. The source of this fall originates from Thangkharang Park. It's the 7th highest waterfall in India and due to its seasonal nature; this waterfall is best enjoyed during the monsoons. The roaring din of the cascading fall poses a healthy competition to the noisy cicadas all around the neighbourhood of this fall.

Living Root Bridge

Living Root Bridges are century-old natural shoots of the banyan fig trees grown around the vicinity of large and small rivers which in turn aid in providing a means to cross the bridges by entangling those shoots from opposite banks. As the shoots gain strength with time, the bridges become more and more robust. The phenomenon is unique and endemic to this part and travellers from around the world come to see the miracle of these living root bridges. There is a small village known as Tyrna, about 2 km from away from Cherrapunjee where the journey to these living root bridges begins. Across 25000 steps covering a distance of close to 3.5 km, the village of Nongriat is the focal point of the famous Double Decker Living Root Bridge.

There are two layers of bridges on the river here as according to local tales, the lower living Root Bridge got submerged in a heavy deluge around 40 years back. As a result, a higher elevated living root bridge above this one was conceived to tide over this problem. Contrary to the popular belief, the living Root bridges are more sturdy compared to the steel wire ones and provide a firm footing on the base for easy movement all along. The small natural swimming pools around this bridge provide

good source of relaxation after a hard day's hike. There is also a small guest house on the other side of the bridge run by Meghalaya Tourism that caters to tourists here.

Wakaba Falls

It's a tiered waterfall close to 170-190 m in height and provides a stupendous beauty of surrounding canyon all around its vista. The fall lies at a distance of 15 km from Cherrapunjee towards Shillong. The fall becomes completely invisible during the winter months with thin streams of water creating a pattern reminiscent of the crisscross pattern of the hair strands at the back of a woman's head. The beauty of this fall comes alive during the monsoon months as the garrulous water makes its way through huge boulders and vegetation in and around the canyon. Sometimes heavy mist envelops the entire canyon and sighting the waterfall turns into a peek-a-boo through the dense layer. One needs to have a bit of luck and patience to witness its full glory. There are some good viewpoints all around the canyon to witness the magnificence of this waterfall.

Nohkalikai Falls

Close on the heels of 340 m drop, the tallest plunge waterfall in India is a vista to behold. The mist around the valley of this fall along with the sad legend associated with the name of this fall creates a mystic aura that engulfs the canyon all around. The name 'Nohkalikai' in Khasi language refers to 'Jump of Likai'. According to the folklore of this region, Likai was a married woman living along with her daughter and husband. Her husband died and she had to remarry but due to little means of income she had to become a porter and remain away from her home and child for long hours during the day. Whenever she was at home, she would give full attention to her child. As a result, her jealous husband killed the infant and cooked her after throwing away her head and bones. Likai returned home and ate the meat but soon realized her folly and went mad with rage. With remorse and guilt, she jumped off the cliff close to the waterfall and hence the waterfall got the name 'Nohkalikai'. A calm and serene turquoise pool of water at the base of this waterfall illuminating death as a placid end to

all tumultuous means creates a wonderful contrast to the gushing volume of this fall from the cliff. There is a flight of stairs that lead close to the base of this fall and also provide terrific vantage points to enjoy this waterfall.

Thangkharang Park

This park is situated at a distance of 12 km from Cherrapunjee and the source of Kynrem Falls lies in this park. This park provides ample prospects for travellers to revel in the panoramic view of the moorish plains of Bangladesh far ahead. The sight of serpentine roads along the valleys from this park is a joy to watch. There are two foot bridges within the park which provide wonderful view points to vast rolling green valleys and the water logged plains behind them. This park also hosts the famous Khoh Ramrah rock popularly known as the Shiva Rock.

This rock is a huge piece of stone in the shape of a lingam that stands precariously on the other side of the park opposite to the entrance. This park is also a fantastic place to enjoy the usual 4 o'clock rains that grace this part of the region every day in the evening during the monsoon season.

Top attractions in

Cherrapunjee



Badlapur: 12-hour delay in sex assault FIR but protesters arrested in 24 hours

The sexual abuse of two girls at a Badlapur school in Maharashtra has triggered outrage over allegations that the parents were made to wait for 12 hours at the police station.

New Delhi: Over 70 people have been arrested and five FIRs have been filed against 500 in just 24 hours over the protests in Maharashtra's Badlapur against the sexual abuse of two kindergarten students. The alacrity of the police in arresting the protesters pales in comparison to the action taken by the cops in registering the FIR, which apparently took 12 hours. The opposition has gone hammer and tongs in attacking the Mahayuti-led government over the insensitivity of the police. The opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi, which comprises the Congress, NCP(SP) and Shiv Sena (UBT), have alleged that the parents of the girls were made to wait for 12 hours at Badlapur police station before taking their complaints. The medical examination of the girls was also reportedly delayed by 10 hours, prompting fears of a cover-up by the administration.

What has added to the outrage is the fact that the mother of one of the two girls was made to stay at the police station for over 10 hours despite being two-months pregnant, a report in The Indian Express said.

While the Maharashtra government has suspended three police officials for alleged dereliction of duty and handed the probe to a Special Investigation Team (SIT), it has done little to quell the outrage. The school management has suspended the principal, a class teacher and a female attendant.

BADLAPUR CASE: OUTRAGE OVER DELAY IN FILING FIR

The two girls, aged three and four, were sexually abused at a school in



Maharashtra's Badlapur by a cleaning staffer between August 12-13. The accused, Akshay Shinde, was arrested by the police on August 17.

As per the FIR, police were informed about the incident on August 16. The FIR was allegedly filed 12 hours later -- around 9

pm on August 16. The delay in filing the FIR has led to an outrage as in such cases circumstantial and medical evidence are crucial. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has sought a report from Maharashtra over the "12-hour delay" in registering the FIR after the parents lodged a complaint. The Maharashtra State Commission for Protection of Child Rights also said the school preferred to cover up the crime instead of helping the parents file a police complaint, PTI reported.

On Tuesday, thousands of people entered the Badlapur railway station and stopped local trains as they protested against the incident. Protesters also ransacked the school where two girls were sexually abused. The police, who resorted to lathicharge to disperse the

protesters, were pelted with stones. A dozen policemen, including senior officers, were injured. Internet services were also briefly snipped in Badlapur.

Questioning the delay in registering the FIR, NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) MP Supriya Sule sought to know why an inquiry was not launched to probe the police's inaction. Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra, while slamming the government, drew a comparison between the Maharashtra Police's reaction to the case and how the Kolkata Police swiftly arrested the accused in one day in the rape and murder case of a trainee doctor.

"RG Kar case had videographed autopsy and Kolkata Police arrested the accused within hours. In Maharashtra, police refused to file an FIR for days. This is the real non-democratic alliance," Mahua Moitra tweeted.

ED officer, under CBI scanner in corruption case, dies by suicide

New Delhi: An Enforcement Directorate officer, who was under the scanner of the agency and the CBI in an alleged corruption case, has died by suicide. The body of Alok Kumar Pankaj was found on a railway track in Sahibabad near Delhi on Tuesday. Alok Kumar, a resident of Ghaziabad, was on deputation with the ED in New Delhi. Earlier, he had worked with the Income Tax department. Recently, he was questioned twice by the CBI in an alleged corruption case but was let off due to lack of evidence. Alok Kumar Pankaj's name had cropped up in a bribery case after an assistant director of the ED, Sandeep Singh, was arrested by the CBI. The CBI received a complaint from a person that Singh had reportedly demanded Rs 50 lakh for not arresting his son. The agency then laid a trap and Singh was caught red-handed accepting a bribe of Rs 20 lakh in Delhi. Singh reportedly also took bribes from a Mumbai jeweller whose store was raided by the Enforcement Directorate earlier. In the same case, Alok Kumar Pankaj was named as an accused along with Sandeep Singh in the FIR. Sandeep Singh was reportedly suspended following the case. The police have shifted the ED officer's body to a mortuary for post-mortem and are probing the case to ascertain the reason behind the alleged suicide.

Malaysia PM hopes India 'plays its part' to deal with minorities, religious issues

New Delhi: Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, on a state visit to India, said on Tuesday that India had to grapple with "some serious issues" affecting minorities or religious sentiments. He expressed hope that New Delhi would continue to play its rightful role in dealing with the issues faced by minorities. "I will not deny the fact that you also have to grapple with some serious issues affecting minorities or religious sentiments. But our hope is that India continues to play its rightful role because I mentioned to Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi, that these were the years when Nehru and Zhou Enlai and Sukarno and Nyerere were there standing up for the Global South against colonialism and imperialism and to struggle to ensure that we recognise what humanity is about, what freedom is all about, and what dignity of men and women," he said at an interactive session at the ICWA in Delhi.

Ibrahim's remarks come at a time when India-Malaysia bilateral ties are slowly coming back on track after former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed criticised India over its move to scrap Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir that granted special status and the passing of the Citizenship Amendment Act. New Delhi lodged strong protests and imposed restrictions on Malaysian oil imports.

However, since Ibrahim took charge in 2022, both countries settled trade in their own rupee and ringgit currencies in April last year. India's Malaysian palm oil imports have increased as well. Zakir Naik, a controversial Islamic preacher, who fled India in 2016, however, continues to be a major irritant in bilateral ties. He is currently in Malaysia after getting asylum there in 2018. Naik is wanted in India for serious charges related to terrorism after his name cropped up in connection with a ghastly terror attack at Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka in July 2016. During his address, Ibrahim indicated that his government may consider India's request to extradite Naik if New Delhi provided evidence against him. He also said that the issue was not raised by the Indian side during his talks with PM Modi and asserted that it should not deter the two countries from enhancing bilateral relations. "Firstly, it was not raised by the (Indian side). PM (Narendra Modi) did raise it much earlier, some years back. But the issue is I am not talking about one person, I am talking about the sentiment of extremism, of a compelling case and evidence that suggest the atrocities committed by an individual or group or faction or parties," Ibrahim said.

How RG Kar Hospital, at centre of storm, started from rented house 138 years ago

New Delhi: Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, steeped in the rich history of West Bengal, has grabbed nationwide attention after the brutal rape and murder of a trainee doctor in its premises. A portion of the hospital, the first non-government medical college in Asia, was also vandalised on the eve of Independence Day as doctors and women protested against the gruesome incident. It is probably the first time that the hospital, established in 1886 by Dr Radha Gobinda Kar (RG Kar) and which has been a cornerstone of Kolkata's healthcare system, has been hit by controversy in its 138-year-old history. Dr Radha Gobinda Kar or RG Kar was born in 1852 in colonial Bengal. His more famous peer, Nil Ratan Sircar, was born nine years later, in 1961. He established the Nil Ratan Sircar (NRS) Medical College, which is located in Sealdah in the heart of Kolkata. Both RG Kar and NRS hospitals are the top state government-run institutions in Bengal, catering to thousands of patients every day. RG

Kar remained as the secretary of the medical college till his death in 1918. The West Bengal government took over the institution on May 12, 1958. The college offers post-doctorate, PG diploma, fellowship, and



undergraduate programs. **WHO WAS DR RADHA GOBINDA KAR?**

Radha Govind Kar, a social reformer, had a keen interest in medicine from a very young age. He completed his studies at Bengal Medical College, which was the oldest medical college in Asia at that time. It later came to be known as Calcutta Medical College. He then went to England for further

studies after graduation and returned to India in 1886 with a medical postgraduate degree. After returning to India, Radha Govind Kar realised that Calcutta did not have an adequate number of hospitals as per the population. At that time, Calcutta was under the grip of several infectious diseases like Cholera and plague. This gave him the idea of establishing a new medical college. Govind Kar then started a medical college, the Calcutta School of Medicine, from a rented house in Kolkata's Baithakkhana Bazar Road in 1886. It provided a three-year medical course and studies were conducted in Bengali.

HOW DID RG KAR HOSPITAL GET ITS NAME?

The college became popular quickly and soon the rented area was found to be too small to cater to the students. The college was then shifted to another building in Bowbazar. However, since there was no hospital nearby, students had to go to Mayo Hospital in Howrah for training.

72 Employers Intend To Hire Freshers In 2024: Report

New Delhi: A new report reveals that 72 per cent of employers across India intend to hire freshers in the latter half of 2024. This upward trend in hiring intent is based on a comprehensive survey of over 603 companies nationwide, reflecting a 4 per cent increase from the previous half-year and a notable 7 per cent rise compared to the same period in 2023, a report by TeamLease EdTech said. "The increase in hiring intent for freshers is an encouraging sign. It reflects growing confidence among employers and presents valuable opportunities for fresh talent entering the workforce," Shantanu Roop, Founder and CEO of TeamLease EdTech, said. India's unemployment rate has declined to 3.1 per cent as per the latest National Statistical Office

(NSO) data, though challenges persist for graduates and freshers seeking employment.



The report says that industries such as e-commerce, tech startups, engineering, infrastructure, and retail are leading the charge in fresher hiring. Bengaluru tops the list, with 74 per cent of employers indicating plans to bring on new graduates, followed by Mumbai at 60 per cent and Chennai at 54 per

cent. In terms of specific roles, the demand for Full Stack Developers, SEO Executives, Digital Sales Associates, and UI/UX Designers remains high. According to the report, employers are increasingly seeking candidates with specialized skills in cybersecurity, cloud computing, data analytics, and search engine optimization. "The need of the hour is to constantly learn, not just for freshers but also for managers and employees as workplaces undergo transformation," Mr Roop said. To address the skills gap, 70 per cent of employers surveyed recommended enhancing academic curricula with experiential learning, while 62 per cent advocated for stronger partnerships between industry and academia.

Court dismisses driver's plea on preserving Delhi coaching centre flooding video

A Delhi court has dismissed a petition by the SUV driver arrested in connection with the deaths of three students due to flooding at a coaching centre's basement. The plea sought directions to preserve the CCTV footage of the incident site.

New Delhi: A Delhi court on Wednesday disposed of the petition of SUV driver Manoj Kathuria seeking directions to preserve the CCTV footage of the site of the flooded basement of a coaching centre in the city's Old Rajinder Nagar area. The incident killed three students.



During the hearing, the CBI informed the court that it had preserved the digital video recorder (DVR) of Rau's IAS Study Circle and the CCTV footage of Chahal Academy located in front of Rau's coaching centre. The court also gave a week's time to the CBI to file its report on the petition demanding the release of the SUV. Kathuria is accused of driving his vehicle through a flooded

road in front of Rau's coaching centre, causing the water to swell and breach the gates of the building. The sudden flooding of the institute led to the death of three students on July 27. The three civil service aspirants -- Shreya Yadav (25) from Uttar Pradesh, Tanya Soni (25) from Telangana, and Nevin Delvin (24) from Kerala -- died when the basement of their coaching centre

flooded amid heavy rain. Kathuria was arrested on the same day. The incident has stirred massive uproar, with people questioning the institute's flouting of norms and the authorities' failure to ensure proper enforcement of laws. Last month, a Delhi court rejected the bail plea of Kathuria, who is also a businessman by profession. He has filed a second bail plea in connection with the case. In his bail plea, the SUV driver said he was "innocent" and that his involvement in the incident was "completely hypothetical."

"He (Kathuria) is innocent and is not associated with the said offence in any manner whatsoever. All involvement, as speculated by the police authorities, is completely hypothetical, and there is no material to support any allegations. The blame for statewide infrastructural breakdown is being put on a single individual," the bail plea said.

2019 landslide survivors come to help Wayanad victims, bring life's lessons

On August 7, 2019, Navuriparambath Sumod left for Bangalore, leaving behind his parents in their village in Kerala. A day later, the Muthappan Hill landslide in Kavalappara would kill both his parents, and change his life forever. Half a decade later, another landslide would take place in Kerala. This time, Sumod would return to be part of the rescue and salvage team to help those suffering in the Wayanad landslide and the disaster. Another disaster survivor, Sumesh, who also lost his parents to the 2019 disaster, is in Wayanad to help the victims. There are 24 such families, victims of the 2019 Kavalappara disaster, that have come together to help the survivors of the Wayanad landslides in Kerala.

In the Kavalappara disaster on August 8, 2019, in one night a whole village was destroyed. Fifty-nine people were killed and 11 still remain missing. One of the first to be found was the body of a 10-year-old boy. More rescue operations followed.

LIFE LESSONS FROM 2019 KAVALAPPARA SURVIVORS

When the Wayanad disaster struck Kerala this year, the memories and grief of losing a loved one was still afresh for survivors of Kavalappara in 2019. Then, they began to see the rescuing process being carried out. They saw how people were being saved. What could be done better? In 2019, they looked with desperate eyes to see any signs of their loved ones. They have now survived the worst. This time, they knew how to be of help in the Wayanad disaster. Since the morning of the disaster, people have been seeing dead bodies floating in the river and a search has been going on the Chaliyar river. Government agencies, local residents, and youth organisations have all come together along with the Kavalappara survivors to help the disaster-hit people of Wayanad. The residents of Mundakkai and Chooralmala in Wayanad have lost their loved ones, their life's savings, and an entire village. That they are survivors is seen as the area has seen over 400 deaths. All have lost their lives, a loved one and a village. Some have lost as many as 16 family members. The search is still going on. Members of 24 families who survived the Kavalappara disaster are on their side. The extent of the Wayanad disaster can be understood by the Chaliyar River in Malappuram district. Dead bodies have reached the Pothukallu and Munderi areas through the Chaliyar, which flows across the forest for about 25 km.

10 enchanting beaches in Odisha

With a coastline of 485 km along the Bay of Bengal, Odisha is home to some of the best beaches in India. From Balasore to Ganjam, these pristine and beautiful beaches have everything to offer to a visitor from a clean sea bed to turquoise blue waters to golden sparkling sand. Travellers can lie back and witness sea waves crashing melodiously on the shore or engage in fun-filled activities, including fishing with the local fishermen, besides uninterrupted sunbathing. Many of the beaches are surrounded by casuarina vegetation and palm trees, which add to the beauty. Almost all the unspoiled beaches are perfect destinations for travellers looking for tranquillity as well as adventure. Here's a look at the most scenic beaches of Odisha.

Paradip Beach

Paradip Beach in Jagatsinghpur district offers a gorgeous view of the Bay of Bengal. In fact, the beach is located on the confluence of the Mahanadi River and the Bay of Bengal. It has clear blue water, large stones on the shore and a good marine drive road. The place is ideal for a family trip, where one can go swimming or enjoy a stroll by the shimmering water. It is 94 km from Cuttack and 125 km from Bhubaneswar and connected by good roads. Although beautiful, the beach is rough many a times, particularly the two km stretch from Hanuman Temple to Sandakhuda in Paradip and the one km shoreline at Siali. These beach stretches have been identified as Seismically-vulnerable zones and are very risky for sea bathing. There is a lighthouse near the beach, which is armed with the latest differential global positioning system. There are several other attractions nearby. Visitors can relax at the sylvan gardens of Smuriti Udyan, a place dedicated to the people who lost their lives in the 1999 Super Cyclone. The musical fountain inside the park is worth a watch. Odisha's biggest aquarium, the Paradip Marine Aquarium, is also located in the Paradip city. It has 28 tanks with different species of fish. Paradip is also famous for its port, one of the oldest in the world. It stands testimony to the rich maritime heritage of the region.

Gopalpur Beach

Situated 16 km away from Berhampur, Gopalpur-on-Sea is a splendid retreat for avid beach lovers. From golden sands to clear blue waters, the beach has everything that can entice visitors. Besides a sun-kissed beach, Gopalpur-on-Sea offers glimpses of its past glory as a commercial port. The crumbling walls and pillars of an ancient jetty can still be found on the beach. In fact, Gopalpur was once a bustling maritime zone in Odisha and a sea port through which early settlers of Southeast Asia sailed off. Established during the British rule, the port stopped functioning in 1942 during the Second World War. There are ruins of several bungalows and mansions belonging to the European merchants, which give it a colonial look. A red-and-white striped lighthouse also stands on the popular beach. Commissioned in 1871, it is one of the oldest lighthouses in the state. Every year during Kartika Purnima, people sail tiny boats made of banana stems and paper, with lamps, betel leaves, crackers, fruits and coins in them, to mark the rich maritime history of Gopalpur-on-Sea. The beach is well connected by an excellent all-weather road which branches off from NH-5 on the outskirts of Berhampur. Regular bus services, taxis and auto rickshaws are also available.

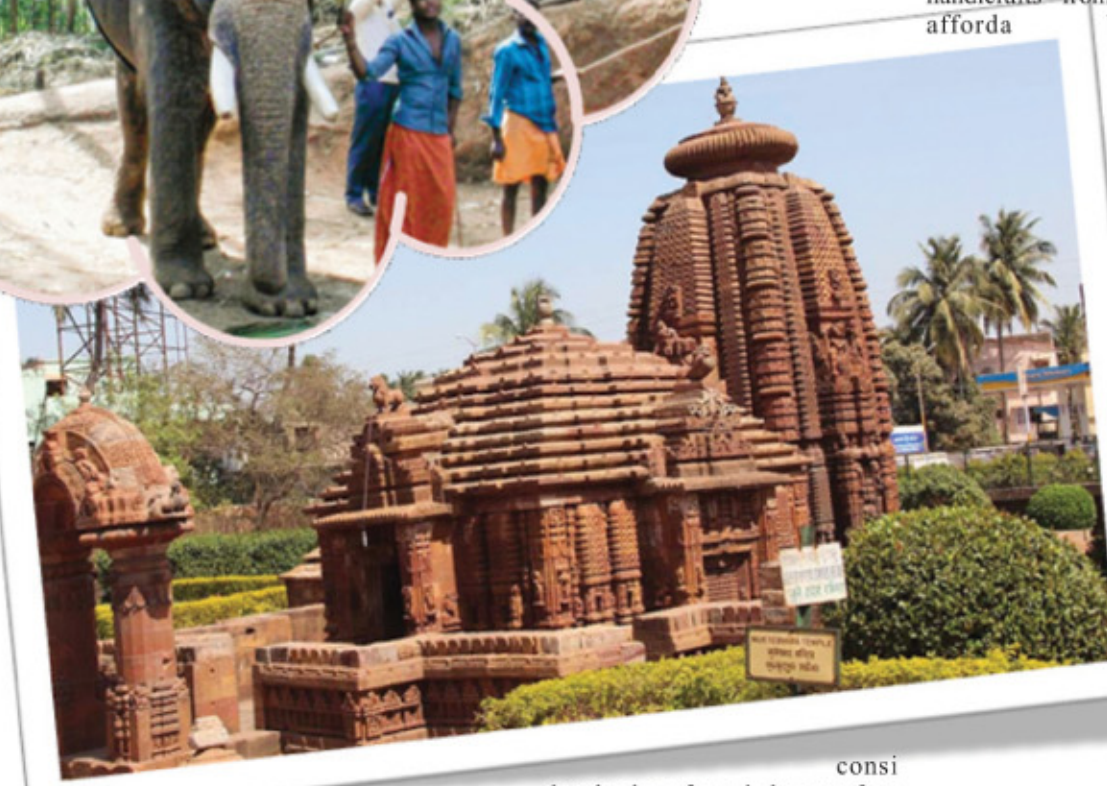
Astaranga Beach

Astaranga Beach is another popular beach resort near Puri. The beach offers an enchanting view of the horizon which becomes uncommonly colourful during sunset. In fact, the name Astaranga is a combination of two Odia words—asta (sunset) and ranga (colourful)—and this is why it's also called a photographer's delight. The beach is also a popular fishing destination for Puri district.

Puri Beach

This destination certainly needs no introduction. This beach in the pilgrim city of Puri is the most popular beach in Odisha and the largest in the country. The splendid beach stretches up to seven km and is a round-the-year destination for both domestic and international travellers. Visitors can enjoy both the sunrise and the sunset, sunbathe, sit back on the beach and watch local fishermen pulling their catch or mending their nets play with the waves, along with listening to the melodious rendition of the striking waves. Compared to other beaches in the country, the Puri Beach is

13th-century Sun Temple at Konark, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. According to historians, the ships took the Sun Temple as a reference point in the sea during the maritime trade between Odisha (Kalinga), Bali, Java and Sumatra. Later, a lighthouse was constructed on Marine Road in 1967 to guide the ships. As there are several mythological tales associated with the beach, a week-long Chandrabhaga Mela is organised here every year to honour the Sun god. Every year during December and January, the Tourism Department of the Government of Odisha hosts an annual International Sand Art Festival on the sidelines of the popular Konark Dance Festival at the World Heritage Site. The Chandrabhaga Beach can be visited anytime during the year and there are a lot of luxury and budget accommodations near the beach and the Sun Temple. There are also many restaurants and refreshment stalls near the beach. Visitors can purchase beautiful seashell handicrafts from stalls on the beach at



affordable prices. People can hire taxis from Bhubaneswar or Puri to reach the destination.

Baliharchandi Beach

Swaying casuarina trees, an unending stretch of golden sand and the turbulent sea form the picturesque landscape of Baliharchandi Beach. Located 27 km away from Puri, the beach is a popular round-the-year picnic spot. A swim in the tumultuous sea is a delight for those seeking adventure.

Besides the clean blue sea, the beach is famous for the temple of goddess Harachandi close by. The

small fishing market operates on the beach every morning, where fishermen immediately sell their catch to vendors. There is a shrine of Pir Jahania near the long, sandy beach, which is frequented by both Hindus and Muslims. They come to take the blessings of Pir Jahania and offer a chadar. Apart from the magnificent sea view, visitors can watch the nesting of Olive Ridley turtles during winter. There's also a mangrove path near the mouth of the Devi River. Although a beautiful beach, many areas are muddy or have quicksand and visitors need to take guides when venturing into unexplored areas on the beach. There are no accommodation options near the beach and the travellers need to put up at Puri, Konark or Bhubaneswar. By road, the Astaranga Beach is 90 km from Puri and 19 km from Konark. It is also well-connected to Bhubaneswar.

temple's sanctum sanctorum houses an asta bhuja (eight-armed) Mahisamardini Durga, who is worshipped as goddess Harachandi. She is regarded as the goddess of water and navigation who protects fishermen. All tourists coming to the beach make it a point to pay obeisance to the deity. A small river flows into the sea just 200 m away from the temple, and can be crossed in a boat for just Rs 5. On the other side of the river, there is a massive sandy dune with casuarina trees that makes for an ideal picnic spot for travellers. While the summer in Baliharchandi is extremely humid and hot, the beach experiences a tropical monsoon climate. The best time to plan a visit to Baliharchandi Beach is between the months of October and March. The beach is accessible with good roads, with the nearest railway station at Puri.

Chandrabhaga Beach

Known for its mesmerising sunset, the Chandrabhaga Beach is considered to be one of the biggest assets of the state as far as tourism is concerned. One of the finest, cleanest and greenest beaches in eastern India, it is located at Chandrabhaga village which is just three km away from the

temple of goddess Harachandi close by. The temple's sanctum sanctorum houses an asta bhuja (eight-armed) Mahisamardini Durga, who is worshipped as goddess Harachandi. She is regarded as the goddess of water and navigation who protects fishermen. All tourists coming to the beach make it a point to pay obeisance to the deity. A small river flows into the sea just 200 m away from the temple, and can be crossed in a boat for just Rs 5. On the other side of the river, there is a massive sandy dune with casuarina trees that makes for an ideal picnic spot for travellers. While the summer in Baliharchandi is extremely humid and hot, the beach experiences a tropical monsoon climate. The best time to plan a visit to Baliharchandi Beach is between the months of October and March. The beach is accessible with good roads, with the nearest railway station at Puri.

Balighai Beach

Situated eight km on the north-eastern side of Puri, Balighai is a pristine beach that remains relatively undiscovered. It is situated at the mouth of the Nuanai River, off the Konark-Puri Marine Drive road. The beach is also a nesting site for the endangered Olive Ridley sea turtles who visit the beach every year from December to January for mass nesting. Migratory birds can be seen here during the winter months. In the evening, one can also

enjoy deep fried seafood at shacks on the beach. Other attractions near the beach are the Balihirana Deer Sanctuary, where visitors can spot the endangered Balihirana antelope and Indian blackbucks; the Sea Turtle Research Centre, and small temples like Barahi, Lakshminarayan and the Amreshra. In fact, the temple of goddess Barahi dates back to the 9th century and is related to early forms of tantric worship. There are very few accommodations in the area, except for some luxury resorts in the Konark-Puri Marine Drive road. Visitors can stay in Puri and hire a taxi to reach the beach. The best time to visit the beach is between October and March.

Aryapalli Beach

Far from the hustle and bustle of city life, the silvery, quiet beach of Aryapalli is ideal for unwinding. At a distance of 30 km from Berhampur, the golden beach is surrounded by casuarina plantations and crystal-clear blue waters. While the weather is a little humid in the noon, it is pleasant towards early morning and evening. During the sunrise and the sunset, the azure sky offers an amazing colour play. Unlike other beaches, Aryapalli does not have many vendors on the shore to hound visitors. After sunbathing at the beach, visitors can go round the hamlets nearby, inhabited by Telugu-speaking fishermen, and know the socio-cultural aspects of their lives. The Sand Mineral Project lies in the vicinity, and is another attraction that cannot be missed. The area near the beach has a number of resorts and sea-facing hotels that are equipped with all amenities. The ideal time to visit Aryapalli is between the months of October and June, when the weather is at its best. Travellers can reach Aryapalli beach through a taxi or an auto-rickshaw after getting down at the Chatrapur railway station in Ganjam district. The beach is just eight km from the railway station. One can also hire a taxi from Berhampur city as the National Highway passing through the beach is also well-maintained.

Chandipur Beach

Chandipur beach in Balasore district is the only beach in the eastern India where the sea recedes up to five km daily at low tide and returns during high tide, offering a truly unique sight. Adding to the beauty are the casuarina trees dotting the area. When the tide returns, fishermen rush to collect the small fishes that the waves leave behind at the shore. The beach is replete with small red crabs that emerge from tiny holes on the sea bed and rush towards the vanishing water during low tide. It is equally captivating to watch the sunrise and sunset at the beach. Touted as one of the finest beaches of Odisha, Chandipur is just 16 km east of Balasore and easily accessible by road. A visit to the beach is not complete without a stroll on the dry sea bed with a packet of jhalmuri and coconut water in hand. After reaching Balasore, visitors can hire an auto-rickshaw or taxi to reach Chandipur. There are plenty of accommodations near the beach. The Tourism Department of Odisha has a Pantha Nivas. Other places of interest like Remuna, Panchalingeswar, Aradi and Chandaneswar also lie close by.

Balaramgadi Beach

Soak up the sun at the wonderful beach of Balaramgadi, which lies at the convergence of the Budhabalanga River with the Bay of Bengal in Balasore district. Calm and clean, the beach is just two km away from Chandipur Beach. Here, a tourist can enjoy the sun, surf and the sand amidst casuarina plantations. While a walk on the beach in the evening is rejuvenating at any time of the day, the sunrise and sunset cast an especially magical spell. Besides swimming in the turbulent yet clean waters, one can take part in adventure sports, fishing and boat rides. Visitors wishing to fish in the sea can seek the help of local fishermen who will readily volunteer to take their boat for a small price. Smaller in comparison to Chandipur, Balaramgadi Beach is for those who want to unwind away from the cacophony. Visitors can hire an auto-rickshaw from Chandipur Beach to Balaramgadi, which is roughly an hour away. There are limited accommodations here and visitors have to stay near Chandipur Beach. The drive from Chandipur to Balaramgadi is a beautiful one, with green casuarina trees on both the sides.



Sensex, Nifty trade flat after 4-session rally; Divi's Lab gains over 3%

New Delhi. Benchmark stock market indices were trading flat in early trade on Wednesday as investors held back after a four-session rally. The S&P BSE Sensex was up 54.93 points at 80,857.79 at 10:33 am, while the NSE Nifty50 rose 35.60 points to trade at 24,734.45. Most of the other broader market indices were trading in positive territory as volatility dipped slightly. However, heavyweight stocks declined marginally, leading to a lack of momentum on Dalal Street. The top five gainers on the Nifty50 were Divi's Laboratories, Adani Enterprises, Dr Reddy's, Bajaj Finserv and Cipla.

On the other hand, the top losers were Ultratech Cement, ICICI Bank, Tata Steel, LTIM and HDFC Bank.

Dr. V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said, "An important trend in the market now is the shift in market preferences from overvalued segments to fairly valued segments."

"Attractively valued financials are witnessing value buying and overvalued segments like railways and defence-related stocks are witnessing profit booking. This is a healthy trend and is likely to sustain for some more time. Prices cannot soar continuously. Reversion to mean is a normal trend," he added.

He noted that the trend of FII selling and DII buying continues, but added that the fall in the dollar index to 101.39 "has the potential to arrest the trend of FII outflows". "But big FII investment will happen only if Indian valuations correct, which appears unlikely in the present context of sustained domestic inflows. Despite high valuations the undertone of the market continues to be bullish," Vijayakumar concluded.

Gold, silver price: Precious metals record hike on MCX

New Delhi. Both gold and silver prices recorded a hike on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) on Wednesday, August 21, 2024. Gold futures, maturing on October 4, 2024, stood at Rs 71,960 per 10 grams on the MCX, after recording a jump of Rs 183 or 0.25 per cent. The previous close was recorded at Rs 71,777. Meanwhile, silver futures, maturing on September 5, 2024, witnessed a marginal hike of Rs 141 or 0.17 per cent and were retailing at Rs 84,903 per kg on the MCX against the previous close of Rs 84,730.

GOLD, SILVER PRICES IN MAJOR CITIES

The gold and silver prices in India depend on several factors, including the value of the rupee against the dollar. Global demand also plays a key role in determining the trends observed in the rate of precious metals.

GOLD, SILVER PRICES IN INTERNATIONAL MARKET

Gold prices were trading below record high levels on Wednesday after a rally fuelled by Western fund inflows and U.S. rate-cut optimism, as investors braced for minutes of the Federal Reserve's latest meeting for clarity on the depth of cuts, news agency Reuters reported. According to the latest metal report, spot gold rose 0.1 per cent to \$2,517.08 per ounce by 0427 GMT, while, U.S. gold futures gained 0.2 per cent to \$2,554.90.

Amid volatility, large, mid-cap funds to see more inflows

NEW DELHI. Amid growing volatility in the domestic equity market, large and mid-cap funds are likely to be a big draw among investors in the coming days, anticipates ICRA Analytics. It stated that the possibility of having a diversified portfolio coupled with good returns is attracting investors to such funds.

The global equity market, including India, is witnessing heightened volatility at peak levels following escalating geopolitical risks and global uncertainty. There are concerns about the valuation of equities listed in India, especially in the mid and small-cap segments.

Large and mid-cap funds have seen over five-fold growth



in assets under management over last five years at Rs 2.57 lakh crore in July 2024, as against Rs 0.50 lakh crore in July 2019. The compound annualised returns on large and mid-cap funds are 44.07% for 1-year, 21.85% for 3-years, 23.67% for 5-years and 16.40% for 7-year period. "Escalating geopolitical risks, worries over heightened valuations and uncertainty as to how the global interest rate cycle pans out in the coming months are some of the factors that may result in market volatility," said Ashwini Kumar, Senior Vice-President and head market data, ICRA Analytics. Large and mid-cap funds may be a good investment choice if these funds have exposure to companies that have comparatively strong balance sheets, established businesses and stable earnings growth which can offer the much-needed stability. "Net flows into large and mid-cap funds have increased by 276% at Rs 2,622.29 crore in July 2024, as against Rs 697.13 crore in July 2019.

Congress to hold 20 press conferences on Aug 21 to highlight need for JPC probe into allegations against Adani, Sebi

New Delhi. The Congress on Tuesday informed that it will hold 20 press conferences across the country to highlight the need for a joint parliamentary committee probe into the findings of the Hindenburg Research, which in its recent report raised serious allegations against the market regulator SEBI chairperson Madhabi Buch.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said that these issues have "widespread ramifications for the economy." "Tomorrow, the Indian National Congress will conduct 20 press conferences across the country to highlight the need for a JPC into the Modani Maha Ghotala that has widespread ramifications for the economy, and for crores of small investors - for whom the integrity of capital market regulators is essential," he said. The Congress had earlier said that the demand for a JPC probe goes beyond the findings of the Hindenburg report as it is "just the tip of the iceberg." "The demand for a Joint Parliamentary



Committee (JPC) investigation into the Adani Mega Scam goes far beyond the revelations made by Hindenburg Research's reports. Irregularities and wrongdoings relating to the Adani Group span every dimension of the political economy, as documented in our 100-question series HAHK (Hum Adani Ke Hain Kaun)," Jairam Ramesh had said.

The party has been pushing for a transparent investigation into the matter since the release of the Hindenburg report in January 2023, which accused the Adani Group of stock manipulation and accounting fraud. In a recently released

report, Hindenburg Research alleged that the chairperson of SEBI, the market regulator entrusted with investigation into the matter, held hidden stakes in the 'obscure' offshore funds used by Vinod Adani, brother of billionaire Gautam Adani. The report alleged that this is the reason why Sebi was not keen to

thoroughly investigate the Adani Group. Both Madhabi Buch and Adani have refuted the allegations with the ruling party terming it as a "conspiracy."

The Congress has however demanded the resignation of the Sebi chief and announced a nationwide protest on August 22.

Rising aspirations behind deposit shift, says RBI governor Shaktikanta Das

MUMBAI. RBI governor Shaktikanta Das has said that it is natural for young Indians to explore other markets for their savings, given rising aspirations fueled by education and exposure to the internet. However, banks need to be prepared by managing liquidity and balancing credit growth with deposit growth. In an interview with NDTV, Das said that credit growth and disbursement have sped up, thanks to technology, but deposit collection is still mostly physical. "That's why, in the previous policy, I urged banks to create new deposit products and services and to leverage their extensive branch networks," said Das. "If youngsters are turning to stock markets, insurance, and mutual funds, it is a good thing. What we have done is to provide advance caution to banks; there is no problem now, but looking ahead, we want to ensure they are prepared," said Das.

Starbucks' new CEO to commute by jet daily, won't relocate to Seattle HQ

New Delhi. Starbucks' new CEO, Brian Niccol, will be making an exceptional daily commute to his new role. Niccol, who currently resides in California, will travel 1,600 kilometres each day to Starbucks' headquarters in Seattle. According to his employment agreement, Niccol will use a corporate jet for this daily journey. Despite the distance, he is expected to work from Starbucks' Seattle office at least three days a week, in line with the company's hybrid work policy, which has been in effect since 2023.

Niccol, aged 50, will receive an annual base salary of \$1.6 million. Additionally, he is eligible for a cash bonus ranging from \$3.6 million to \$7.2 million, depending on his performance. He will also have the opportunity to earn up to \$23 million in annual equity awards. This commuting arrangement is not new for Niccol. When he was CEO of Chipotle in 2018, he arranged a similar deal. Chipotle,



which was headquartered in Colorado, moved its headquarters to California just three months after Niccol took on the role. A Starbucks spokesperson said, "Brian's primary office and a majority of his time will be spent in our Seattle Support Center or out visiting partners and customers in our stores, roasteries, roasting facilities and offices around the world. His schedule will exceed the hybrid work guidelines and workplace expectations we have for all partners." Such flexible work terms are often negotiated by high-ranking executives who have significant

negotiating power. For instance, Hillary Super, the CEO of Rihanna's lingerie brand Fenty x Savage, was granted a similar arrangement, allowing her to work from New York City instead of Victoria's Secret's headquarters near Columbus, Ohio. However, not all CEOs have such leeway. Amazon's Andy Jassy and JPMorgan Chase's Jamie Dimon are actively advocating for a return to in-office work. The reasons behind Niccol's unique arrangement are linked to Starbucks' recent performance. Sales in the company's largest markets, the US and China, have declined this year under the leadership of current CEO Laxman Narasimhan. Niccol's appointment comes with high expectations, given his impressive track record of revitalising companies. Under his leadership at Chipotle, the company's stock reportedly increased by 773%.

Reliance-Disney merger: CCI raises concern over cricket broadcast rights

NEW DELHI. The Competition Commission of India (CCI) is said to have raised preliminary concerns that the \$8.5 billion merger of Reliance and Walt Disney media assets might harm competition due to their power over cricket broadcast rights. As per a report, the CCI has privately told billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance and Disney its view and asked the companies to explain why an investigation shouldn't be ordered.

The report stated that rights worth billions of dollars for the broadcast of cricket would be vested with the merged entity, which could potentially permit fair pricing power and control over advertisers. The CCI earlier privately asked Reliance and Disney about 100 questions related to the merger. The companies reportedly told the antitrust body they are willing to



sell about 10 television channels to assuage concerns about market power to get an early approval.

CCI is reported to have given a 30-day timeframe to the two companies to respond and explain their position.

Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) and US-based entertainment giant Walt Disney in February had announced forming a joint venture (JV) that will combine the businesses of Viacom18 and Star India to create an \$8.5 billion

media behemoth whose reach in the broadcasting as well as streaming platform will be among the largest in the country. The transaction, which will create an entity merged with 120 TV channels and two streaming platforms, is expected to be completed in the last quarter of CY24 or the first quarter of CY25. Antitrust experts had earlier warned that the merger process would attract intense scrutiny due to its expected size and reach in the industry.

Billion dollar rights

Report stated that the rights worth billions of dollars for the broadcast of cricket would be vested with the merged entity.

May impact fair pricing power

Exclusive cricket broadcasting rights could peril fair pricing power and control over advertisers.

Mumbai. Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty declined in early trade on Wednesday amid continuous foreign fund outflows, weak trends from Asian markets and selling in banking stocks. The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 138.58 points or 0.17 per cent to 80,664.28 in early trade. The NSE Nifty snapped its four-day rally and slipped 15.20 points to 24,683.65. From the 30 Sensex firms, UltraTech Cement, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Tech Mahindra, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, IndusInd Bank, Power Grid and Axis Bank were the laggards. Larsen & Toubro, Bharti Airtel, Nestle India, Hindustan Unilever, Bajaj Finserv and Adani Ports were among the gainers. In Asian markets, Tokyo, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Seoul were trading lower on Wednesday. The US markets settled lower on Tuesday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) again turned sellers on Tuesday as they offloaded equities worth Rs 1,457.96 crore, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors



(DIIs) bought equities worth Rs 2,252.10 crore on Tuesday. "The trend of FII selling and DII buying continues. But the fall in the dollar index has the potential to arrest the trend of FII outflows. But big FII investment will happen only if Indian valuations correct, which appears unlikely in the present context of sustained domestic inflows," V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said. Despite high valuations the undertone of the market continues to be bullish, Vijayakumar added. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.11 per cent to USD 77.09 a barrel. The 30-share BSE Sensex rebounded 378.18 points or 0.47 per cent to settle at 80,802.86. Rising for the fourth consecutive session, the NSE Nifty surged 126.20 points or 0.51 per cent to 24,698.85.

Single-digit pay hike in IT new reality

Current salary spends and increments reflect sluggish performance, says a staffing company

BENGALURU. Last week when Nasdaq-listed Cognizant rolled out an increment to employees after a four-month delay, it had to face criticism on social media as wage hike starting as low as 1%.

Soon, the company in a statement said the merit increases for this cycle are tied to both individual performance and macro industry dynamics. As per sources, employees with the highest rating received only a 4.5% salary hike. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) rolled out double-digit wage hikes for high performers and an average 4.5% to 7% wage hike for the rest of the employees, with effect from April 1. Infosys' last wage hike was in November 2023. Its CFO Jayesh Sanghrajka said during the Q1 earnings conference that they take multiple factors into account (inflation, peer practice) in case of a wage hike. "At

this point we are evaluating all of that...we have improved our variable pay this year versus the last quarter and last year," he said. These companies are announcing single-digit hikes due to various factors including inflation. "Tech sector's compensation spend and increments are linked to the revenue performance and outlook for revenue growth. The current compensation spends and increments reflect sluggish performance on these two parameters," said Krishna Gautam, business head, Direct Hire - IT, Xpheno, a specialist staffing company. As per Xpheno, the collective of top 7 IT services firms have seen 3.4% annual revenue growth in the quarter ending June 2024 as against June 2023. The collective has accordingly controlled compensation costs with 2.8% annual growth for the same period. The compensation cost controls have been driven through headcount reductions and moderate hikes for performance and retention. The 12-month period ending June 2023 saw a 12.4% revenue growth with a compensation cost growth of



14.2%. Top 7 IT firms saw revenue growth of 3.4% in Q1. According to Xpheno, the collective of top 7 IT services firms have seen 3.4% annual revenue growth in the quarter ending June 2024 as against June 2023. The collective has accordingly controlled compensation costs with 2.8% annual growth for the same period. And the 12-month ending June 2022 saw a 19.2% revenue growth driven on a compensation cost growth peak of 24.3%. "Having incurred high spend manpower absorptions during the buoyancy of 2021 and early 2022, the

tech sector is now operating on tighter cost controls and austerity measures to preserve margins in uncertain market conditions," Gautam said. The restrained salary hikes of 2% to 4% in IT companies this fiscal year are primarily driven by global economic headwinds and tightening profit margins, said Ramesh Alluri Reddy, CEO, TeamLease Degree Apprenticeship. While the IT sector had been offering robust increments during the pandemic to retain top talent, the current economic landscape is more challenging. "Global uncertainties and potential slowdowns in key markets like the US and Europe have led to cautious client spending, directly affecting the revenue growth of Indian IT firms. Additionally, rising inflation and the need to invest in next-generation technologies are exerting pressure on profit margins, prompting companies to adopt a conservative stance on salary increments," he explained. Moreover, IT organisations are increasingly prioritising operational efficiency and are channeling significant raises towards employees in strategic roles or those possessing niche skills that are critical for business transformation.

NEWS BOX

Phil Foden thanks Pep Guardiola after winning PFA player of the year award

New Delhi Manchester City midfielder Phil Foden won the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) Player of the Year award on Tuesday after helping his club win a record fourth successive Premier League title. The 24-year-old scored 19 times and delivered eight assists for Pep Guardiola's team as they pipped Arsenal to the title on the last day of the season. Foden expressed his gratitude for the award, highlighting the importance of recognition from his peers. Foden beat competition from City's Erling Haaland, who won the award last year, and Rodri, plus Chelsea's Cole Palmer, Arsenal's Martin Odegaard and Aston Villa's Ollie Watkins. He also acknowledged his teammates who were voted into the PFA Team of the Year, including Kyle Walker, Rodrigo, and Erling Haaland. "Winning this award is something very special and I am very



proud and grateful for it," Foden said. "To be recognised in this way by your peers means everything and I would like to thank everyone who voted for me. I would also like to give a special thanks to Pep, the City coaches and all my teammates for helping me to get better every day." Chelsea winger Cole Palmer, 22, was named Young Player of the Year after scoring 27 goals and registering 15 assists in all competitions in his first season with the London club after leaving City. Manchester City women's team forward Khadija Shaw claimed the Women's Player of the Year crown after topping the WSL scoring charts with 21 goals last season.

Manchester City began their title defence with a win over Chelsea in their first game. Erling Haaland and Mateo Kovacic were on the scoresheet as they clinched a clinical 2-0 win over the Enzo Maresca team.

All eyes on Jay Shah as ICC chairman Barclay opts out of 3rd term

New Delhi Current ICC chairman Greg Barclay on Tuesday opted out of a third term following the end of his tenure on November 30, fuelling speculations on BCCI secretary Jay Shah's future at the sport's governing body.

Whether Shah will be interested to throw his hat in the ring will be clear by August 27, the last date for filing nominations for the chairman's post. An ICC chairman is eligible for three terms of two years each and Barclay, a New Zealand-based attorney, has so far completed four years. "ICC Chair Greg Barclay confirmed to the Board that he will not stand for a third term and will step down from the post when his current tenure finishes at the end of November. Barclay was appointed as the Independent ICC Chair in



November 2020, before being re-elected in 2022," the ICC stated in a media release. As per ICC rules, the chairman's election comprises of 16 votes and now a simple majority of nine votes is required (51%) for the winner. Earlier, to become the chairman, the incumbent needed to have two-third majority. Current directors are now required to put forward nominations for the next Chair by 27 August 2024 and if there is more than one candidate, an election will be held with the term of the new Chair commencing on 1 December 2024. "Shah is considered as one of the most influential faces in the ICC board room. He is currently the head of ICC's all-powerful Finance and Commercial Affairs (F&CA) sub-committee. He enjoys a lot of goodwill with most of the 16 voting members. Currently, Shah has another one year left as the BCCI secretary before going on a mandatory cooling off period of three years from October, 2025. As per the BCCI constitution approved by the Supreme Court, an office bearer can stay for six before he needs to go for a cooling off of three years. In all, a person can stay in office for a cumulative period of 18 years.

Mayank Yadav cannot be wrapped in cotton wool: Mhambrey on injury-prone pacer

Former India bowling coach Paras Mhambrey has advocated that Mayank Yadav bowl as much as he can. The injury prone pacer has been away from the game after playing 4 matches in the Indian Premier League's 2024 season.

New Delhi. After a sensational debut in the Indian Premier League's 2024 season, things have been eerily quiet for Mayank Yadav. The young pace sensation from Delhi who took the world by storm with his exceptional speed and accuracy has not played a single match since the conclusion of the tournament. Former India bowling coach

Paras Mhambrey has advised that Yadav should not be kept in a cotton wool by the Board of Control for Cricket in India and rather should be bowling as many overs as possible in the nets, at this young age.

The 22-year-old, playing for LSG consistently breached the 150 kmph mark in the 4 matches that he bowled in, leaving seasoned batsmen bewildered. In his debut match against PBKS, Mayank clocked a speed of 155.8 kmph, the fastest ball of IPL 2024 at that point. He took three wickets, including those of Jonny Bairstow and Prabhsimran Singh, and was instrumental in LSG's victory. This performance was not a one-off, as he continued to impress against RCB, where he clocked a speed of 156.7 kmph, the fastest delivery in IPL 2024.

Mayank Yadav: Dark horse in BGT? Manchester City began their title defence with a win over Chelsea in their first game. Erling Haaland and Mateo Kovacic were on the scoresheet as they clinched a clinical 2-0 win over the Enzo Maresca team. However, the pacer has been out of action since then. Mhambrey, while speaking to Indian



Express said that Mayank Yadav needs to play first-class cricket to build his bowling muscles and adjust his body to the load of fast bowling. "I don't agree that if he is not ready, just don't play him. This is the age where he has to bowl. A bowler should bowl. The more you bowl, the more you will have control, you will know your threshold as to how much your body can take. You can't wrap him up in cotton wool saying he will get injured. We can't overbowl and burn him out but we have to be smart about how much he should bowl. As a fast bowler, he needs to play first-class cricket," Paras Mhambrey told The Indian Express. "When you play

one season, you understand your bowling. You bowl in different conditions. Physically, you will be tested in different phases of the game. Sometimes, you will have to be on the ground for six sessions. And to be able to bowl with the same intensity in the last session will give you confidence when you play at the international level. I strongly feel Mayank needs to grind it out in the domestic season," Mhambrey added. The

former India bowling coach said he did not care about the long term plan with Mayank, but wanted to see what the pacer brings to the table in the next 5 years. "I am not looking at the next 10 or 15 years. I want to see what he can do in the next five. The next three-four years will be extremely crucial for him. Once he is 25-26, he will understand his body much better. And then he will have a good five years at the international level," Mhambrey added on the matter.

Mayank Yadav is currently training at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru after opting out of the Delhi Premier League.

ENG vs SL: England to pay tribute to Graham Thorpe ahead of Manchester Test

England cricket team will pay tribute to the late Graham Thorpe before the start of its Test match against Sri Lanka at Old Trafford, Manchester on Wednesday, August 21. Thorpe died by suicide, aged 55 on August 4.



Manchester. The England cricket team will pay tribute to former batter Graham Thorpe, who died earlier in the month, ahead of the first of their three-match Test series against Sri Lanka. Before the national anthems at Old Trafford in Manchester on Day 1, England players will remember the celebrated cricketer. A tribute video will be played on the big screen at the iconic cricket ground. Stand-in captain Ollie Pope confirmed that the England players will wear black armbands throughout the Test match, which gets underway on Wednesday, August 21. Thorpe died by suicide on August 4 after battling 'major depression and anxiety'. His widow Amanda confirmed that Thorpe decided to take his own life despite multiple

attempts from his family and friends to help him battle mental health issues. Ollie Pope conceded that the news of Graham Thorpe passing away had hurt a lot of people in the England dressing room, especially those who worked with the former cricketer. Thorpe played 100 Tests for England before he worked with the senior national team in coaching roles.

England vs Sri Lanka, 1st Test: All you need to know

"We'll have our black armbands throughout the game and there'll be a tribute to him before. It has hurt a lot of people in that changing room. He was a great man. I probably had two or three years playing with him as a batting coach. I really admired

him," Pope said ahead of the series opener. "I remember him saying one thing to me, which was: 'Never let the runs you're scoring define you as a person'. In a bit of a rut when you're young, that was exactly what I needed to hear. It shows, for me, what a people's person he was." He was loved in the changing room. He's such a sad loss to everyone: to the country, his family, and the boys as well. He's missed, and we'll honour him this week," he added. The opening of an inquest into the death of Graham Thorpe heard he died from multiple injuries sustained after being struck by a train at Esher railway station in Surrey on August 4, 2024. The coroner, Simon Wickens, expressed heartfelt condolences to Thorpe's family and all those affected by his life and career. England will begin the first of their three Tests against Sri Lanka on August 21, hoping to stitch an unbeaten run as the race of the World Test Championship final berths reaches its last phase. England, who are at the 7th spot, need to win all the remaining nine matches to stand a chance of making it to the final. England will be without injured Ben Stokes for the rest of the English summer due to a hamstring injury.

Onus on Australia to prove dominance at home: Gilchrist on BGT 2024-25

New Delhi Legendary Australia wicketkeeper batter Adam Gilchrist feels that the onus is on the Pat Cummins side that they are still dominant at home, when India visit Australia late in 2024 to play the Border Gavaskar Trophy. India will be touring Australia for the showpiece 5-match Test series, starting late November. Australia have not won the BGT in the last decade and will be looking to exact revenge against India. The Rohit Sharma side come to Australia on the back of winning two back to back BGTs down under, once under the captaincy of Virat Kohli and the other under Ajinkya Rahane. Speaking to the Times of India, Gilchrist said that India knew how to win overseas and Australia would have to work hard to beat the Rohit Sharma team. "Onus is on Australia to prove they are the dominant force at home. India know how to go away and win overseas," said Gilchrist, speaking to The Times of India.

Gilchrist backed Australia to win the BGT but



said that it was going to be a close call. "Naturally, I'm going to say Australia, hope they get there. But it's too close to call. It will be a close tussle," Gilchrist said.

Pat Cummins puts focus on BGT
The BGT will be both India and Australia's final Test series before the World Test Championship Final in 2025. India

currently leads the WTC points table, while Australia are in the second position. It is expected that these two teams are going to qualify for the final, set to be hosted in Lord's during the English summer of 2025. While Australia lost the BGT 1-3 in 2023 while playing in India, they clinched the World Test Championship title beating Rohit Sharma's team. Australia went on a tremendous run by winning the ODI World Cup as well, once again beating India in the final. Australia spinner Nathan Lyon has already said that he is hungry to win back the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Speaking about the series Lyon said that Australia have unfinished business with India in red-ball cricket.

The spinner praised the Indian side but said that he was really hungry to bring the trophy back to Australia. "It's been ten years of unfinished business, it's been a long time, and I know we're extremely hungry to turn things around especially here at home," Lyon said.

Border Gavaskar Trophy on par with Ashes for Australia: Mitchell Starc

Australia fast bowler Mitchell Starc feels that the Border Gavaskar Trophy against India is on par with the iconic Ashes series. Starc has hoped that Australia will win the bilateral series after 10 long years. Pakistan had failed to chase down 120 runs in New York

New Delhi India are set to travel to Australia at the end of this year to play their showpiece Test series of the season - the Border Gavaskar Trophy. India and Australia have been the fiercest rivals over the past two decades and the BGT has turned into one of the most important Test bilaterals for India since they stopped playing bilaterals against



Pakistan. Australia fast bowler Mitchell Starc has said that the BGT is one of the most important Test series for their fans as well. Speaking to the Wide World Sports website, Starc has said that the BGT is on par with the

Ashes for Australian cricketers and fans. "Being five matches now it's probably right on par with an Ashes series. We always want to win every game at home and we know India are a very strong team," Starc

said.

BGT 2024-25: Full Schedule
India and Australia are currently placed at the top of the World Test Championship points table and are once again likely to meet at the final, set to be played in 2025 at Lord's. India have made to two finals of the WTC but have not been able to win the competition yet. Last year, Australia outplayed India in the final of the competition at the Oval in London.

"As we're placed at the minute we're the top two teams on the Test ladder... so a very exciting series coming up for the fans and certainly the players," Starc said.

Australia last won the BGT back in 2014, after which the series has been dominated by India, under the leadership of Virat Kohli, Ajinkya Rahane and Rohit Sharma. In the last BGT, hosted in India in 2023, India beat Australia 3-1 to reach the final of the WTC.

"Hopefully when we're sitting there on the 8th of January we have that trophy back on our shores," Starc further added.

The India vs Australia Test series starts on November 22 and will end in January with

Ananya Panday's

'Bae' Is a 'Glorious Gen Z 2.0 Derivative' of Kareena Kapoor's Poo, Says Karan Johar

Producer-director Karan Johar on Tuesday said it's been 23 years since "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham" released and if two of its characters, Rohan Raichand and Pooja Sharma, had a baby girl, she would be Bae from the upcoming series "Call Me Bae". Johar, who serves as an executive producer on the Prime Video show, said the character of Bae — played by Ananya Panday in her series debut — is a "glorious Gen Z 2.0 derivative" of Kareena Kapoor Khan's iconic fashionista Poo aka Pooja from his 2001 feature film.

"Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham" ends with Poo and Rohan, essayed by Hrithik Roshan, tying the knot. "If Rohan and Pooja now would have had to have had a baby girl, she would be Bae. I'm just talking because she really is a glorious Gen Z 2.0 derivative of Poo. It's like where Poo ends, Bae takes off. That's the best way that I can describe her because even when you saw the character of Poo, it started with all the fun and games and then, she contributes to the emotional gravitas of the ongoings in 'Kabhi Khushi Kabhie ham' Johar told reporters here at the trailer launch of the series. "Call Me Bae" will see Panday essay the role of Bae, a billionaire fashionista, who is disowned by her ultra-rich family. How she fends for herself by becoming a journalist, overcomes stereotypes, and discovers who she really is forms the core of the story.

Johar said the series, directed by Collin D'Cunha and created by Ishita Moitra, is fun and cool but it also has a "universal appeal and message". "Full credit to Ishita Moitra, who is the creator of the show along with her glorious team, both Rohit Nair and Samina Motlekar who have given all the fun, the needed and required gravitas (to the series). There are a lot of meaningful things that happen in the show through this character. But I will not say that it is a textbook-on-journalism kind of show. The show's communication and politics is strong, everyone in India and abroad will be able to relate to it," he added. "Call Me Bae" hails from Dharmatic Entertainment, the digital arm of Johar's Dharma Productions. Besides Johar, Apoorva Mehta and Somen Mishra also serve as executive producers on the show. Johar, who launched Panday in his 2017 production "Student of the Year 2", said it is the actor's best work so far.



John Abraham Reveals He Asked Shah Rukh Khan For A Motorcycle After Pathaan's Success: 'Unhone Bola...'



John Abraham's last film, Pathaan, was a mega success when it was released in theatres. John played the villain, Jim, against Shah Rukh Khan's Pathaan. The film also starred Deepika Padukone in a prominent role. After the film's super success, the cast and crew of the film celebrated with a special success party. However, John, who sleeps early, wanted to give it a miss. Hence, Shah Rukh had a special gift for him. "My last film Pathaan was with him. I remember there was a success party after the film's release, and Shah Rukh was like, 'Come on John, let's party! Apni picture chal rahi hai. Achha opening mila hai. Maine bola nahi mujhe sona hai. 'Kya, sona hai?' 'Han, mujhe sona hai.' Toh unhone bola kya chahiye tumhe? Maine bola ek motorcycle de do bas. Toh unhone mujhe motorcycle gift ki. Main khush ho ke gaya ghar. (Our film is doing well. It's got a good opening. I said no, I've to sleep. 'What, you've to sleep?' 'Yes, I've to sleep.' So he asked me, 'What do you want?' I said just gift me a motorcycle. So he gifted me one. I went home happy)." John recalled on Zakir Khan's TV show.

Meanwhile, John Abraham is currently seen in Vedaa. Inspired by true and harrowing events, Vedaa delves into the dark and brutal world of caste-based violence and social discrimination. Drawing from the tragic stories of Manoj-Babli, victims of a heinous honour killing, and Meenakshi Kumari, who was subjected to a barbaric punishment by an all-male village council, the film centres on three key characters caught in the storm of societal injustice. News18 Showsha gave the film 3/5 stars. Our review of the film read, "On the acting front, Sharvari Wagh delivers a standout performance, showcasing a remarkable range that surprises and captivates. Whether portraying fierce determination, fear, or confusion, Sharvari handles each emotion with finesse, never compromising her craft.

Naga Chaitanya and Sobhita Dhulipala Planning For a Destination Wedding?



Naga Chaitanya and Sobhita Dhulipala surprised everyone earlier this month when they announced their surprise engagement. While everyone is now waiting for the two actors to tie the knot, it has now been revealed that they might have a destination wedding soon. Several unverified reports claim that Naga Chaitanya and Sobhita Dhulipala are planning to host a destination wedding. Reports claim that the couple might announce their wedding date once the venue is finalized. However, there is no official confirmation about this as of now. Previously, in an interview with Times Now, Chay's superstar father, Nagarjuna also asked if the wedding date is set to which he said, "Not immediately. Like I told you, we chose to have a hurried engagement because it was an auspicious day, and since Chay and Sobhita are very sure that they want to marry, we said, Let's do it."

Naga Chaitanya, who was previously married to Samantha Ruth Prabhu, got engaged to Sobhita Dhulipala on August 8, 2024. It was an intimate ceremony at Chaitanya's home, attended only by close family members. Sharing their first official pictures online, Naga Chaitanya's father, superstar Nagarjuna wrote, "We are delighted to announce the engagement of our son, Naga Chaitanya, to Sobhita Dhulipala, which took place this morning at 9:42 a.m.! We are overjoyed to welcome her into our family. Congratulations to the happy couple! Wishing them a lifetime of love and happiness. God bless! ?? 8.8.8 A beginning of infinite love??."

Later, the couple also shared new romantic pictures from their engagement ceremony and wrote, "What could my mother be to yours? What kin is my father to yours anyway? And how did you and I meet ever? But in love, our hearts are as red earth and pouring rain; mingled beyond parting." Rumours about Naga Chaitanya and Sobhita's relationship began circulating in May 2023 when they were first spotted together in Hyderabad. Their bond drew further attention after a viral photo from their European holiday in June showed the couple enjoying a wine-tasting session, adding fuel to the speculation.

Sanya Malhotra

Can't Wait For Fans To See Mrs At Indian Film Festival Of Melbourne

Sanya Malhotra is enjoying all the buzz surrounding her upcoming film, Mrs, which is an official remake of Malayalam hit, The Great Indian Kitchen. Even before its Indian release, the movie has been making noise at the global film stage. Recently, the movie received a thunderous response at the New York Indian Film Festival (NYIFF) and the team is now gearing up for its premiere at the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IFFM) in Australia. Taking to her Instagram story, Sanya shared her excitement for the screening, which is scheduled to be held on August 22. The actress also shared the IFFM poster and announced that the attendees will have a unique chance to understand her perspective on film's subject during a special QnA session. Directed by Aarti Kadav, the flick also stars Kanwaljit Singh and Nishant Dahiya in key roles. In the movie, Sanya plays Richa, who starts her journey with high hopes as she marries and moves into her new home. However, she soon faces a number of challenges. Despite her efforts to impress her in-laws by doing housework and cooking for the family, but whenever she tries to

make her own choices, she is reminded to follow house rules. Sharing her excitement ahead of the Melbourne premiere, the actress wrote, "I can't wait for you guys to watch this." In June, when Mrs premiered at the New York Indian Film Festival (NYIFF), impressed by Sanya Malhotra's performance, the actress was honoured with the Best Actress award. Actor Harman Baweja's production company, Baweja Studios shared the good news on Instagram and congratulated the actress for winning the award at such a prestigious event.

