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Reacting to Israel's attack, Iran's Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei says, "The evil of Zionist regime...should understand the strength, will of Iranian nation & country's youth Other Book

Trump claims Google CEO Sundar Pichai called him to praise his visit to McDonald's, amid reports that big-tech CEOs are 'seeing the writing on the wall' in the prez elections and therefore folding before Trump to avoid retribution Other Book

Wicketkeeper-batter Muhammad Rizwan named Pakistan's ODI and T20 captain, replacing Babar Azam, as selectors announce squads for white-ball tours of Aus & Zimbabwe beginning Nov 4 P 11

Elon Musk is laughing off reports that he began his tech career illegally in US after dropping out of college, even as he rails against illegal immigration Other Book



DOUBLE DELIGHT

Today's bumper issue of TOI is organised in two sections, both equally packed. To get the full reading experience, make sure you don't miss the other section

OTHER BOOK TOP STORIES

- PMS & CMs do attend social events at judges' homes: CJI
- Discounts come as Diwali gift as car makers try to drive sales
- Actor's husband is NCP (SP) nominee, Sena puts up Nirupam

SL navy arrest 12 TN fishermen

Sri Lankan navy arrested 12 TN fishermen and seized their trawler on charges of poaching in SL territorial waters off Paruthithurai (Point Pedro) Sunday. So far in 2024, Lankan navy has seized 62 Indian fishing boats and arrested 462 fishermen. **TNN**

We did nothing during 26/11: JS

Foreign minister S Jaishankar, on a visit to the city Friday, invoked the 26/11 terror attack, saying Mumbai is a symbol of counter-terrorism, but claimed, "We were attacked and we did nothing. This is unacceptable...It should never be repeated." **P6**

FIR on 18 students in ragging incident

Following complaints by administration about a serious ragging incident at TMC, Agartala, an FIR has been filed against 18 medical students, a collective fine of ₹10 lakh imposed, along with a one-year suspension from the hostels. **Other Bk, P 4**

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Times Interact | P 4 & 6

India's value huge, Modi can impact end of war: Zelensky

'Must Go Beyond Just Saying It Is Against War'

Rudroneel Ghosh
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PM Modi can influence the end of the Ukraine war. "This is the huge value of him in any conflict. This is the huge value of India," said Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky in an exclusive interview to TOI.

Asked about the possibility of PM Modi holding negotiations between Ukraine and Russia, Zelensky gave his strongest signal yet. "Undoubtedly it can be in India and PM Modi can really do that... (but) only according to our format

Fresh violence in Manipur, drones sighted

Fresh violence erupted Saturday night in Manipur's Imphal West and Bishnupur districts, with reports of suspected militants using sophisticated firearms and bombs in both attacks. No fatalities were reported at the time of going to press, reports **Kangkan Kalita**.

Militants launched an attack around 7pm in Koutruk Ching Leikai village in Imphal West, promoting retaliatory action from security forces. Residents of nearby villages reported sightings of drones. Around 9pm, militants struck Tronglaobi village in Bishnupur. **P7**

"You cannot be neutral because it would mean you are on the side of Russia. Between the aggressor and the victim, there cannot be neutrality. I consider this a hidden support for Russia... Those at the (Brics) summit saying they would like to help solve the conflict, in my opinion, look more pro-Russia

Modi is PM of a really huge country, from perspective of population, economy, influence and impact. Such a country cannot just say we're interested in end of war... Blocking of Russian economy, blocking of cheap energy resource, blocking of defence-industrial complex of Russia will lead to the decrease in capacity of Moscow to wage wars against us

— VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY | UKRAINE PRESIDENT

because the war is in our land... we have the platform which is the peace summit."

Ukrainian forces have been under pressure in recent months with Russia making advances in the Donbas region. Add to this the uncertainty posed by the upcoming presidential elections in US

US, France & Armenia top 3 buyers of Indian def exports

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New Delhi: With India shedding its hesitations in exporting lethal arms to other countries, Armenia has emerged as its biggest client of 'finished' weapon systems like Akash air defence missile systems, Pina-ka multi-launch rocket systems and 155mm artillery guns, among others.

The US, France and Armenia ranked as the top three destinations for defence exports by India, which chalked up military sales worth Rs 21,083 crore (\$2.6 billion) in 2023-24, official sources said on Sunday.

Indian public and private sector companies are now exporting a wide range of arms,

INDIA'S GROWTH IN RECENT YEARS



ammunition and fuses to around 100 countries, which also include some complete weapon systems and platforms.

► Components to US', P 9

deep inside Russia. "This is the third hard winter for Ukraine and the Ukrainian people... We are step-by-step strengthening our energy systems and aren't just going to allow Russia to kill our people," said Zelensky.

On Modi's statement that he is ready to work to bring peace in Ukraine, Zelensky said a country like India "cannot just say we are interested in

► FULL Q&A: P 8
► Edit Page: Zelensky's New Peace Formula

the end of the war..." Specifically, he asked Modi for help to bring back Ukrainian children forcibly deported to Russia. "PM Modi can use his influence and tell Putin just give me 1,000 Ukrainian children... Let PM Modi bring back at least 1,000 Ukrainian children," he said.

Missing woman found buried in Kanpur VIP zone

A gym trainer was arrested Saturday and charged with murdering a 32-year-old married woman he was in a relationship with and burying her body in the Officers' Club near the Kanpur district magistrate's bungalow four months ago.

Vimal Soni (35) had been absconding since June, when the woman was reported missing by her businessman husband. He was finally traced to Punjab, where he had been working in a hotel. Soni told cops the two had a heated argument after his marriage was fixed, after which he strangled her in a fit of rage. **Other Book, P 7**

Stampede at Bandra Terminus amid festival rush, 10 injured

2.5K Try To Board Locked UP Train Entering Platform

Manthan K Mehta, Somit Sen & Eshan Kalynikar

Mumbai: Ten people were injured, two of them critically, in a stampede at Bandra Terminus around 2.45am Sunday when over 2,000 passengers headed to UP for Diwali and

► People were shouting, pushing, and falling on each other', P 6

Chhath Puja tried to board the unreserved Bandra-Gorakhpur Antyodaya Express.

According to witnesses, as the 22-coach festival special train slowly approached platform number 1 from the yard, many rushed to board it, breaking queues, and creating chaos.



Six to eight sacks of footwear and clothes were collected from the tracks after the early-morning stampede at Bandra Terminus

As the doors were still locked, many fell between the coaches, sparking panic on the platform and others got injured in the melee. A video of the stampede has gone viral on social media.

While the train has a seating capacity of 2,037, an estimated 2,540 tickets were issued,

creating overcrowding on the platform. GRP sources said another Gorakhpur-bound train, delayed by 16 hours, had led some unreserved passengers to linger on the platform, increasing crowd to 2,500-3,000 people.

► WR launches inquiry, P 6

Modi flags 'digital arrests', says no govt agency issues phone threats

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: In a recognition of the rampant threat of cybercrime, PM Narendra Modi on Sunday flagged the issue of fraudsters targeting people through 'digital arrests' as he clarified that no govt agency threatened individuals over phone or demanded money.

In his 115th episode of 'Mann Ki Baat', the PM detailed the modus operandi of the scam and explained how to handle it in case someone was cheated.

Call drop saves techie from 30-hour 'arrest'

A Hyderabad techie Sunday narrowly escaped a 30-hour digital arrest, which forced him to drive from home and check into a lodge. A call drop allowed him to reach out to cybercrime cops. In UP, Uttarakhnd STF arrested a person for allegedly duping a Dehradun man of Rs 3 crore. **Other Bk, P 7**

Modi suggested that anyone who receives such a call needn't be afraid.

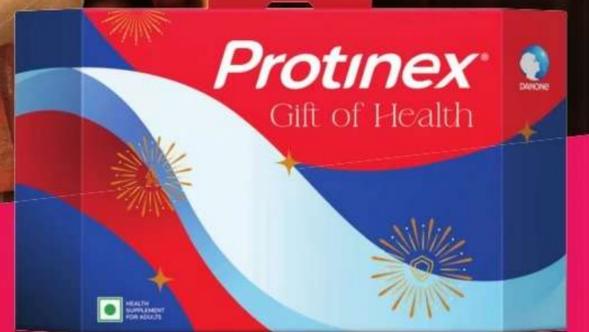
► 3 steps to security, P 7

Will mark Birsa Munda anniv nationally: PM

PM Modi said the 150th birth anniversary year of Sardar Patel will be celebrated nationally from Oct 31 and that of iconic tribal leader Birsa Munda from Nov 15. "These great souls faced different challenges but their vision was the same... of 'unity of the country'," he said. He spoke about his visit last year to Birsa Munda's birthplace in Jharkhand. The state goes to polls in Nov. **Other Bk, P 4**

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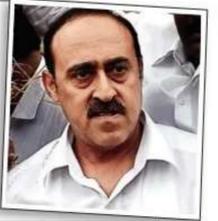
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DANCE of DEMOCRACY

GANDHI FAMILY LOYALIST QUILTS CONG, SAYS WILL CONTEST FROM NAGPUR CENTRAL

Veteran Congress leader and former cabinet minister Anees Ahmed sprang a surprise on Sunday by announcing his candidacy from Nagpur Central. Bunty Shelke, runner-up of the 2019 assembly polls, is Congress's nominee from the seat. A three-time Congress MLA and staunch Gandhi family loyalist, Ahmed said he sent his resignation to AICC chief Mallikarjun Kharge, alleging a lack of social engineering by state leadership in ticket distribution. Ahmed flew to Mumbai in the night to meet VBA chief Prakash Ambedkar. Earlier, AIMIM had offered him a ticket to fight the polls from anywhere in the state. Ahmed had rejected that offer, saying he would never quit Congress



THE TIMES OF INDIA, MUMBAI | MONDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2024

Candidates same again, voters' concerns remain same day (on rd) & night (noise)

Richa.Pinto@timesofindia.com

Mumbai: Bandra West will see a familiar fight: sitting MLA Ashish Shelar will square off once again with former BMC corporator and Congress member Asif Zakaria. Zakaria had run against Shelar in 2019, too, but lost by a margin of 26,507 votes.

Earlier this month, there were reports that former MP Priya Dutt might contest the seat, but Dutt reportedly instead recommended Zakaria, a three-term civic corporator from the area. She even took to X to congratulate Zakaria late on Saturday after his candidature was announced.

While the key challengers remain the same, the Mumbai North-Central parliamentary constituency, which covers this assembly seat, has a new MP: Congress's Varsha Gaikwad defeated BJP's Ujwal Nikam in the LS polls this year.

CONSTITUENCY WATCH
BANDRA WEST

► Also see P4; other book 2,3

wad defeated BJP's Ujwal Nikam in the LS polls this year. Prior to Gaikwad, BJP's Poonam Mahajan had been the MP for two consecutive terms.

For residents in this assembly seat, which includes some of Mumbai's most active advanced locality management (ALM) groups, key concerns include managing the boom in restaurants and pubs, congested roads and late night noise. Locals also want better regulation of hawkers, a resolution to illegal slum encroachments in Nargis Dutt Nagar, Nityanand Nagar and Gazdarbandh, and a stronger focus on environment.

Vidya Vaidya, chairperson, Bandra Reclamation Area Volunteers Organisation, said the weekend crowd of pub- and restaurant-goers clogs lanes. "While young peo-

HAWKERS' REGULATION AMONG KEY DEMANDS



The assembly seat consists of Bandra West, Khar West and Santacruz West, and has a number of citizen groups/resident assns from all localities

Issues: Illegal slums, unauthorised hawking in shopping hubs like Linking Road and Hill Road in Bandra, and a boom in the number of restaurants and pubs

Sitting MP: Varsha Gaikwad defeated Ujwal Nikam (BJP) in Mumbai North-Central in LS polls this year



ple need spaces to gather; this influx must be regulated." Recently, the area saw BMC scrap its underground parking plan below the popular Patwardhan Gardens playground space, a move reflective of involvement of residents in civic issues. Maria D'Souza, chairperson of Mount Mary Kane



2019 assembly polls	
Total votes	% of votes polled
Ashish Shelar (BJP)	57.1
Asif Zakaria (Cong)	36.9
NOTA	2.7
No. of voters	
2019 2,97,716	
2024 2,87,025	

(Above) A campaign vehicle of MLA Ashish Shelar. (Below) Asif Zakaria (extreme right) with MP Varsha Gaikwad (seated, centre)

"The last 10 years as an MLA have been very fulfilling. We laid the foundation stone for a cancer hospital, prior to which we revamped Bandra West station premises and tried every way to decongest areas — Ashish Shelar | SITTING MLA

"The LS polls showed people are ready for change. With a Congress MP elected, it's evident anti-incumbency is strong and we're within hitting distance. Voters have someone they're more connected to — Asif Zakaria | EX-CORPORATOR

Road ALM, said Shelar and Zakaria have a strong connection with the people. "They need to ensure that our trees are not hacked and the green spaces are added to." Activist Anandini Thakoor said illegal hawking in popular shopping spots needs to be kept in check. Shelar said his agenda is to

rehabilitate slums and ease traffic. "The last 10 years saw tremendous development in the locality, whether it was to bring in CCTV cameras for citizens' safety, housing for policemen, a cybercrime police station, Bandra station revamp, and laying the foundation for a cancer hospital. We

Sultanpuri son also in the fray, vows to push for self-reliance

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Mumbai: Andaleeb Sultanpuri, son of the noted poet-lyricist Majrooh Sultanpuri, is contesting from Bandra West on Rashtriya Ulama Council's ticket. The UP-based council has so far picked two candidates, with Chand Mohammed Sheikh from Colaba being the other nominee.

"I have joined a political party which is committed to empowering Muslims. I know my limitations as I am new to politics, but I am not entirely unknown as I have a legacy from my famous father: I want to do something for the community and the country," said Andaleeb, a former film director who also dabbled in the garments business before plunging into politics.

Asked whether he would be blamed for splitting Muslim votes and indirectly helping the Mahayuti candidate (sitting MLA and city BJP chief Ashish Shelar is once again contesting from this seat), Sultanpuri said: "MVA should have thought about it. Are we only to support others? I want Muslim youths to become self-reliant."

would only take these good works ahead."

Zakaria said people are angry over wasteful expenses, especially in the name of beautification projects that are later abandoned. "There is a lack of connection and I wish to be that bridge so that pending works are completed."

Pawar picks actor's husband to take on ex-min's daughter

Prafulla.Marpakwar@timesofindia.com

Mumbai: Actor Swara Bhasker's husband, Fahad Ahmad, will be NCP (SP)'s nominee from Anushaktinagar. Ajit Pawar's NCP has fielded former minister Nawab Malik's daughter, Sana Malik, from the constituency. Ahmad's candidature has surprised even NCP (SP) leaders, who were expecting a local functionary to get the ticket for the seat.

State NCP (SP) chief Jayant Patil said Ahmad was associated with Samajwadi Party—he was president of Samajwadi Party Yuvjan Sabha—and joined NCP (SP) recently. "We felt he was a suitable candidate from Anushaktinagar. We're sure he'll win with a massive margin."

Besides Ahmad, NCP (SP) nominated Gnyayak Patni from Karanja, Atul Wandile from Hinghghat, Ramesh Bang from Hingna, Rahul Kalate from Chinchwad, Ajit Gavhane from Bhosari, Mohan Bajirao Jagtap from Mazalgaon, Rajesaheb Deshmukh from Parli and Siddhi Kadam from Mohol. Patil said so far, NCP has declared

With four more names, NCP declares candidates for 49 seats

Mumbai: State NCP chief Sunil Tatkare on Sunday announced four more candidates. Vijay Singh Pandit will be the nominee from Gevrai, Sachin Patil from Phaltan, Dilip Bankar from Niphad, and Kashinath Date from Parner. NCP had declared 38 names in the first list, seven in the second, and four in the third.

NCP spokesperson and party leader Nawab Malik's daughter Sana Malik, who has been nominated from Anushaktinagar, will file her papers on Monday. Nawab had represented Anushaktinagar for a long time, but gave up the seat for Sana, who has been active in the area. Apparently, Nawab is scheduled to contest from Mankhurd-Shivaji Nagar as an NCP nominee or an independent. Tatkare said senior NCP leaders are meeting Nawab. "We are in constant touch with him. So far, no decision has been taken on Mankhurd-Shivaji Nagar." Mumbai BJP chief Ashish Shelar and his state counterpart Chandrashekhar Bawankule have strongly opposed Nawab's candidature. "We won't allow it. We're sure NCP chief Ajit Pawar will take an appropriate decision," said Bawankule. —Prafulla Marpakwar

76 candidates, including 11 women—67 in the first two lists and nine in the third.

Gnyayak is the son of BJP's Karanja MLA Rajendra Patni, who died a few months ago. He had expected a ticket from Karanja and when BJP rejected his claim, he joined NCP (SP) on Saturday. Sharad Pawar nominated him immediately. Siddhi is the daughter of Ramesh Kadam, who was in jail for eight years in a Rs

312-crore scam. After his release from jail, Kadam met Sharad Pawar for a nomination from Mohol, but he was rebuffed, following which his daughter was given the ticket. Sharad Pawar has propped up Deshmukh, a powerful leader, against Ajit Pawar's trusted aide Dhananjay Munde from Parli. The Sharad Pawar camp feels that it was Munde who drafted the strategy to lure legislators of his group.

Amid BJP objection, Nawab Malik says will file nomination tomorrow

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Mumbai: Controversial NCP leader and former minister Nawab Malik has said he will on Tuesday file his nomination papers for the assembly polls. "My daughter, Sana, is filing her nomination papers on Monday. I will accompany her: I will file my nomination papers on Tuesday from Mankhurd-Shivaji Nagar constituency," he told TOI.

He did not disclose if he would fight as an independent or as an NCP nominee. "I am contesting the election. I will win," he said.

On Saturday, NCP chief Ajit Pawar, party's working president Praful Patel, state president Sunil Tatkare, and food and civil supplies minister Chhagan Bhujbal had called on Malik. Apparently, following objection by BJP leaders Ashish Shelar and Chandrashekhar Bawankule

to giving him a ticket, the NCP leaders had urged Malik not to file his nomination. However, Malik was non-committal. BJP's contention is that it will be wrong to associate with a person who was arrested by ED and with alleged links to gangster Dawood Ibrahim.

Samajwadi Party's Abu Azmi has been representing Mankhurd-Shivaji Nagar since 2009. In the 2019 assembly polls, he had defeated Shiv Sena's Vitthal Gotre.



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35 seats had victory margins of under 5,000 votes in 2019

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Pune: Thirty-five constituencies in Maharashtra witnessed a close contest in the 2019 assembly election where the winning margin was below 5,000 votes. In 12 of the 35 seats, the winning margin was less than 5,000 votes, data available with the Election Commission (EC) shows. Five years later, most of these MLAs have been re-nominated by Mahayuti and MVA for the Nov 20 poll.

According to political analysts, following splits in NCP and Shiv Sena, and with the factions joining different alliances, parties have been forced to deny tickets to those who stood second in the previous poll. This has prompted many aspirants to rebel and contest as independents or switch parties for tickets. For their part, the incumbent legislators claim they have been carrying out development work in their constituencies for the last five years and these will have an impact on voters.

NCP MLA Ashutosh Kale, who won Kopergaon seat by 822 votes against BJP's Senhata Kolhe (while 1,619 voters opted for NOTA), said Kolhe may not contest this time as NCP is now part of Mahayuti and he has been declared its official candidate. "I have brought many development projects to my constituency over half a decade. Besides, the two independent candidates, who collectively received around 20,000 votes in the previous election, are now on my side, which will help me increase my lead," Kale told TOI.

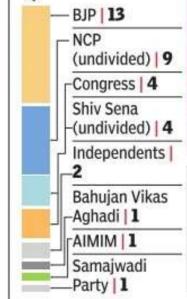
In DAUD constituency, BJP's Rahul Kul defeated NCP's Ramesh Thorat by a meagre 746 votes. Kul said

BUT PARTIES PICK SAME WINNERS AGAIN

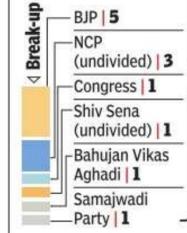
SEATS THAT SAW NECK-AND-NECK RACE

35 No. of assembly constituencies where winning margin was below 5,000 votes in 2019

Break-up



12 No. of assembly constituencies where NOTA exceeded victory margin in 2019



THE SEATS

Seat	Winner	Party	2019 Margin	2024 Margin
Akkalkuwa	KC Padvi	Congress	2,096	4,857
Akola West	Govardhan Sharma	BJP	2,593	2,598
Murtizapur	Harish Pimpale	BJP	1,910	2,443
Arjuni-Morgaon	Chandrikapure Gowardhan	undivided NCP	718	2,045
Ghansawangi	Rajesh Tope	undivided NCP	3,409	9,293
Boisar	Rajesh Patil	BVA	2,752	4,622
Bhiwandi East	Rais Shaikh	SP	1,314	1,358
Ulhasnagar	Ailani Uttamchand	BJP	2,004	4,969
Chandivali	Dilip Lande	undivided Sena	409	3,358
Daund	Rahul Kul	BJP	746	917
Khadakwasala	Bhimrao Tapkir	BJP	2,595	3,560
Kopergaon	Aashutosh Kale	undivided NCP	822	1,619

Source: Election Commission

NCP workers who played a key role in the previous election are with Ajit Pawar's NCP and since he is the official nominee of Mahayuti, they will campaign for him. "People are happy with my

performance in the last two and a half years of the Mahayuti govt," he said.

The EC data reveals that of the 35 candidates, whose winning margins were less than 5,000 votes in 2019, 13

were from BJP, while nine were from NCP (undivided), four each from Congress and Shiv Sena (undivided), two independents, and one each from Bahujan Vikas Aghadi, AIMIM and Samajwadi Party.

'Double-engine govt needed, Centre at global level, state at ground level'

Clara Lewis@timesofindia.com

Mumbai: Maharashtra requires a govt that is on the same page as the Centre, in which the country as well as the world will repose faith, said external affairs minister S Jaishankar. Reiterating the govt's zero-tolerance policy on terrorism, he said, "When we talk of zero tolerance against terror, it is clear that when somebody does something, there will be a response." On the India-China border standoff, Jaishankar said the two countries would go back to the arrangement that existed in April 2020 along the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh. "We expect to return to pre-October 31, 2020, patrolling arrangements in areas like Demchok and Depsang. This will take some time," he said.

Jaishankar was on a visit to Mumbai on Sunday. Addressing a press conference at the BJP's Mumbai office in Dadar,

he said a double-engine govt is required as the Centre works at the international level while the state govt works at the ground level. "PM Modi works very hard attending international investment conferences and when the investments come to the country, the state govt plays a role. Success depends upon state govt being positive, sincere partners," he said.

On the opposition's charge that investments coming to Maharashtra were being taken to Gujarat, Jaishankar said federal competition for investments is in the country's interest, adding that not all investments that came to the country went to Gujarat. "The investor makes his own assessment and when he sees a performing govt, he goes there. One needs to see which govt was there (when investments went out

of the state). Everyone needs to think of their performance," he said.

He said the India-Middle East Economic Corridor connecting to Europe is one of the most talked about connectivity corridors today. "Maharashtra, given its geography, will be at the centre of it," he said, highlighting the importance of the Vadnavan port.



On the India-China border tensions, Jaishankar said the disengagement of the two armies is the first step in ending the four-year-long standoff in Ladakh. "We expect our two armies to return to their earlier positions," he said, adding that the de-escalation, as both armies are heavily armed, will not happen until India is sure that the same is happening on the other side as well.

On countering terrorism, he said Mumbai is a symbol of

counter-terrorism. "We should not have a repeat of what happened in Mumbai. We were attacked and we did nothing. This is unacceptable. Wherever required, we will act after thinking it through thoroughly," he said. When India was a member of the UN Security Council, it was chairing the counter-terrorism committee, Jaishankar said. "We held the counter-terrorism panel meeting in the same hotel that was hit by the terror attack."

Reacting to a question on the recent terror attack in Kashmir, he said, "We are very clear there is cross-border terrorism. There are different ways to tackle it. One is to impose cost and the other is to integrate Kashmir more deeply with India." He pointed out that more than 60% of voters participated in the recent elections, an indication that the abrogation of Article 370 has widespread support.

'BJP cannot win alone, will emerge as largest party'

Mumbai: The polarisation of votes which was seen during the recent Lok Sabha elections will not be repeated in the state assembly elections, affirmed Dy CM Devendra Fadnavis.

In an interview to a news channel on Sunday Fadnavis said the BJP alone cannot win the upcoming assembly polls in the state but maintained that it will emerge as the single largest party after the elections.

"One has to be practical about the ground reality," he said, underscoring that Mahayuti allies BJP, Shiv Sena led by CM Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar's NCP can fight unitedly and win the elections.

"BJP alone cannot win the state but it is also true that we have the most seats and the highest voting percentage. After the elections, the BJP will emerge as the single largest party in the state. The consolidation of votes of all the three parties can only make us victorious," he said.

Asked about BJP leaders who could not get tickets to contest the elections and the possibility of them turning rebellious, Fadnavis said, "One (party) cannot say that you want other parties' votes but refuse to compromise on seat sharing. I feel sad for some of our aspiring candidates who could not be given a chance in this assembly elections."

In a lighter vein, he said the current situation in the state is like many movies being made and every aspiring actor getting the role of a lead character. The BJP has declared candidates for 121 of the 288 constituencies in the state so far. Fadnavis expressed confidence that the BJP would form the government with the help of Shiv Sena, NCP and the Republican Party of India. TNN & PTI

Raut: Is Nehru contesting from Mahim that Sena UBT should withdraw?

Priyanka Kakodkar
@timesofindia.com

Mumbai: When asked if Shiv Sena (UBT) would withdraw its candidate from the Mahim assembly seat, from where MNS chief Raj Thackeray's son Amit is making his electoral debut, party leader Sanjay Raut told a TV channel on Sunday, "Is Nehru or Balasaheb Thackeray contesting that we should take such a step? The youth should contest elections and test their ability to win... When support is required, then there have to be talks."

With Amit taking the electoral plunge, there is speculation about whether Shiv Sena and Sena (UBT) will withdraw their candidates. BJP leader Ashish Shelar has suggested that the Mahayuti should support Amit's candidature. In 2019, MNS chose not to contest the Worli seat from where Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray was standing as a candidate of the undivided Shiv Sena, which was

then in alliance with BJP. "Why is the BJP lobbying for this? MNS is the sister concern of BJP. Such parties are put up to cut votes of other parties. It is BJP that has broken families and political parties," Raut said. He further said that while the MVA has not declared a CM candidate, his party would like to see Uddhav Thackeray in the post. "It is our wish and also that of the people," he said, adding that MVA is set to come to power in the state with 165-170 seats.

He also dismissed rumours of a meeting between deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis and Uddhav. "I do not have any personal enmity with Fadnavis. But he is a political foe. They have broken our party... have used court, ECI, and the agencies against us... We will fight back through elections and win," said Raut.

In response to Aaditya's electoral contest from Worli, he said, "People fear this young man. He has to take on responsibilities and to fight."



In CM home ground, voters want end to infra mess, 'stepmotherly treatment'

Manoj Badgeri, Sandhya Nair & B N Nayak | TNN

Thane: The lack of adequate transportation modes and persistent traffic congestion, along with delayed infrastructure projects and poor civic facilities, remains the common focal point in all six assembly seats of Thane, covering Thane, Mira-Bhayander and Navi Mumbai corporations.

The electorate primarily comprises the working class that travels to and from Mumbai for work. Thane residents complained that the state has repeatedly failed to provide a separate corridor for outstation traffic, leaving them to fight for space with city vehicles. The mess from that poor planning was witnessed last

'WE TRAVEL LIKE CATTLE IN LOCAL TRAINS'



Sitting MLAs and their assembly segments in Thane

Seat	2019 Margin	2024 Margin
1 OVALA-MAJIWADA ELECTORATE* 54,0293 SITTING MLA Pratap Sarnaik Shiv Sena	Defeated INC by 84,008 votes	2024 Shiv Sena ahead of Shiv Sena (UBT) by 61,399 votes
2 THANE 37,4153 voters Rajan Vichare Shiv Sena (UBT)	2019 Sanjay Kelkar (BJP) defeated MNS by 19,424 votes	2024 Shiv Sena ahead of Shiv Sena (UBT) by 48,062 votes
3 KOPRI PANCHPAKHADI 33,8320 voters Eknath Shinde Shiv Sena	2019 Eknath Shinde (Shiv Sena) defeated INC by 89,300 votes	2024 Shiv Sena ahead of Shiv Sena (UBT) by 44,875 votes
4 MIRA-BHAYENDER 50,7452 voters Muzaffar Hussain Congress	2019 Geeta Jain (Indep) defeated BJP by 15,526 votes	2024 Shiv Sena ahead of Shiv Sena (UBT) by 40,650 votes
5 AIROLI 48,4407 voters Ganesh Naik BJP	2019 Ganesh Naik (BJP) defeated NCP by 78,491 votes	2024 Shiv Sena ahead of Shiv Sena (UBT) by 9,798 votes
6 BELAPUR 42,0242 voters Manda Mhatre BJP	2019 Manda Mhatre (BJP) defeated NCP by 43,597 votes	2024 Shiv Sena ahead of Shiv Sena (UBT) by 12,312 votes

line for Mira-Bhayander should have been planned simultaneously with Mumbai as we travel like cattle in local trains," said Rahan Jadhav from Mira Road.

Residents felt that with the CM from Thane, they expect to get a better say in projects and funds.

The region also faces water scarcity. Navi Mumbai residents said the 'one day a week'

water cut imposed on them despite good rainfall this season is unfair, while Bhayander resident Ashok Singh said they have only been hearing about water to be drawn from Surya river for several years. The situation is no different in Thane, where areas like Hiranandani Estate continue to face water scarcity, said former BJP corporator Manohar Dumbre, who recently led a de-

legation to highlight the issue. The fight in Thane, the CM's stronghold, is one of the most awaited ones. The LS poll results cemented Eknath Shinde's iron grip there but he is likely to be put to the test again, said observers. UBT, which has no representation in the power circles there, will fight for survival and reputation as Thane gave the party its first power seat, they said.



BATTLEGROUND THANE

month when Ghodbunder Road and Eastern Express Highway saw chock-a-block traffic for several hours on four consecutive days.

"Thane lacks proper motorable roads, and despite the CM being from Thane, there is still no proper solution. Several infrastructure projects are announced, but key ones like coastal road and Metro seem to be languishing," said former corporator and Sena (UBT) Thane functionary Sanjay Ghadigaonkar.

The shameful story repeats in Airol segment—Ghanoli has had internal roads, while Mira-Bhayander residents complained of stepmotherly treatment. "The Metro

AAP not to contest Maha assembly poll to avoid repeat of Haryana outcome

Prasad Kulkarni
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Pune: Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday decided against contesting the Maharashtra assembly election in a bid to avoid a repeat of the Haryana election outcome in the state. "AAP is part of the INDIA bloc at the national level and will assist its member

parties in defeating BJP. Therefore, AAP will not contest the 2024 assembly election in Maharashtra," said party's state spokesperson Mukund Kirdat said on Sunday. A statement issued by AAP stated that Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SCP) and Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) had offered seats to AAP to contest in Maharashtra assembly election. "But the focus is not on

contesting seats. It is more important to defeat the oppressive and authoritarian BJP. Else, like in Haryana, the division of opposition votes could help BJP alliance form govt in the state again," Kirdat said.

AAP failed to make any inroads in Haryana after the party contested the assembly election there on its own as efforts to form an alliance with Congress

fell through. Having said that, the party's vote share in Haryana increased from 0.48% in the 2019 assembly poll to around 1.59% in the recent election.

According to political observers, the vote division of AAP and Congress helped BJP in securing more victories. "As a result, BJP managed to form govt despite anti-incumbency," a political observer said.

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Mumbai: Rat trap manufacturers, feeling stuck by notifications calling for a ban on glue boards, have petitioned Bombay High Court to have them quashed. The circulars, first issued in Aug 2011 and in Nov 2020 by Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI), are "illegal and arbitrary" and have infringed their legal and various fundamental rights, the pest control companies have contended.

AWBI said glue traps are inhumane and contrary to provisions of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. The rodent control companies claim the use of glue traps in India provides a non-poisonous and pesticide-free solution to stem infestation. The 2011 circular was advisory in nature, they said, and the state govt did not issue any ban then. But in 2020, AWBI secretary issued a letter to all states and the Directorate General of Foreign Trade,

GLUE BOARDS ARE INHUMANE: AWBI

Indian Grain Storage Management and Research Institut, Hapur, in 2019 stated that since 1975, rats have been identified as 'national pest' and enemy number one of mankind in our country. Estimated food grain loss in India annually ranges from 2.4 to 26 million tons

A committee headed by Dr V G Panse, in its report submitted in 1968, stated that 2.5% of post-harvest losses are due to rodents in storage

that the AWBI circular is contrary to Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. Schedule V of the Act terms rodents as 'vermin'

A petition by Guntree Traps, through Gururaj Agnihotri, president of GBMA, and others, states

Oxford Dictionary defines vermin as small wild animals that carry disease and destroy plants and food



Delhi, to take steps to impose a ban on manufacture and import of glue traps, according to the petition filed by pest control companies.

Last Sept, Glue Boards Manufacturers Association said it learned from news articles that a ban was imposed, but the petition filed in May and registered in July 2024 said no official circular has been made available. Adding to their grievance of a

EVERY VOTE WILL COUNT



A man spreads public awareness on a cycle cart, ahead of the assembly elections, in Vashi

Quash 'illegal' circulars seeking ban on rat traps, makers urge HC

Mumbai: Rat trap manufacturers, feeling stuck by notifications calling for a ban on glue boards, have petitioned Bombay High Court to have them quashed. The circulars, first issued in Aug 2011 and in Nov 2020 by Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI), are "illegal and arbitrary" and have infringed their legal and various fundamental rights, the pest control companies have contended.

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delivered to the petitioners, including the hotel and restaurant business, Indian Air Force, Indian Railways, and Indian Space, Information Technology and Research Organization, which regularly issue tenders for their purchase.

The traps set out how to release the trapped rat with vegetable oil, said manufacturers from Goa, Mumbai, and four other pest control firms that filed the petition against AWBI, state Animal Welfare and Dairy dept, the chief secretary, and Indian Pest Control Association, and DG of Foreign Trade.

The petition argues that there are presently "no other effective and commercially viable humane methods other than glue boards available to be implemented".

The matter was listed before HC's division bench of Justices BP Colabawalla and Somasekar Sunderesan on Oct 22, but due to a paucity of time, will now come up on Nov 13.

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Historic Inauguration of India's First Aircraft Final Assembly Line in the Private Sector

by

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister of India

Pedro Sánchez Pérez-Castejón
President of the Government of Spain



A landmark moment for India's Aerospace & Defence industry

- India's 1st Aerospace Project under the **'Make in India'** initiative, for the Indian Air Force
- India's 1st Aircraft Final Assembly Line in the private sector
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**State-of-the-art facility for C295 Final Assembly Line,
built at Tata Advanced Systems' Aircraft Complex**

Date: Monday, 28th October, 2024 **Time:** 10:00am onwards
Venue: Tata Advanced Systems Limited, Tata Aircraft Complex Harni, Vadodara - 390022

Fine contractor ₹1L a day for SoBo road works delay: Ex-corporator

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Almost two years after PM Modi performed the ground-breaking ceremony, south Mumbai cement concrete road works have not started despite awarding a new contract, alleged former BJP corporator Makarand Narwekar. Narwekar said that after the earlier contractor messed up, BMC terminated the contract and awarded a new one in August. "But even after monsoon... work hasn't started. A Rs 1 lakh per day fine should be recovered from the new contractor for delaying works."

In a letter to municipal commissioner Bhushan Gagrani, Narwekar has demanded that if works are delayed or stopped this time,



Ex-corporator Makarand Narwekar has written to BMC over the delay

"BMC should put in the contract that a Rs 1 lakh per day fine will be imposed on the contractor with penal action."

He further said that citizens have been enduring significant difficulties due to

the delayed construction of cement-concrete roads in south Mumbai.

Additional municipal commissioner (Projects) Abhijit Bangar did not respond to a query from TOI.

Roadways Solution Infra

India Ltd (RSIL), which had earlier been awarded the contract, failed to start works. Now it has been given to NCC Ltd," Narwekar said.

He stated that starting Oct 1, these works were to be taken up on south Mumbai roads. Two roads — Ramnath Goenka Road and VN Road — where the ground-breaking was done in the presence of Colaba MLA Rahul Narwekar, have seen no work start.

"We have been raising the issue of delay for south Mumbai for the last year. BMC contractors don't start works on time; they are only penalised on paper, and new contracts are awarded at escalated costs. This is outright loot of citizens," said Narwekar.

Man who made remarks against Thorat kin detained

Nashik: Vasant Deshmukh, who was on the run after making derogatory remarks against Congress MLA from Sangamner Balasaheb Thorat's daughter Jayshree at an election rally in Dhandarval village on Friday, was detained from Pimpri in Pune on Sunday. Police said Deshmukh, who is a supporter of former BJP MP from Ahmednagar Vijay Vikhe Patil, will be formally arrested.

Meanwhile, Thorat and his daughter expressed disappointment over the cases registered against them and their supporters for protesting against the derogatory remarks. Police have charged Shirdi Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Bhausaheb Wackchaur, Jayshree and 200 others under BNS sections 223 and 37(1)(3) for organising a protest without permission when the poll code is in force.

Deshmukh's remarks had led to violent protests, but BJP's Shirdi MLA Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil said his comments were being used by the opposition for political gains and to defame him and his son Sujay. TNN

Police discover neta's a/c linked to ₹5cr share scam

Ahmed.Ali@timesofindia.com

Mumbai: In a significant breakthrough, Mumbai police investigating a share trading cyber fraud have discovered a bank account linked to a politician from Sambhaji Nagar, holding suspicious transactions worth Rs 5 crore. The account, under the name of Kisan Trading Company, has sent shockwaves through the Tilak Nagar police as investigators trace funds reportedly funneled from cyber frauds across India.

The probe began when Pramod Tiwari, a resident of Pestsagar, filed an FIR earlier this month, reporting that a woman he met on social media had convinced him to invest in a share trading company. Tiwari invested Rs 2.5 lakh, only to later realize he had been duped when the woman cut off contact and deactivated her phone. Following his complaint, Tilak Nagar police registered a case of cheating under the Informa-

tion Technology Act and began tracking the money trail. "Our investigation led us to a bank account under Kisan Trading Company, which received numerous transactions from various parts of the country, all tied to cyber fraud activities," a senior police official disclosed. With these findings, police summoned the account holder, a politician, for questioning. During the initial inquiry, the politician claimed to be unaware of the transactions and denied any involvement, stating that he was unaware of the account's use in illicit activities.

The police have recorded his statement, issued him a formal notice, and are now pursuing further inquiries to understand the extent of the account holder's involvement, if any, in the ongoing fraud. Meanwhile, investigators are working to determine if additional individuals or entities may be linked to the account and the larger fraud network.

Sunday AQI 'moderate' in city at 144

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Mumbai: On Sunday, the city's Air Quality Index (AQI) reached 144, classified as 'moderate', according to Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data. The primary pollutant was particulate matter (PM) 2.5 at 24 of the city's 30 AQI stations.

A day earlier, the overall AQI stood at 110. With firecracker use during Diwali, AQI levels could rise.

Malad (W) recorded the highest AQI at 214, marking it the 'most-affected' area. Other high AQI readings included Byculla at 200, Deonar at 194, Borivali at 183, Mazgaon at 160, BKC at 155, Worli at 149, and Chembur at 140. In contrast, Borivali (E) had a 'good' AQI of 42, Powai at 80, Mulund at 87, and Kandivali at 100.

The Met has forecast dry weather conditions for Mumbai from Oct 28-31, while parts of Thane and Raigad could see light rains and thundershowers. Raigad could also see lightning coupled with gusty winds.

WR launches an inquiry into Bandra Terminus stampede

Manthan K Mehta, Somit Sen & Eshan Kalyanikar | TNN

Mumbai: While a video of the early-morning stampede at Bandra Terminus has gone viral on social media, collection of 6-8 sacks of footwear and clothes from the tracks highlights the mayhem.

Western Railway's divisional railway manager, Neeraj Verma, who later inspected the site, said: "Passengers tried to board the train despite closed doors, leading to this unfortunate incident." He explained that doors typically open once the train halts.

Western Railway (WR) has launched an inquiry into the stampede in which 10 people were injured, two of them critically, when thousands of passengers headed to UP for Diwali and Chhath Puja tried to board the unreserved Bandra-Gorakhpur Antyodaya Express. Railway Protection Force (RPF) and Government Railway Police teams acted swiftly, transferring injured passengers to Bhabha Hospital in Bandra and KEM

No platform tickets at 16 stns till Nov 8

In anticipation of passenger rush during the festive season, CR and WR have imposed temporary restrictions on the sale of platform tickets at 16 major stations — CSMT, Dadar, LTT, Thane, Kalyan, Pune, Nagpur, Mumbai Central, Dadar, Bandra Terminus, Borivli, Vasai, Vapi, Valsad, Surat, and Udhna — till Nov 8. Senior citizens and those with medical needs are exempted from these restrictions. TNN

Hospital in Parel.

The two critically injured are Indrajeet Sahani (19), who suffered a severe compound fracture in his left thigh; doctors at KEM Hospital are considering amputation, and Noor Mohammad (18) with lung damage and a rectal tear, requiring a breathing tube.

Ravindra Chuma (30) sustained facial cuts and fractures in his collarbone and ribs, requiring surgery, while Ramsevak Prajapati (29) has fractures in his pubic and shin bones. Other victims are

CROWD CRUSH DURING FESTIVE RUSH

Sanjay Hadkar



Sunday, 2.50am: Thousands of passengers headed to UP for Diwali and Chhath Puja rush to board the unreserved Bandra-Gorakhpur Antyodaya Express as it approaches platform no. 1 at Bandra Terminus

Train's seating capacity: 2,037

Tickets sold at platform: 2,540

As doors are locked, some of them fall between the coaches & come under train, others hurt in stampede on platform

5am: 10 injured taken to hospitals

5.18pm: Train leaves for Gorakhpur

More Spl Trains For Gorakhpur

WR to run train CSMT at 2.30pm on Oct 28 & reach Gorakhpur at 11pm next day. Train 01020 will leave Gorakhpur at 12.45am on Oct 30 & reach CSMT at 10.35am next day

WR to run train 05054/05053 Bandra Terminus-Gorakhpur Superfast Festival Special (Weekly) till Nov 30: 26 trips

On CR, train 01019 will depart from

In Surat, Nov 11, 2023: 1 dies, 2 hurt while trying to board a Bhagalpur-bound train from Surat station. 5k+ people reportedly on platform



Divyansh Yadav (18), with

fractures in his shin and pelvis; Parmeshwar Gupta (28), suffering severe back pain, likely due to spinal injuries; and Sanjay Kanojia (20), who has a fractured right foot. Three victims took discharge against medical advice: Shabbir Rehman (40), Md Sharif (25), and Samir Sk (22).

The incident has raised concerns about railway crowd management during peak seasons. Former Uttar Pradesh MLA Subhash Pasi,

now with BJP, who visited the site, said, "The railways need better crowd management to avoid such tragedies."

Passenger Ashok Yadav shared, "Festival special trains are packed, and there's often a scramble for space, with people pushing and haggling for seats instead of maintaining orderly queues." Another passenger described the cramped conditions onboard, where some were forced to sit near toilets due to overcrowding.

WR chief spokesperson Vineet Abhishek urged passengers not to board or alight from moving trains, noting, "It's dangerous and can lead to tragic outcomes." Verma also announced an increase in staff deployment to manage crowds for festival trains.

A passenger rights activist emphasised, "More comprehensive crowd control and infrastructure improvements are essential during festive season to ensure passenger safety."

'It was scary; people were shouting, pushing, and falling on each other'

Somit Sen & Eshan Kalyanikar | TNN

Mumbai: "It was a scary situation at Bandra Terminus at 2.45am. People were pushing each other, and shouting and falling on each other," recounted 22-year-old Manoj Kumar, a tailor headed for his native place in Gorakhpur. The platforms were packed to the brim, with barely any room to move for the 2,500-3,000 passengers headed to their hometowns.

"My late night train for Gorakhpur was delayed and I attempted to board the Antyodaya Express, but people started pulling me. My shirt got torn in the process. I could not even get my luggage inside the train and finally gave up," he said.

Manish Kumar, who too was planning to board the train, called it a nightmarish experience. "I fell on a passenger, but quickly got up and decided not to board this train," he added.

Both Manoj and Manish claimed there were poor crowd control measures and a



Manoj Kumar (left) and Manish Kumar managed to escape unhurt



failure of railway administration. Most of the passengers headed to villages in Uttar Pradesh for Diwali and Chhath Puja were daily wage labourers and tailors.

Ramsevak Prajapati (29), who was pulled under the moving train, which he estimates took at least five minutes to come to a halt, said: "I didn't think I would survive. I don't remember much, but there was a huge crowd and several doors of the train were shut. People started rushing into one or two doors that were open, and I slipped under the

train while trying to climb in." He was among the 10 injured victims of the Bandra Terminus stampede who were admitted to hospitals across the city, with at least five requiring surgery and one facing the possibility of limb amputation.

A doctor at Bhabha Hospital in Bandra said Prajapati has a fractured tibia — a break in the shinbone that will likely require surgery — as well as a fracture of the pubic rami and he will be bedridden for at least a month.

Indrajeet Sahani (19), was

also caught under the moving train and is currently in critical condition. He was initially taken to Bhabha Hospital and later transferred to KEM Hospital in Parel. "His femur was exposed, so we fixed that first. He has no sensation in his feet and no detectable pulses. A trial embolectomy will be performed to see if blood flow can be restored. If pulses are detected, there is potential to salvage the limb; however, we will need to keep dressing the wound for some time and monitor for infection. If there is no pulse, we will have to amputate," a doctor at KEM said.

Another critical patient, 18-year-old Noor Mohammed, is also at KEM Hospital with a serious tear between the genitals and the rectum, a broken thigh bone, and a damaged lung. His kin could not be traced.

The families of both Prajapati and Sahani are unable to reach Mumbai due to financial constraints. The two are being cared for by fellow villagers who work as daily wage labourers in the city.

Unprepared for passenger rush, stampede was Rlys' failure: MVA

Somit.Sen@timesofindia.com

Mumbai: Criticising the stampede at Bandra Terminus, Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) leaders called the incident as Railways' "failure".

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP and spokesperson Priyanka Chaturvedi raised concerns about lack of preparedness for the passenger rush during Diwali and Chhath Puja. She alleged that the number of passenger trains and holiday specials was reduced, leading to the stampede, which she attributed to Railways' "failure."

But Western Railway (WR) officials said 56 trains with 356 trips were run from Mumbai to Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and other areas during Diwali and Chhath Puja festivals.

Lashing out at the Union railway minister on his X handle, Sena (UBT) MLA Aadiya Thackeray posted: "The incident reflects how incapable the current railway minister is. BJP has made Ashwini Vaishnavji a prabhari in Maharashtra for elections, but there are frequent incidents and accidents occurring within railways." Clyde Crasto from NCP (SP) echoed similar sentiments on his X post, calling the stampede at Bandra Terminus "very disturbing".

In response to the Opposition's allegations, WR officials denied any major failure on their part. A senior official said there were adequate measures in place for crowd management at stations and forming queues to board unreserved

trains. A WR tweet asked passengers to refrain from boarding or alighting from moving trains.

Minister of state for railways Ravneet Singh Bittu told the media, "We have decided to conduct a probe to find out the cause of the incident."

BJP MP from Gorakhpur Ravi Kishan expressed sadness over the incident and emphasised that Vaishnav has ordered a probe into the matter. "It is a sad incident, everyone including the PM has expressed concerns... Diwali is coming and everyone wants to go home so some chaos must have occurred. Vaishnav has ordered a probe to find out the reason behind the stampede... CCTV footage will be checked..."

MACT awards ₹18L to kin of man killed in '20

Thane: The Motor Accident Claims Tribunal (MACT) in Thane awarded Rs 18.84 lakh compensation to the family of a man killed in a motorcycle accident in 2020. MACT chairman SB Agrawal directed the respondents, the owner of the offending motorcycle, and its insurer to pay the compensation jointly and severally to the petitioners with 7.5 per cent interest from the date the claim was filed. A copy of the order passed on Oct 21 was made available on Sunday. The petitioners were the deceased man's father and sister; both residents of Ambernath town. The owner of the offending vehicle did not appear before the tribunal, and the matter was decided ex parte against him. PTI

Bennett & Coleman
THE TIMES OF INDIA

THE GREAT FOOD FACE-OFF. WHAT'S HEALTHIER?

When it comes to choosing between everyday food items, the answer isn't always clear. Is jaggery a healthier option than sugar? Should you be reaching for Greek yogurt over traditional curd? And what about peanuts vs. cashews—which's the healthier snack?

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EX-CHIEF MINISTER DIGVIJAYA SINGH, MP CONG CHIEF BOOKED FOR ELECTION CODE VIOLATION



PINARAYI-LED KERALA GOVT SLAMS CENTRE'S 'NEGATIVE ATTITUDE' TOWARDS WAYANAD REHAB

3 of Nandgaon family out to graze sheep drown in river

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Nashik: Three members of a family, including a boy (12), drowned in a river in Bangaon village of Nandgaon taluka on Saturday.

The deceased have been identified as Walmik Itnar (12), his mother Indubai (30) and her brother Ambadas Kharat (29). Police said the family, who reared sheep, had taken the animals to graze near the river when Walmik slipped and fell into the water. It's believed Indubai leapt into the water to save her son, but found herself unable to get out.

And then seeing both his nephew and sister struggling in the water, Ambadas jumped in too in an attempt to rescue them. Tragically, all three drowned. Ambadas's wife, who was nearby, began to scream for help, and soon locals rushed to the spot.

However, all three were dead by the time assistance arrived. Police have registered a case of accidental death.

State-sponsored infiltration in WB, says Shah, TMC hits back

BJP Neta Says Party Win In '26 Can End Smuggling, Graft, Syndicate Raj

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kolkata: Peace can be established in Bengal only when infiltration stops, said Union home minister Amit Shah on Sunday. Urging voters to give BJP a chance, Shah said that infiltration and corruption would be rooted out from the state when the saffron party is in governance.

"Bengal is witnessing state-sponsored infiltration. To stop this, you have to vote BJP to govern the state. Rabindra Sangeet has been replaced by bomb blasts here. Only BJP can put an end to cattle smuggling, coal smuggling, corruption and syndicate raj," he said.

Launching BJP's national membership drive here, Shah said, "2026 will be a milestone in the assembly polls in Bengal. BJP will win the election with two-thirds majority!"

"When you join the BJP in



Amit Shah with party functionary Mithun Chakraborty at BJP's membership drive in Kolkata

Bengal, you also join the movement to free the state from the terror of Communists and Mamata didi," Shah said. Referring to BJP's dismal performance in the state in recent elections, he added: "Mamata didi is happy seeing a lower seat tally for BJP. She thinks BJP has slackened pace in Bengal. Her happiness is not going to last long."

Earlier, opening a new passenger terminal at Petra-

No meeting with kin of RG Kar victim

The RG Kar Medical College and Hospital rape-murder victim's parents could not meet Amit Shah on Sunday. Bengal BJP sources said meeting the parents was not in his itinerary. Earlier this week, the parents of the 31-year-old PGT intern sought an appointment with Shah. TNN

pole, Shah said that people in Bengal were not getting benefits of Central schemes. "If voted to power, BJP will roll out all Central schemes in Bengal. MGNREGA workers would get their pay. Aap ke acheche din dur nahin (good days are not far off)," he said.

Setting a target of enrolling 1 crore members in the next 20 days for his party colleagues, Shah said in Kolkata, "We do not aim to make bhai-

po (nephew) a CM. We would be unstoppable when we enter the political arena with renewed vigour. Workers have been our strength, and BJP swept the polls in MP, Rajasthan and Odisha. Our govt was formed in Haryana for the third term, and I can assure BJP govt in Maharashtra and Jharkhand. Our next big target is Bengal."

Reacting to Shah's allegations of infiltration across the border, Trinamool Congress (TMC) spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said, "Raising the infiltration bogey in Bengal, which Centre is supposed to stop, was akin to scoring a self goal."

"If he (Shah) speaks on infiltration, he is presenting his own report card. Infiltration takes place at international borders, and to guard them is his responsibility. It is not the job of West Bengal Police," Ghosh added.

Bahraich violence: 2 arrested for murder, 2 for arson

Lucknow: UP on Sunday arrested four persons in connection with the violence that broke out in Maharajganj area of Bahraich district during Durga idol immersion procession on Oct 13.

Gopal Mishra, and two others were held for arson and vandalism that occurred after Mishra was shot. Police said Maruf and Nankau were on the rooftop from where Sarfaraz, son of Hamid, allegedly opened fire at Mishra. Police detained the two near a bridge. TNN

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Militants open fire, hurl bombs as fresh violence hits Manipur

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Guwahati: Fresh violence erupted on Saturday night in Manipur's Imphal West and Bishnupur districts, with reports of suspected militants using sophisticated firearms and bombs in both attacks. No fatalities were reported at the time of filing this report.

Militants launched an attack around 7pm in Koutruk Ching Leikai village in Imphal West district, promoting retaliatory action from security forces stationed in the area. "The militants also



Security agencies are on high alert over the use of drones

triggered explosions in Koutruk," a security source said.

Adding to the tension, residents of nearby Meitei-populated villages situated 5km to 7km from Koutruk reported sightings of drones in the evening. "We saw drones and it created panic. The militants used drones to

launch an aerial attack in Koutruk on Sept 1," a resident said. Security agencies are on high alert over the use of drones in and around the area. Koutruk has remained one of the flashpoints since ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3, 2023. The state's sectarian strife has claimed more than 225 lives and displaced around 60,000 people, creating a deep divide between Kuki-Zo tribal people and Meiteis. In the second attack, militants targeted Tronglaobi village in Bishnupur district, opening fire from Molngat and Molshang areas around 9pm.

3 steps to digital security are stop, think & act: PM

► From P 1

Be aware that no investigating agency conducts interrogations over the phone or video call. The three steps to digital security are: stop, think and act. If possible, take a screenshot or record the call. No govt agency issues threats over the phone or demands money," PM Narendra Modi said.

The PM further added that investigating agencies were working in partnership with state govts to combat the scam being carried out in the name of 'digital arrest' but awareness was essential in protecting oneself from such fraudsters.

During his broadcast, he also shared a conversation between a victim and a fraudster to highlight the 'digital arrest' scam.

"The fraudsters of digital arrest phone calls, at times impersonate as police, CBI, narcotics, at times RBI... using such various labels, they converse as fake officers with a lot of confidence. Many listeners of 'Mann Ki Baat' have wished that we must discuss that," Modi said. He reiterated that there was no system like digital arrest in the law and this was just a fraud, deceit and a lie. The gang of criminals and those who doing this are enemies of society, the PM added.

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'There can't be neutrality between aggressor & victim. It only means you're with Russia'

PM Modi can influence the end of the war... He should also bring back at least 1,000 Ukrainian children kidnapped by Russia... Brics summit was a failure... Not everything depends on US elections... Russia is advancing but facing huge losses, we are trying to save our people... We want invitation to Nato not quick membership
- Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky speaks exclusively to TOI's Rudroneel Ghosh

What did you think about the Brics summit in Russia and PM Modi saying he is ready to work for peace in Ukraine at the summit?

Zelensky: First and foremost the Brics summit in Russia failed. It was a total failure. Not everyone was there, even looking at today's composition of Brics, we couldn't see many leaders whom Russia was relying upon within Brics besides the guests. Saudi Arabia wasn't there at the level of the leader and there was no unity within Brics. I think Brics is divided by Putin himself by his policy of war. And I think Putin's aim for the summit was to polarise the world and he did not achieve this. He will subvert the Brics' purpose and use the platform for his own policy of war. That's why he wants to divide the world into so-called West-plus and Brics-plus. But as of today he has failed to do that for many reasons. First, I think everyone understands that he is a murderer and a terrorist. That today Russia is just a cheap energy resource, and some of the states are using that. But even the states that understand that they can help their economy in this manner, don't want to spoil the process for themselves with Putin. Plus, Putin is not consistent, and even the proposals of Brazil and China, which were more political and not very specific, were not acceptable to Putin from the perspective of territorial integrity. And for China, I would say, this was a slap on the face. For Brazil too, and that's why Brazil was not present at the summit at the level of the leader. So Brics in effect did not take place.

standing that the energy resource they are buying is helping fuel the war - if they re-evaluated their values, then the sanctions would be functioning fully. Now they are working only partially because the world is implementing them partially.

Everyone is looking to the US elections and there is a belief that a ceasefire could be reached after the elections. Do you think that's possible?

■ So many things depend on the policies of US. But it's not a deep analysis to say everything depends on US. Many things depend, but not everything. In the beginning of war in Ukraine our nation stood together against the enemy, let me remind you, without the support of allies, including US. The unity of people of Ukraine, our population and society, this is what in fact repelled the attack of the Russians, stopped them. But the occupation, of course, we wouldn't be able to respond to without the support, or at least it would be very hard because of human losses. And that's why we are very grateful to our allies for their help and support. But still, not everything depends on US elections. US policies change not only because of the leader. We don't know who will become the US president, but undoubtedly the bipartisan support for Ukraine will stay. And the US Congress, in any case which we are cooperating with and have developed strong connections, will have its personal impact on this war. The US president will definitely shape the foreign policy because it's his or her constitutional obligation. And undoubtedly if US policy changes and it says we don't support Ukraine in its sovereign and just protection of its territories, it will be really hard for us. This is if the policy totally changes. Then we will think what we will do with that. Definitely not now, we will think on that only then.

Another argument is that we shouldn't forget that Europe is a powerful continent on its own. In fact, India and China shouldn't forget about that in spite of the fact that India and China are great economies, still Europe is five times bigger than Russia by population and dozens of times bigger economically. Hence, Europe is a more attractive market. So we need to understand that US population is half the population of Europe. And we need to understand that Europe as it is, when it is not divided, is powerful. It is important for us to preserve this unity in Europe, and not to change the policy of Europe about this war. This is the second aspect. And the third about the ceasefire, we need to understand that we are against a frozen conflict, we don't want the third war. Because in 2014, one war started, and our territories were occupied. In 2022, the full-scale war started, though before 2022 we used to have a frozen conflict. There was a ceasefire already. There were Normandy and Minsk processes where there were dozens of negotiations with Russia and other partners in different platforms. And then we had the full-scale war. So if we now freeze the conflict without a proper understanding of what will happen tomorrow, which guarantees of security the Ukrainian people will have, our children will have, then I think it is a huge risk, a very high risk. Everything should be done on paper and should be comprehensible. How this war ends, and who and how much will bear responsibility for it? Definitely the aggressor will do that.

Europe is a powerful continent on its own. India and China shouldn't forget that in spite of the fact that India and China are great economies, still Europe is five times bigger than Russia by population and dozens of times bigger economically. Hence, Europe is a more attractive market

As for the presence of the UN secretary general, I think that altogether this is a kind of a surrealistic thing. It's not only about the UN but many other countries. I think that you cannot just say that you are neutral in the war between Russia and Ukraine. You cannot be neutral because it would mean you are on the side of Russia. Neutrality really helps just Russia. And between the aggressor and the victim, there cannot be neutrality. I consider this a hidden support for Russia, and the ones who were present there at the summit and speaking about their neutrality and saying they would like to help to solve the conflict, in my opinion, they look more pro-Russia. And that means it's not about peace because Russia started this war and continues to wage it. And whether they want it or not, or understand it or not, that is not important. This is the fact: neutrality in this war means support for Russia. After all of the victims, after all of the tortures and deportation of Ukrainian children, this is how it looks.

As for the position of PM Modi, I think that any assertions today should not end with words only. Modi is the PM of a really huge country from the perspective of population, economy, influence and impact. Such a country cannot just say we are interested in the end of the war - we are all interested in that. All of the leaders would tell you that they would like to end the war, even the enemy of peace, Putin, will say that even he wants peace. This is a common thing. Especially for such a huge country like India, PM Modi can influence the end of the war. This is the huge value of him in any conflict. This is a huge value of India. Blocking of Russian economy, blocking of cheap energy resource, blocking of defence-industrial complex of Russian will lead to the decrease in capacity of Moscow to wage wars against us. Then the G20; the G20 is considered the 'Great 20' because they are main economies of the world. And the whole world is looking to them. That's why the 20 great economies can just easily put Putin in his place and end the war. Not just incentive but the opposite, slow down all of Putin's desires. And you don't need to say we would like peace, you need to act. Because the daily war is killing people.

Many would argue that sanctions haven't stopped Russia and more sanctions would cripple the global economy. So how do you convince more countries to your point of view?

■ Sanctions are working. Sanctions have led to effect. If the great economies of the world like India, China, Turkey and others, which did not impose sanctions on Russia, if they would not help Russia survive in the war economically - they actually helped Russia earn money, sometimes even with the under-

You recently revealed your Victory Plan which includes quick Nato membership for Ukraine. But many countries are divided about your plan. Do you think the plan is practical or is it just a bargaining chip?

■ The Victory Plan is not a bargaining chip or a topic of negotiations with Russia. Let's not confuse this. The Victory Plan is not a platform for response for all of the countries of the world. The Victory Plan is the plan for strengthening Ukraine today. Strengthening of Ukraine before heading into those diplomatic formats of negotiations, peace summits, so that Ukraine could be strong. That's why the Victory Plan is given to countries who are ready to



strengthen Ukraine. It's not about talks with Russia, because Russia is not making us stronger, it's making us weaker. It's not a proposal for negotiations. This is a request, very specific one. I shouldn't 'ask' in my Victory Plan. As for the invitation to Nato - I would like that people don't misunderstand this - the first point is not Nato membership or quick membership of Nato. The first point is invitation to Nato so that in the future nobody can change their opinion. Everything shouldn't be just in words, but documented in papers, fundamentally and legally. We are talking about invitation, not membership, because during the war we cannot become Nato member obviously. And this point is only for the Nato countries because we would like to be invited to Nato.

The second point of the Victory Plan is strengthening the Ukrainian army with weapons today at the battlefield, not tomorrow. We are not talking with Putin about that or the countries of the Global South who do not strengthen us with weapons today. We speak about this with the Ramstein countries which helped Ukraine with weapons during this conflict. Point three is about the package of deterrence against Russia. It does not mean the use of missiles. However, this would be just because Russia is using missiles against us. But we are saying that it's not about the use of missiles but deterrence of Russia. This is the package of long-range weapons which Ukraine will not use if Russia stops the war against us. Stops the aggression against us. Stops killing our people. That is why this package of long-range weapons should be in Ukraine. This is the prevention measure of weapons. This is the warn-

ing army as part of the security of Europe. And it is exclusively about Europe. So it is not the plan that will end the war where we unite the whole world. This is the plan of victory that leads us to the plan to end the war. This is the plan of strengthening of Ukraine.

What is the position of the war as of now? Because Russia has been making some gains on the battlefield, and with winter coming many believe you will face a tough few months.

■ Well, this is the third hard winter for Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. Russia is doing the same thing every year of this war. We are studying how to protect ourselves. Russia attacked our energy centres since the very beginning to breed chaos in Ukraine, so that our people would starve, so that our people will be ill without having the opportunity to provide insulation and winterisation of their houses. So that the people would die. We as a state started to oppose that. We restored our energy systems. We are step-by-step strengthening the protection of our energy systems. And we aren't just allowing Russia to kill our people. Gradually we have begun to cope with their attacks on our energy systems. We know how to retaliate to their strikes, but we do that very cautiously. We never target the people, we never target the schools and universities - which Russia does. So they have felt that Ukraine can respond. And in those operations none of our partners have helped us. This is what we have done alone in our response, unfortunately.

As for the battlefield, you are right, Russia has more people and more weapons. In many directions, technologically, we are better than them already. Many partners agree with that, especially in long-range drones, systems of electronic warfare etc. But it's not enough because the most important thing is to save the people. So we look at the battlefield from the perspective of how to save our people. We can lose equipment, we can lose technologies, but we should minimise human losses. Sometimes by the price of metres or few kilometres of land. Yes, the human being is more important than the land, though this is our land. But our land will be brought back later, but we will not be able to bring back the human being. And we live according to this law. It is hard to be at war with Russia by this law because they have a different law - if they are not attacking, if their soldiers are not on the offensive, they are shot by the Russians themselves. Russians are killed by Russians. The Russians have killed many of their own mobilised soldiers just because these soldiers were afraid to attack, to perish under the bullet or to be wounded. So they retreated and this is where they were killed by their own army. This is their law of war. They don't quantify, they don't calculate the numbers. They have approximately 650,000 victims already who were killed or wounded in Russia. Just imagine, that's a lot.

And you know what's really scary? The same is continuing and they don't even retrieve the bodies. The bodies are just rotting on the battlefield, they don't take them back. This is the face of today's Russia, today's Putin. And what's more interesting, yes they are having gains in Ukraine's east because of this strategy, because of this meat-grinder, because they are throwing bodies onto us. But when we came to Kursk region and had a preventive attack against their territory, because they wanted to have a separate operation and occupy our north, we can see that they are attacking their own territory. They are themselves killing their own civilians in Kursk. And our people are giving them food and water because they are civilians not soldiers. Our soldiers are giving away and sharing what they have. And we can see the bodies of Russian civilians, civilians who were shot by Russian artillery. This is the war.

... just one mechanism, just one ICC cannot fully correct the situation. It cannot fully influence Putin and his allies. But all of them together, the ICC, the leaders, international law, UN, G20, altogether can definitely end this war

When PM Modi was in Kyiv he along with you visited the Martyrologist Exposition dedicated to the fallen children of this war. Can you detail the overall impact of the war on Ukrainian children?

■ First of all I thank PM Modi who joined me and commemorated the perished children. You know the real number of Ukrainian children who have been killed in the war is unknown. Nobody knows the real number, unfortunately. We can definitely state that dozens of thousands of children were deported and kidnapped by Russia. But how many of them were killed, we will only get to know after the war. Dozens of thousands of deported children. Thousands with changed names and surnames. They have been forced to speak a different language. Many of them who were teens, they have been forced to the battlefield to fight against their own country. This is just horrible. Their relatives don't have their children back. And unfortunately, with dozens of thousands having been kidnapped, less than 1,000 have been brought back. That's why it's very important that many countries join the coalition to bring back Ukrainian children. We would really like India to help with this. Today, the coalition is working with more than 40 countries. But unfortunately, not many countries have managed to bring back our children. Besides this, many children have been affected by the war in Ukraine. Schools have been hit, universities have been hit. Many children have been wounded, many have lost their limbs, and many children have been killed. Many children have left Ukraine with their parents. You know that more than 7 million

We know how to retaliate to their strikes, but we do that very cautiously. We never target the schools and universities - which Russia does. So they have felt we can respond. And in those operations none of our partners have helped us. This is what we have done alone, unfortunately

Ukrainians are now abroad. A big number of them are children. Their parents are staying sometimes here. For instance, the men in the family are left here or they are on the frontline of the war. And their children are being deprived of their childhood. Some of those fathers are dying in the war. This is the situation about the children.

What can India do specifically to bring back the forcibly deported Ukrainian children?

■ You can join the coalition to bring back Ukrainian children. You can support the joint communique of the Peace Summit because the third point was about bringing back the children, you can call Putin and ask him who he is, you can force him to bring the children back, PM Modi can do that because he really has huge influence, he can just say specifically how many Ukrainian children will be given to me so that I could bring them back to Ukraine, just say that directly, just give me 1,000 Ukrainian children who will be brought back to Ukraine. This is the real step. Putin took dozens of thousands. Let PM Modi bring back only 1,000 at least. And if every such influential person as PM Modi is able to bring back 1,000, we will be able to bring back the majority of our children. That's what is needed to be done. You need to raise this issue at the meeting of G20. India can invite us to this meeting as well together with Brazil. So the G20 can divide the obligations. If 20,000 of Ukrainian children are deported, every leader should take the responsibility to bring back 1,000 children. It's not just to sit at the table during this summit but to really help the children. The world should be helping.

ICC issued arrest warrants for the forcible deportation of Ukrainian children. But those were not implemented as we saw recently with Mongolia. Do you still have faith in international mechanisms to bring back the children?

■ We believe just in the international law. We believe in the international influence of the leaders. We believe in the international mechanism. You are right, just one mechanism, just one international criminal court cannot fully correct the situation. It cannot fully influence Putin and his allies. But all of them together, the ICC, the leaders, international law, UN, G20, altogether can definitely end this war. But the results of the ICC are still felt. Putin is not travelling to the majority of world countries. We can see that. The majority of the leaders who acknowledged and approved the Rome Statute, and still acknowledge the verdict of the ICC, the majority of them try not to visit Putin. Remember, this (the deportation of children) is only the first case of war crimes. There will be many more cases for which more evidence will be provided. As for Mongolia, unfortunately it showed that it is not an independent country.

The Brics summit was a total failure... I think Brics is divided by Putin himself by his policy of war. And I think Putin's aim for the summit was to polarise the world and he did not achieve this. He will subvert the Brics' purpose and use the platform for his own policy of war. That's why he wants to divide the world into so-called West-plus and Brics-plus

Do you think there's any possibility that PM Modi can host negotiations between Ukraine and Russia?

■ As for PM Modi, we have the platform which is the Peace Summit. The second Peace Summit could be conducted in any respected capital and we communicated that it could be held in New Delhi. Undoubtedly it can be in India and PM Modi can really do that if he can organise a certain summit. But for that we need to prepare ourselves in terms of the proposals on which any number of countries could be heard - the proposals of India, EU, the African continent etc. So if Brazil and China would like to see us as well and they have proposals, please by all means, but only according to our format because the war is in our land. So I think that such a summit can be hosted in India.

Thanks, Mr President, for speaking to The Times of India.

■ Thank you and I wish the people of India peace. This is really important.



Sanctions are working. If the great economies like India, China, Turkiye and others, which did not impose sanctions on Russia, if they would not help Russia survive in the war economically - they actually helped Russia earn money - if they re-evaluated their values, then the sanctions would be functioning fully. Now they are working partially because the world is implementing them partially

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ing for Russia. Stop killing people. The aggressor needs to stop. And that's why this point of the plan is not for everyone, not even for all of the countries of Ramstein. This point is only for those countries who have certain types of weapons. Who have and who are ready to give it to Ukraine.

The fourth point, the economic one, is for the ones who are interested in investments in Ukraine, to protect mineral resources of Ukraine, and to create businesses in future together with Ukraine. The fifth point is about just security of the European continent. And that's why this is the post-war point. It tells us what will happen after the war with the Ukrainian



'Components exported to US & software to France'

From P 1

Indian companies are now exporting a wide range of arms like BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles, Dornier-228 aircraft, artillery guns, radars, Akash missiles, Pina rockets, and armoured vehicles, the sources added.

The exports to the US, however, mainly consist of sub-systems and components, which include global defence majors like Boeing and Lockheed Martin sourcing fuselage, wings, and other parts of aircraft and helicopters from India as part of their global supply chain networks as well as offset commitments. The Tata Boeing Aerospace venture in Hyderabad, for instance, is making the fuselage and secondary structures for Apache attack helicopters.

"France, in turn, is importing a lot of software and electronic equipment," a source said. The former Soviet Republic of Armenia, on its part, has inked a flurry of de-



Pic for representation
Armenia is 1st foreign customer for Akash air defence missiles

first foreign customer for the indigenously-developed Akash air defence missiles, which have an interception range of 25 km, while other countries like Brazil are even keen on co-production and co-development of advanced versions of the system. "Brazil wants an inter-governmental agreement on it... talks are underway," another source said.

Similarly, after India clinched the \$375-million contract in Jan 2022 for the export of three BrahMos anti-ship coastal missile batteries to the Philippines, other Asean countries as well as some Gulf nations are increasingly showing interest in acquiring the precision-strike missiles that India has co-developed with Russia.

India, of course, continues to remain in strategically vulnerable position of being the world's largest arms importer, accounting for 9.8% of the total global imports in the 2019-2023 time-frame.

MLA detained at Srinagar airport for bullets in bag

Srinagar: CISF and J&K police detained and questioned NC's Srigufwara-Bijbehara MLA, Bashir Ahmad Veeri, at Srinagar airport after security staff recovered two live pistol bullets from his baggage during an X-ray scan on Sunday. Veeri, travelling to Jammu, was released after he told security the bullets were of his licensed pistol, for which he produced documents. **TNN**

Kol filmmaker wins Emmy year after her death

Kolkata: Kolkata-based filmmaker Sriyanka Ray, who passed away from a sudden illness last year at 33, was posthumously awarded independent Emmy as a director and producer for her short documentary 'Homeroom Dreams'. "The film exposes how New York City grapples with a monumental housing problem for people living below poverty line," her sister, Sanjana, told **TOI**. **TNN**

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Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong remedies

- GROUCHO MARX

West Asia & Beyond

Call it the butterfly effect on US elections - Israel strikes Iran, Musk-Putin talks & fears of oil price shocks

Tuesday week is the US presidential election. Three events over the weekend unrelated to elections may still impact voting as the Trump-Harris fight comes down to the wire. First, as expected, Israel targeted Iran's military infra. What was unusual is Israel claimed the hits, making its covert war with Iran turn overt, returning West Asia's volatility to the centre of conversation. This can impact turnout in a swing state like Michigan - home to the largest numbers of Palestinian- and Lebanese-Americans in US, who helped Biden win in 2020. But, since Oct 7 last year, there has been open discontent with Democrats' support for Israel, and Biden's failure to negotiate a ceasefire. Saturday's strike may keep anti-Trump voters home, because the weekend sharpened the anti-Harris feels too.

The second event is what didn't happen. There's alarm over escalation of conflict, but global oil prices didn't react though prices soared 9-10% after Iran had sent missiles to Israel. The new reality is US and Saudi have capacity enough to cover shortfalls from Iran's absence in the oil market. Beijing buys 90% of Iran's oil, which is around 15% of China's needs, and imports the rest from Russia, Saudi etc. But for American voters, fear of global oil price shocks impacting domestic gas prices (read inflation) is a big deal days ahead of polling.

It's said the storyline of conflicts in West Asia is 'continuity'. Saturday's strike was in tune, with Tehran playing down damage, and Tel Aviv stopping after three rounds of 'targeted, precise' attacks that spared oil/nuclear facilities - as demanded by US. Washington's control over pace of West Asia conflicts is near-absolute. It's largely true even for the Russia-Ukraine war. Take, for instance, Trump's promise to stop both wars if he's elected, regardless of his ability to do so. Fact is, next phase of both wars will depend on who takes White House.

Which brings one to the third event - WSJ's potentially explosive report of Trump's vociferous supporter Musk being in frequent contact with Putin. The report triggered a demand for an investigation from Nasa chief - Musk's SpaceX has multibillion-dollar US gov contracts - and hot denials from Kremlin. That Russia interfered in US's 2016 presidential polls to sway the election outcome is established. Musk-Putin tangos little impact the Trump voter, but can bother the non-Trump Republican. And Harris's campaign won't shy from a last-ditch effort to make something of it, especially since it's looking like who stays home might decide the vote.

Blowing In The Wind

Delhi's toxic air is killing us softly with its smog. Netas give a damn

Sunday's AQI touched 352, but Delhiites don't need to know the number - from their burning eyes, irritable throat, dry cough, wheezing, breathlessness, over 15% rise in cases of asthma, COPD and pneumonia as early as Sep, they can tell air's a killer. It is nothing new, but what doesn't cease to amaze, year after year, is the state's stilted response to air pollution.

Listing out what needs done is flogging a dead horse. Yet the state will slip into the same old ritual, flog ineffective plans that environmentalists have long said are either ineffective or have limited scope. Measures that should be year-round, such as ban on open burning and suppressing dust on roads and construction sites, and traffic management, are ignored till AQI hits a high note and All Scramble. Then courts All Rise, wagging a finger and scolding Delhi's neighbours on non-compliance, who in turn, will move some, but farm stubble, it will burn. There is no excuse for the collective failure of govts and authorities in NCR. Problem is, govts are acting like extensions of party offices - squawking at cross purposes with little commitment to their office, and near zero investment in public welfare.

Air pollution cripples productivity. An NCAER study in 2023 on economic costs of Delhi's air pollution calculated annual productivity loss to be ₹31.3bn and health expenditure at ₹4.1bn. Other studies have measured loss of life expectancy by 6.2 years for Delhi's residents. Improved public transport is the one thing entirely in Delhi gov't/LG's control. But nothing has been done to fix it. Massive surge in PM2.5 from vehicular pollution as traffic volumes explode ahead of Diwali is deliberately unseen. How to tackle Delhi's scourge? Close your eyes. Wait till it goes away some.

The safety net

It's great...and out of reach of most Indians

Anupam Srivastava



The seller greeted me warmly and welcomed me into his office. I had told him I was on the verge of turning sixty, the time in one's life when a productive asset metamorphosises overnight into a Kafkaesque creature, bearing no semblance to one's previous self.

Without social security, wealth, or medical cover, this phase of one's life is fraught with anxiety about the future for most. I needed a medical cover, a safety net to support me if I fell ill, so that my family wouldn't bear the "catastrophic expenditure" which the National Health Policy acknowledges as a major contributor to poverty.

Soothing my frayed nerves, the seller pointed out a safety net in the display window. "That's for you, it provides medical cover of ₹5L, all paid by gov't," he said, smiling.

I was transported to a state of bliss. It is human not to want to die early and prolong one's life with medical treatment when one needs it. I immediately reached out for the net, but somehow could not get to it. He explained patiently, "You will see it at a distance, always above you, until you turn seventy. After that, it will find its place below you."

Crestfallen, I pleaded that wouldn't work for most Indians as on an average Indians are expected to live less than seventy years. At sixty, their incomes dwindle, or altogether vanish. World Bank estimates there are 93mn people in the 60-69 age group, and only 45mn in the 70-80 age group. How many would cross over to the other side?

"You know how much it'll cost to cover people above sixty?" thundered the seller. Yes, but would that be too much for the world's fifth largest economy, which habitually spends on non-essentials? The seller looked upset. There was already a precedent, I argued. Govt-supported cover for its employees, the judiciary, and elected representatives was extremely generous. Why couldn't everyone have the same cover, like it was in most of Europe and so many other countries?

By this time, more people had entered the shop. The seller became occupied with them, showing them other exciting items. I withdrew, to find the safety net I would look at for the next ten years, if I lived that long.

Zelensky's New Peace Formula

It includes Global South, particularly India. Western military aid can defend Ukraine but not end the war. Here's Kyiv's new hybrid approach

Rudroneel Ghosh@timesofindia.com



Reading his TOI interview closely, it was clear how Zelensky's thinking about how to end the war is evolving.

First, it appears he has accepted that while he may need US and his Western partners to defend against Russian attacks, the war cannot be ended without the support of Global South nations. He alluded to this during the interview when he accepted that sanctions against Russia have not functioned fully. In other words, Russia has been able to evade the impact of sanctions through bilateral trade with certain countries.

The problem, as Zelensky sees it, is that these countries, while voicing support for ending the war, are carrying out their trade with Russia on economic self-interest. They cite the need for dialogue to avoid taking a position on the war. Hence, Zelensky's strategy now seems to be twofold. Call out neutrality as hidden support for Russia, and compel those who say they want to help bring peace, to walk the talk.

In the process, Zelensky is laying down parameters for dialogue to end the war. Such dialogue should stem from or closely track Ukraine's Peace Formula and Peace Summit joint communique. Talks could also be on specific points of the formula or communique, such as the return of forcibly deported Ukrainian children. This way, Zelensky feels, Ukraine can control the dialogue to its advantage.

Second, Zelensky clearly knows getting into peace negotiations right now is not to Ukraine's advantage. Despite the Kursk operation, Kyiv hasn't been able to completely halt the Russian onslaught. This is due to a combination of delayed military supplies to Ukraine from US, and plain old numerical advantage Russians have. Moscow can afford to throw bodies into the battlefield, Ukraine can't. Therefore, as Zelensky says in the interview, Ukraine has to

save its people by giving up land. Meanwhile, Putin, given his position in the Russian political system, can tolerate giving up people for land. And land is also what gives him a potential off-ramp to end the war.

To counter this disadvantage, Zelensky now has a 'Victory Plan' that includes the West offering - not granting - Nato membership to Ukraine and giving it a long-range weapons package as a deterrence against Russia. Zelensky wants it in writing that

But if he can successfully pitch Ukraine's value in a post-war European security architecture, Zelensky feels he'll have greater bargaining power at the eventual negotiating table with Russia. The last thing he wants is a frozen conflict that'll allow Moscow to restart the conflict some years down the road. European and Nato security guarantees are the best way to thwart Russia's "nefarious" designs in future.

And finally, Zelensky has come to appreciate India's strategic autonomy. Still frustrated about India-Russia defence and oil trade, he nevertheless senses New Delhi at this point may have more elbow room than Beijing to consider Ukraine's point of view. There's little strategic daylight between Beijing and Moscow. New Delhi, on the other hand, can toggle between Brics and Quad. This is why he is looking at opening a humanitarian angle for New Delhi's buy-in through the issue of the return of Ukrainian children.

Modi could ask Putin to find and return Ukrainian children to Kyiv. This'll also allow Putin to follow through voluntarily. Putin could also stick to the argument that these children were relocated to protect them from the war. It would embarrass International Criminal Court, sure, but Ukraine would get its children back, Modi, a diplomatic win, and Putin, some credit.

This in turn would also be a litmus test for India in terms of how far it's willing to go to facilitate dialogue. And should there be progress on returning the children, other parleys to end the war could follow.

Zelensky knows he needs to come to the negotiating table to end the war. He knows military strength on the battlefield alone won't stop Russia. He needs a hybrid strategy that combines deterrence of Russia on the frontline and talks with Global South nations to be in a strong negotiating position. And with US elections too close to call, he is hedging his bets. Zelensky's showing a willingness to be flexible.



Chad Crowe (USA)

Method In Tel Aviv's Aggression

Israel's strike on Iran means it has had its revenge without crossing the red line set by US. Iran's been prevented from entering into direct conflict with Israel

Aydin Sezer



With limited strikes against Iran on Saturday, Israel once again implemented its so-called strategy of 'preventive war' outside its territory. Iran, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen are the battle zone for Israel to execute this strategy.

Almost three weeks have passed since Iran's attack on Israel. Iranian president Masoud Pezeshkian had said at the time, "Region's security means security of all Muslims. We don't want a war or massacre. I've emphasised our demand for security and peace. No country and no nation can prosper in the midst of war. We've been left with no choice but to respond. If Israel decides to retaliate, it'll face an even stronger response."

Pezeshkian has often repeated, "Our patience doesn't mean we're afraid." Undoubtedly, a message to the Iranian public, but also a call to build a front within the Islamic world. The new Iranian leadership is dealing with serious economic challenges but doesn't want to remain a bystander to the escalating developments in the region.

But it simply doesn't have the financial resources to maintain influence on the region. Balance between Iran's economic capacity and its foreign policy objectives is out of whack, and if conflict continues, this gap will only widen, with consequences for the current Iranian leadership's future itself.

Three developments help better understand the region, or predict developments, in reality largely unpredictable.

● While US's ceasefire plan was being negotiated, Hamas's Ismail Haniyeh, who was supportive of the ceasefire, was killed in Tehran.

● On the plan falling through, Pezeshkian later said, "We were deceived by the promise of a ceasefire by American and European leaders. It was to be in

exchange for not responding to Haniyeh's assassination." Iran had been stalled.

● Lebanese foreign minister also told CNN Hezbollah's Nasrallah and Lebanon had agreed to a ceasefire with Israel and had communicated the same to Israeli gov't, and to US and France, with Netanyahu accepting the proposal. Immediately after this agreement, Israel killed Nasrallah.

So, what really happened after Iran's attack three weeks ago? We know Netanyahu, who has the support

with US. Washington has all along cautioned Israel against striking Iran's nuclear facilities or oil infra. Indeed, Israel's revenge strikes were precisely as authorised by US - against limited military targets.

Israel kept the promise it made to US of "proportionate response", with no energy or nuclear facilities among the targets. US said it knew of Israel's plan - Tel Aviv had informed Washington.

Iran's statements were as expected. It said that its air defence systems successfully tracked and countered Israel's "aggression" but that there was some limited damage. Israel, again as expected, warned Iran that Tel Aviv would be "forced to respond" if Tehran launched fresh escalation. It was all perfectly executed.

A key priority for US was to eliminate the risk of Iran falling into Netanyahu's trap of getting forced into a direct conflict with US military in the region. In this, US succeeded. The attack was deemed inadequate by hardliners in Israel, but Israel got to strike Iran.

Point is, there's a massive power gap between Iran and Israel. The West is all-in for Israel, while Iran has no serious supporter. To what extent Iran can trust Russia is debatable given Moscow's relations with Israel - more than a million Russian citizens live in Israel today.

It's possible to see the scope and restraint of Saturday's attack as a success of the Biden administration. If a more comprehensive attack had been carried out, Iran's immediate response could completely change the electoral climate in US. Netanyahu's influence on the US election process needs no repetition.

In fact, Israel knows and wants to prove to its allies, especially US, that Iran is not as powerful as it's perceived to be, and that fighting organisations it supports won't lead to frightening doomsday scenarios.

Israel and its allies are exploring the possibilities of changing the region's dynamics, but one must await the results of US elections to see what shape the process will take.

The writer is a former diplomat



Calvin & Hobbes



If You Are Lonely, It's A Sign You Are Ready

James Anderson

We are never truly alone. Loneliness is perplexing and painful, but essentially it is an illusion, a mask created by the surface consciousness. Losing a 'soulmate' is unbearable if one doesn't recognise the immortal spirit residing in all. This truth is our first step away from loneliness. It is illusory because, innately, we are divine and one with everything.

If you are lonely, you stand on a bridge between two worlds: one of lack, the other plenitude. The lack creates a vacuum which will be assuaged if one adopts a conscious approach. Because of this, loneliness offers an ideal platform for the spiritual life. The Mother said: "Those who feel lonely in the world are ready for union with the Divine." Somehow, the emptiness has to be filled. Aloneness is generally regarded as

something to be avoided. It is radical to consider it an opportunity. When alone, many will search for props. Generally, these episodes are used unwisely. We indulge our senses. We drink or eat too much. We interact on social media and generate virtual relationships to blot out the void. We switch on the television to create new images and noises. The distraction is viewed as company: anything to expunge the nightmare. Anything but this silence. The prospect of sacrificing such accessories is considered unbearable.

The yearning for company is embedded in us the moment we are born. Then, gradually, we get with the social fabric and become magnets for every conditioning, so much so, we might interpret aloneness as a sign of inferiority. The herd mentality is what

we must swim against. Isolation leads to further morbidities and creates self-pity, a sign of misplaced self-love. Instead of loving for the sake of loving, we erect so many conditions. We identify the ego as ourselves. We must continuously step back and disengage from the flux in order to discover our Inner Friend and this is when we begin to expand and grow. Seize this vibration if it visits you and offer it to the Light.

In Integral Yoga, every knot is an opportunity for growth. We absorb a simple truth: do not expect anything from anyone. Otherwise, you'll wind up hurt. Attachment only festers loneliness. It comes when we slide onto the surface, far away from our 'true home'. We can only depend on what lies inside. The surface consciousness cannot process aloneness. There is outer and inner loneliness.

With outer, one constantly erects scaffolding to keep one's life from falling apart. It is all the ego can manage - makeshift reactions and piecemeal solutions. It is a common condition. It requires catastrophe to truly transform this affliction because it is only a reversal of awareness that will transform. Inner loneliness is 'direr'. It may be precipitated by intense grieving, bereavement or loss. The being craves affection and love. The past is often idealised and there is an aching chasm inside the heart. One might feel an intense ache and not know why. There is a remedy. Sri Aurobindo states: "The inner loneliness can only be cured by the inner experience of union with the Divine; no human association can fill the void." So, if you are in this state, take this as a sign that you are ready! It is now time to make your life divine.

The writer is coordinating editor of NAMAHA, the Journal of Integral Health

Sacredspace



If the many and the One be indeed the same Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work...all modes of creation, which are paths of realisation. No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular.

Sister Nivedita



THE SPEAKING TREE



HERVE RENARD BACK TO COACH SAUDI ARABIA TWO DAYS AFTER THE DEPARTURE OF MANCINI



WOMEN'S CRICKET CALENDAR IS RESEMBLING MEN'S SCHEDULE, SAYS FORMER OZ SKIPPER MEG LANNING

A SOBERING LOSS & SOME HARD LESSONS

India's Failures In Bengaluru And Pune Were A Result Of Failing To Understand The Grammar Of Test Match Batting

Amit.Karmarkar@timesofindia.com

Pune: When Rohit Sharma said he doesn't want to be too critical of his players after seeing India's invincibility at home end against New Zealand after 12 years and 18 series in Pune on Saturday, he may have had a point.

A close look of this Test team in all conditions reveals a few serious shortcomings. Crucially, the commitment of the players and the stars to domestic multi-day cricket must be questioned.

It starts with the batters appearing in no position to either hone or polish their defensive techniques or increase their ability to bat for long periods of time. Not just because they play a very high percentage of white-ball cricket where explosive-ness is rewarded more than balance, technique and patience, the busy international calendar and star culture also means they hardly get to play domestic first-class cricket.

Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli have not played any first-class game this season. All other pure batters in the team picked for the Test series against NZ, had played at least a game—either in the Duleep Trophy or Ranji Trophy.

The reason behind Rohit and Virat not playing any first-class game, be it either citing fitness worries or workload management, could be genuine and may have been recommended too by the medical team and team management. But not spending time in the middle, under the sun and in competitive environment can lead to failures. The runs, or lack of runs, in domestic cricket can help a player and his team to understand where he stands in terms of form and match-readiness.

When Washington Sundar made a dramatic Test comeback on the first day of the Pune game, all experts were united in their opinion: He was ready after playing against Delhi only a few days ago.

Besides Sundar, left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav also played a domestic First-Class game despite his chronic groin issue. And so did Rishabh Pant, Sarfaraz Khan, KL

Rahul, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Akash Deep, Dhruv Jurel and Axar Patel.

Like Rohit and Virat, even Ravindra Jadeja, R Ashwin, Jasprit Bumrah and Mohd Siraj did not play a domestic First-Class game before the Bangladesh series or before the first Test against NZ in Bengaluru.

Rohit himself confessed that his reading of the pitch on the first day in Bengaluru was incorrect. The Pune pitch seemed to have slightly stumped him too as he took pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Akash Deep out of the game in the second innings. The talk of playing five specialist bowlers in Indian conditions never rang so hollow.

The Indian skipper with the hitherto Midas touch felt that there have been only two batting collapses, and the team should be allowed concessions after doing so well over the years at home.

It would be good to remember that India were all out for 145 (vs England, Ahmedabad 2021) and 109 & 163 (vs Australia, Indore 2023) too. While a completely doctored pitch ensured that the Ahmedabad game got over within two days, the crushing Indore defeat had seen Rohit winning the toss and opting to bat first.

When India won the 2020-21 Test series in Australia, Rohit Sharma missed the first two Tests and KL Rahul came back after missing the first Test due to injury. Virat too played just the Adelaide Test (all out 36); the game India lost.

Now, the troika is expected to provide calming influence on India's batting Down Under which seems a tall ask. Especially going by the form and manner of dismissals of Rohit and Virat in the longest form of the game.

To their credit, Rohit or coach Gautam Gambhir have not given the impression that they have not accepted the team's shortcomings—patience, technique, handling pressure and failure to bat out sessions consistently. Hence there is still optimism—for both the Border-Gavaskar Trophy Down Under and WTC qualification.

Yashasvi Jaiswal played a similar role in Pune with an attacking 77. But Rohit Sharma (8), Virat Kohli (17) and Rishabh Pant (0) failed to essay the kind of roles played by Gautam Gambhir (66*), Sachin Tendulkar (103*) and Yuvraj (85*) from the class of 2008.



LOOK, RUNS OVER THERE: Lack of adequate match practice in red-ball cricket has hurt Indian batting stalwarts, skipper Rohit Sharma (right) and ex-skipper Virat Kohli

SHORT TESTS A NORM It was the third Test at the Gahunje stadium and none have gone into the fifth day. India added five more new Test centres, besides Pune, in recent years. They are Rajkot, Indore, Ranchi, Visakhapatnam and Dharamshala. These other five

centres have hosted a combined 14 Tests with three lasting five days, seven four days and four three days. So, Tests ending early is an overall norm. The preceding Test in Bengaluru also lasted only four days with the first day being washed out. **TNN**

PERFORMANCE OF LEFT-ARM SPINNERS VS INDIA IN TESTS IN THE LAST TWO DECADES

Bowler	For	Span	T	Wkts	Ave	Best inns	Best match	5WI	10WM	SR
Monty Panesar	Eng	2006-12	11	36	40.94	6/81	11/210	2	1	85.1
Rangana Herath	SL	2009-17	11	33	48.06	7/48	7/115	2	0	88.8
Shakib Al Hasan	Ban	2007-24	10	25	40.88	5/62	7/174	1	0	62.6
Mitchell Santner	NZ	2006-24	4	23	29.60	7/53	13/157	2	1	53.1
Paul Harris	SA	2007-11	9	22	51.86	4/129	5/179	0	0	106.9
Tom Hartley	Eng	2024	5	22	36.13	7/62	9/193	1	0	68.3
Jack Leach	Eng	2021-24	6	21	33.90	4/54	6/178	0	0	62.2
Ajaz Patel	NZ	2020-24	5	21	28.42	10/119	14/225	1	1	47.8
Daniel Vettori	NZ	2009-10	6	21	41.80	5/135	6/199	1	0	96.3
Steve O'Keefe	Aus	2017-17	4	19	23.26	6/35	12/70	2	1	56.5

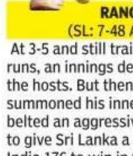
—Rajesh Kumar

Panesar to Santner, India's woes vs left-arm spin remain

Mitchell Santner's 13-wicket haul in the Pune Test is not the only time that a left-arm spinner has troubled India. TOI highlights some other instances post 2010.



MONTY PANESAR (ENG: 5-129, 6-81 AT MUMBAI, 2012) After beating England at Ahmedabad earlier, India were confident of turning over their rivals on the red dirt of Wankhede. Kevin Pietersen's stunning 186 helped England reply to India's 327 with a robust 413. Monty Panesar, who had toiled for 47 overs for his five-for in the first innings (which included a brute to dismiss Sachin Tendulkar bowled), found the pitch much more to his liking in the second dig. He got Tendulkar again with an arm ball, this time lbw and devalued the rest of the batters with his quickish deliveries to help Alastair Cook's side record a famous 10-wicket thumping.



RANGANA HERATH (SL: 7-48 AT GALLE, 2015) At 3-5 and still trailing India by 192 runs, an innings defeat loomed for the hosts. But then Dinesh Chandimal summoned his inner Viv Richards and belted an aggressive 162 off 169 balls to give Sri Lanka a sniff by setting India 176 to win in the fourth innings. Rangana Herath, who had gone wicketless in the first innings after bowling 33 overs, then ran through India with a sublime spell of 7-48 to bowl India out for 112 and make it a sombre Independence Day. That he was there in the current NZ coaching set-up for the sub-continent sojourn, seemed like poetic justice.



STEVE O'KEEFE (AUS: 6-35, 6-35 AT PUNE, 2017) At 94-3, replying to Australia's 260, things looked steady for India as they hoped to be on par with Steve Smith's side on the first innings. Enter Steve O'Keefe. The left-arm spinner just landed the ball on a length and challenged the batter's defences as India lost 7-11 to be bowled out for 105. On a pitch that was dry, a 155-run deficit soon turned into a target of 441 as Smith produced a masterclass on how to bat on a turner and grinded out a 109. O'Keefe was in business again exploiting the pitch, which had by now started to turn ragged and produced identical figures in both innings of 6-35. India lasted just 33.5 overs as Australia won by a mammoth 333 runs.



TOM HARTLEY (ENG: 7-62 AT HYDERABAD, 2024) England had no business competing in this Test after India had rattled up 436 in reply to England's 246. At 5-163, and a deficit of 27, defeat, possibly an innings loomed large. But Ollie Pope produced an innings for the ages like Pietersen's in Mumbai to score 196 and give India a nervy chase of 231 on a crumbling pitch. Cashing in on India's diffidence and lack of technique, Hartley, on debut, exploited the conditions perfectly and bowled England to a famous win by 28 runs in fading light.



MATT KUHNEMANN (AUS: 5-16 AT INDORE, 2023) A late venue swap from Dharamshala to Indore didn't aid pitch preparation as the venue, known for belters dished out a bald, dry track. India won the toss and batted, but Matthew Kuhnemann bowled in the right areas to exploit the roughness in the surface to have batters stumped or caught at slip. With dream figures of 5-16, India could manage just 109 in 33.2 overs. Nathan Lyon produced an 8-for in the second dig as Australia won by nine wickets.

SHASTRI BACKS GAMBHIR AFTER SERIES DEFEAT TO NZ

Pune: Former India head coach Ravi Shastri came out in support of the current Indian head coach Gautam Gambhir after the side conceded the ongoing Test series to New Zealand. India, captained by Rohit Sharma, marking their first Test series loss at home in 12 years. Shastri explained that since Gautam Gambhir is in the early phase of his coaching stint.

Indian batters collapsed against the Kiwi spin attack led by Mitchell Santner, who took 13 wickets as New Zealand defeated India by 113 runs to secure the series 2-0 with a game to go. "New Zealand have beaten them (India) handsomely in both the Test matches. It's food for thought (on series loss). He (Gambhir) has just taken over the job. It is never easy being coach of a team that has such a big following. It is still early days in his career as a coach. But he'll soon learn," Shastri said on commentary during the second Test in Pune. **ANI**

SANTNER EXPOSED INDIAN BATTERS' TECHNIQUES: DOULL

Pune: Former New Zealand pacer Simon Doull attributed India's shocking series defeat to their batsmen's inadequacies against spin bowling but he was not ready to write off underwhelming star batter Virat Kohli.

"There's a misconception that Indian players are better players of spin. I think they've had better spinners and they've been able to expose the opposition batters. But in this Test (at Pune), their batters were exposed a little bit by a very, very good performance from Mitchell Santner," Doull told **PTI Videos**.

"I think you get used to playing on such good wickets. And when it does turn, techniques get exposed. For a long time, when India played on turning surfaces, they still had the best spinners in the world in Jadeja and Ashwin. So, they've been able to undo other sides. In this Test, they were undone by a New Zealand side that, with all due respect, is not a world-class spin attack," he added. **PTI**

TURNERS HAVE AFFECTED IND BATTERS' CONFIDENCE: BHAIJI

New Delhi: India's star batters have lost a lot of confidence over the years by playing on rank turners, feels former off-spinner Harbhajan Singh.

"If you have had great record at home for so long and if you lose, obviously there will be chatter. It was a tailor-made condition for spinners where ball was supposed to turn from first hour," Harbhajan told **PTI** in an interaction. The man who played in over 100 Tests stressed the reasons for the batting woes.

"Look at the trend during last decades. We are playing mostly on turners through the last decade with the hope that we will win the toss, score 300 and control the game," he added.

"Our batters have lost a lot of confidence playing on these tracks. The biggest example is Ajinkya Rahane, a fine player. His career suffered because of these kind of surfaces," Harbhajan said. **PTI**

EX-CHEPAUK CURATOR PARTHASARATHY DEAD

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: Renowned curator K Parthasarathy, who was in charge of the pitches and outfield at the MA Chidambaram Stadium for a long time, passed away in Chennai on Sunday. He was 71 years old and is survived by his wife and daughter. Parthasarathy served the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association (TNCA) from 1972 to 2013 in a career spanning nearly four decades. He prepared surfaces for some of the iconic matches at Chepauk and was also involved in the famous India-Australia tied Test in 1986. Parthasarathy earned accolades from players and coaches for dishing out "lively"

pitches, which offered good balance between bat and ball. Former Tamil Nadu spinner Sunil Subramaniam said that Parthasarathy, fondly referred to as 'Pacha' in the local cricket circles, had the knack of delivering tracks that offered good bounce.

"I learnt a lot from him. He prepared pitches that generated good bounce and he had his own way of doing it. He certainly knew how to make a bouncy track. I feel lucky that we bowled at a time when Chepauk had reasonable bounce," Subramaniam told **TOI**.

Parthasarathy was in charge of the pitches for the India-Australia Tests in 1998 and 2001 and the long-format match between India and England in 2008, when the hosts achieved the highest successful fourth-innings chase in Test history.

With series decided, MCA may offer extra tickets for sale online

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Mumbai: With New Zealand having clinched the series 2-0 by winning the second Test at Pune, the public interest level in the third and final Test between India and New Zealand, which will kick off from Nov 1 at the Wankhede Stadium, may just go down.

THIRD TEST VS NZ

It may prompt the Mumbai Cricket Association to release a few extra tickets for online sale for the 'Diwali Test', which is now a dead rubber.

"We might put up around 500 more tickets for online sale from Monday. As the series has been decided, we could be left with a few tickets which have been utilised from our club members' quota," Mumbai Cricket Association secretary Abhay Hadap told **TOI** on Saturday.

The MCA had initially released 14,000 tickets for online sale from Oct 18. With the fans expecting a decider at the Wankhede initially, almost all the online tickets were sold out quickly, with only a few high-end tickets worth Rs 25,000 still available on the ticketing platform.

Shami's absence big loss for India, says Oz coach McDonald

Sydney: Australia head coach Andrew McDonald feels the absence of Mohammed Shami during the marquee Border Gavaskar Trophy next month is a huge loss for India, but stressed that the hosts won't underestimate the quicks stepping in for the seasoned pacer.

AUSTRALIA TOUR

Shami, who had played a significant role in India's successful 2018 tour of Australia, has not played since the ODI World Cup final last November due to an ankle injury.

He underwent surgery and was subsequently rehabilitating at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) but developed swelling in his knees which affected his rehabilitation.

"Mohammed Shami is a big loss," McDonald was quoted as saying by **ESPNCricinfo** on **ABC's OutSiders**.

"The way our batters speak about his relentless nature, his



Mohammed Shami has not played since the ODI World Cup final last Nov due to an ankle injury

line and lengths, the way he goes about his business, a real good complimenting skill set to Bumrah. So I think that one-two combo they'll lack a little bit, and they'll miss that."

India have handed maiden call ups to speedster Harshit Rana and allrounder Nitish Kumar Reddy while quicks Akash Deep and Prasidh Krishna have also been selected. "But needless to say we saw what happened last time, they had reserves that came in and

Pacer says sorry to BCCI and fans

New Delhi: India pacer Mohammed Shami has apologised to the fans and the BCCI after the board decided against rushing his return to the team for the high-profile tour of Australia as he is yet to attain match fitness.

"Putting in my efforts and getting better with my bowling fitness day-by-day. Will continue working hard towards getting ready for the match and to play domestic red ball cricket. Sorry to all cricket fans and bcci too, but very soon I'm ready to play red ball cricke, love you all," Shami wrote on **Instagram**. **PTI**

did the job as well so they cannot be underestimated at all," McDonald added. **PTI**

Ethiopian Kejelcha shatters men's half-marathon WR

Valencia (Spain): Ethiopian runner Yomif Kejelcha made every second count, breaking the men's half-marathon record by just a second on Sunday.

Kejelcha finished strongly in the Spanish city of Valencia to set a time of 57 minutes & 30 seconds, knocking a single second off the record set in 2021 by Ugandan runner Jacob Kiplimo in Lisbon, Portugal.

Kejelcha is a former world championship silver medalist in the 10,000 meters and holds the indoor world record for the mile, which he set in Boston in 2019.

Like all track and field records, Kejelcha's will be subject to ratification procedures before World Athletics considers it official. It was the second time in a row that the record was bettered by such a narrow margin. When Kiplimo set his record, the time was a second faster than that set by Kibiwot Kandie of Kenya a year earlier in Valencia. **PTI**

New Zealand played smart, tough cricket, says Wright

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Jaipur: Former New Zealand captain John Wright wholeheartedly praised Tom Latham and his boys for winning the historic Test series in India.

"New Zealand played smart, tough cricket to win both the Test matches quite convincingly. All the team members deserved special praise and accolades for creating history. Any team which wins and creates history gets an amazing experience. This side is good and played great this month," Wright told **TOI** here on Sunday.

The former Team India coach is here to watch the ongoing Ranji Trophy match between Rajasthan and Gujarat as a part of the talent search assignment for Mumbai Indians.

Before this Test series, the last time New Zealand beat India, Wright was the captain of the side.

"It was in 1988 when my team defeated India at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. We won that match but lost the series 2-1. But this time around, Latham's team completed the job quite brilliantly. I am personally happy that finally New Zealand achieved spectacular results and

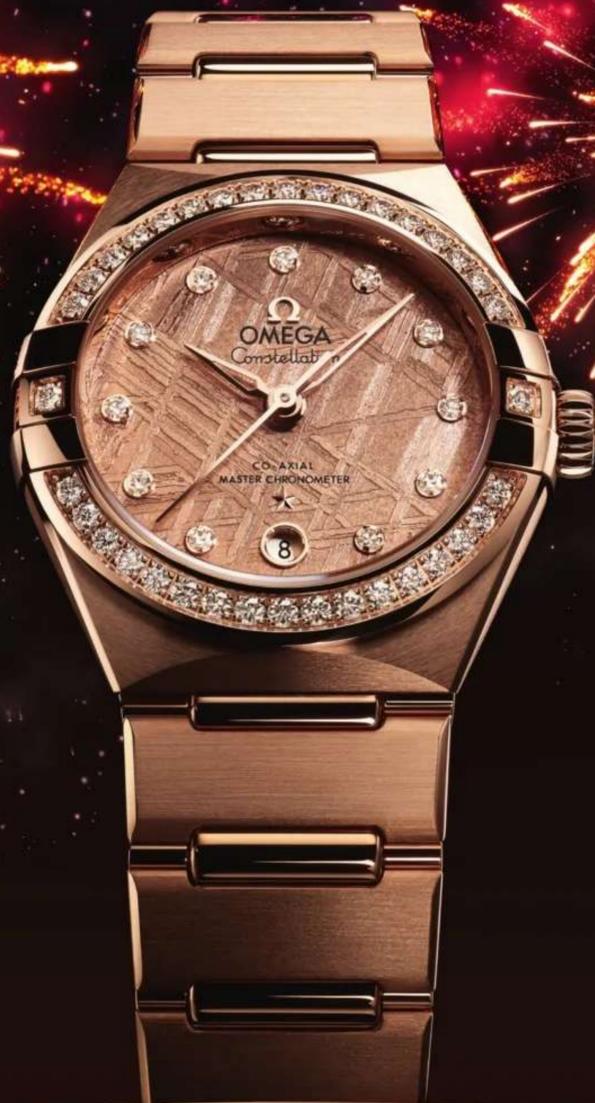


Former New Zealand captain John Wright didn't pick any particular hero for the win

broke the long winning streak of the Indian team on home soil," said Wright.

The 70-year-old didn't mention any particular heroes but lauded the efforts of the entire team for such an outstanding show.

"All the members of this side will remember this performance for the rest of their lives. They outsmarted the formidable Indian team by preparing well and implementing their plans with precision. Every player did his job to perfection and didn't allow the hosts to make a comeback in both the Tests," added Wright.



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Study suggests siblings who fought as children tend to spend more time together during Diwali

Noise levels set to rise during Diwali as neighbours organise a street-wide 'Antakshari' contest

Diwali melas experience a revival as more people encouraged to celebrate the festival in person with loved ones

Diwali wishes on social media don't have the same warmth as meeting in person, say experts

Sweets fed by mother somehow taste better

There is a unique magic in sharing sweets during Diwali, particularly when they come from a beloved family member. While festive occasions are filled with an assortment of desserts, the experience is elevated when a mother feeds them to her child. The warmth of her hands and the love behind each bite transform even ordinary chocolate into something extraordinary. "It's not just about the taste; it's about the love and memories associated with it," reflects Shraddha Sharma as she reminisces about her childhood.

Three generations, one celebration

In a delightful display of familial unity, three generations are preparing to come together under one roof to celebrate Diwali this year. Priya and Arjun's parents are expected to join the festivities, sharing stories and traditions, while their children add to the joyful chaos. This vibrant gathering will be centred around the goodness of meetha and the joy of being together.

The real essence of Diwali? Sharing meetha with family

Diwali sparks a migration of people who are eager to reconnect with loved ones over Cadbury Celebrations

As the festival of lights, Diwali, approaches, the hustle and bustle of travellers is filling the air. Families across the country are reuniting, making the journey home to celebrate this cherished occasion together. While the festivities are marked by dazzling lights and colourful decorations, the true essence of Diwali lies in the warmth of family bonds and the joy of sharing meetha—especially when it comes in the delightful form of Cadbury Celebrations.

In cities and villages alike, Diwali sparks a migration of people eager to reconnect with loved ones. Whether by train, car, or plane, nothing compares to the anticipation of sharing moments with family. As families gather around tables laden with sweets, the act of shar-



ing creates unforgettable memories and strengthens bonds.

Cadbury Celebrations has become a beloved tradition during the festive season, offering a wide

array of chocolates that bring joy and smiles. Picture this: a beautifully wrapped box of Cadbury Celebrations opened amidst laughter and stories, with each chocolate

shared symbolising love and togetherness. This Diwali, the spirit of sharing takes centre stage, turning each moment into a sweet and cherished memory.

Siblings reunite to share meetha and memories

This Diwali, the reunion of siblings adds a heartwarming narrative to the festival's celebrations. After several years apart, Priya and Arjun have reunited in their childhood home to celebrate the festival of lights. Their bond, strengthened by the passage of time, is rekindled over shared plates of meetha and the joy of Cadbury Celebrations.

Setting into the familiar surroundings of their family home, memories flood back as they laugh over old photos, recall mischievous antics, and recount cherished family traditions. "Growing up, we always fought over the last piece of chocolate," Priya says with a laugh as she opens a box of Cadbury Celebrations. "Now, we just enjoy it together!"

The two spend the evening decorating diyas and preparing sweets, their laughter ringing through the house. The simple act of sharing chocolates becomes a vehicle for nostalgia, transporting them back to their carefree childhood days. Each piece of meetha they savour is imbued with the sweetness of shared memories, further strengthening their bond. "This Diwali is special because



we have each other again," Arjun reflects, his eyes gleaming with happiness. The reunion, filled with laughter and love, showcases the true spirit of Diwali—a celebration of togetherness.

Man, 65, to take first-ever flight to meet sister

In a heartwarming story, 65-year-old Rajesh Kumar is set to take his maiden flight from Pune to Delhi, eagerly anticipating a reunion with his sister after years apart. "I've always preferred trains, but this year, I want to surprise her," Rajesh shared. His journey highlights the lengths to which families will go to celebrate Diwali together.

Is technology replacing real connections?

As Diwali approaches, concerns are growing about the impact of technology on the festival's spirit. While text messages and video calls have made it easier to send greetings to loved ones, many argue that these virtual interactions lack the warmth and intimacy of in-person interactions.

In previous years, Diwali was a time when families and friends gathered to share sweets and celebrate together. The laughter and conversation that filled homes during these joyous reunions created lasting memories. However, with the rise of digital communication, more people are opting for quick messages over personal visits. "A text may convey good wishes, but it can't replicate the joy of feeding meetha to your friend in person," says Ramesh Kumar, a local community leader.

As neighbourhoods grow quieter during the festival, some worry that the essence of Diwali is fading.



DIAL F FOR FAMILY: While technology has made it easier for families to stay connected, it can never replace the emotional depth of an in-person interaction

"We're losing the magic of connecting face-to-face, sharing meetha, and lighting diyas together," reflects Priya Singh, a long-time resident. This Diwali, as we scroll through

our phones to send virtual wishes, let's also consider making the effort to reconnect with loved ones in person. Reviving these traditions could help restore the true spirit of the festival.

Video calls: on; meeting friends and family: off

Today, video calls have become the go-to method for connecting with loved ones, but in-person gatherings are on the decline. As Diwali approaches, families are opting for virtual greetings over traditional visits, leaving many feeling disconnected during the festive season. "It's convenient to wish everyone through a screen, but it lacks the warmth of being together," says Neha Datta, reflecting on the missed joy of shared celebrations. This Diwali, as lights adorn homes, let's remember the importance of personal connections.

Homeward bound: Diwali sees surge amongst travellers

Airports and train stations are seeing a surge in passengers, with most travellers eager to return home for Diwali. From bustling cities to serene villages, families are reuniting to celebrate this joyous occasion. Despite the jump in bookings, travellers appear excited as they look forward to the warmth of home-cooked meals and the sharing of sweets.

This Diwali, as we travel far and wide to meet our loved ones, let's make it a point to share not just sweets, but moments filled with laughter and love. Cadbury Celebrations provides the perfect addition to any gathering, ensuring that every shared chocolate adds to the festive spirit.

In the end, the real sparkle of Diwali lies not just in the lights that illuminate our homes, but in the bonds we nurture with each shared meetha.

BIG FAMILIES NOISIER THAN CRACKERS



Homes across India are buzzing with excitement as families prepare to reunite for the Diwali celebrations. The joyful laughter, animated chatter, and playful banter of large gatherings often outshine the sound of firecrackers, creating a festive symphony that lights up entire neighbourhoods.

Phones are keeping families apart on Diwali

While smartphones and social media offer instant communication, many families find themselves increasingly disconnected, especially during Diwali. Concerns are growing about how technology is affecting the essence of this cherished festival.

Traditionally, Diwali was a time for families to gather, share meals, and celebrate together. However, the convenience of texting and video calls has led to a decline in in-person visits. "We used to spend hours with relatives, sharing stories and laughter," says Anjali Verma, a mother of two. "Now, we send quick messages and feel satisfied, but it's just not the same." This shift has made celebra-



tions quieter and less vibrant, with children missing out on the joy of playing together and the rich tradition of sharing sweets fading away.

This Diwali, there is a call to prioritise personal connections and embrace in-person celebrations. By doing so, families can restore the true spirit of togetherness that defines this joyous occasion.

Neighbours set to reconcile over sweets this Diwali

For years, Ramesh and Deepa have exchanged nothing more than curt nods; their feud is rooted in a property dispute that has cast a shadow over their homes.

However, with the festival of lights approaching, Ramesh has decided that it's time to mend fences, with a box of Cadbury Celebrations. As he gathers the courage to make amends, he wonders how she will react.

When questioned about what he plans to say to break the ice, he replied, "Happy Diwali! I thought it might be a good time to start anew. Deepa may hesitate, but with any luck, a smile will break across her face as she accepts the gesture." He hopes that they will open the box together, sharing chocolates and laughter while reminiscing about the neighbourhood's vibrant past.

Bring back the '90s Diwali: A millennial's appeal to restore festival's community spirit

As Diwali approaches, a wave of nostalgia sweeps over millennials yearning for the simpler, more vibrant celebrations of the '90s. In an era where social media dominates our interactions, many are calling for a revival of the community spirit that once defined the festival.

Back in the '90s, Diwali was more than just a personal celebration; it was a time when neighbourhoods came alive with the laughter of children playing with sparklers and families gathering for shared meals. Streets



were adorned with rangoli, and the air buzzed with the sounds of laughter and chatter. "We need

to reclaim that sense of togetherness," says Anisha Sharma, a passionate advocate for reviving traditional Diwali celebrations.

Millennials are now organising local events, from community potlucks to neighbourhood diya-lighting ceremonies, aiming to foster connections with neighbours and friends. "Let's bring back the joy of celebrating together, sharing Cadbury Celebrations, and creating memories as a community," Sharma urges.

As we revel in the festive lights, let's also remember the importance of community spirit.

Diwali: India's annual family reunion season

For many, Diwali is the season of family reunions, where loved ones travel from distant cities and towns to come together. The aroma of traditional sweets fills the air, while the clamour of children playing complements the warm conversations of adults reminiscing about cherished memories. It is a time when the heart of the home truly comes alive, highlighting the importance of familial bonds.

As families gather to light diyas and share meals, the joy of togetherness resonates louder than any festive display. This Diwali, while fireworks may illuminate the sky, it is the sounds of family love and laughter that will truly brighten spirits.

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