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# Afternoon

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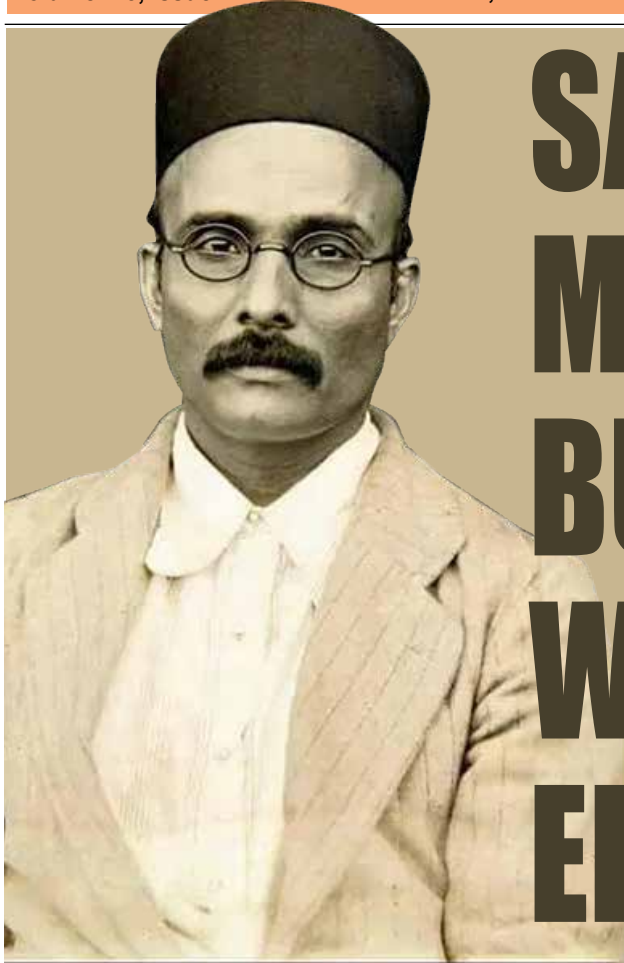
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## SAVARKAR IS NOT ONLY MAHARASHTRA'S DEITY BUT AN IDOL FOR THE WHOLE COUNTRY: EKNATH SHINDE



Hours after Rahul Gandhi used Savarkar's name during a press conference over his disqualification as Member of Parliament, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde used the remarks to launch an attack on Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT). Eknath Shinde made the statement while addressing the media at the Vidhan Bhawan after the end of the 4-week-long Budget session. His remark came after earlier in the day, Rahul Gandhi had said that he would not apologise

for his remarks as he was not Savarkar. Savarkar is not only Maharashtra's deity but an idol for the whole country, and Rahul Gandhi has defamed him, said state's Chief Minister Eknath Shinde after the former Congress chief refused to apologise over his remark on the Modi surname, saying he was not Savarkar, but Gandhi and Gandhi don't apologise.

The statement was made by Rahul Gandhi earlier in the day during a press conference following his suspension as the Lok Sabha MP. Retorting to former

Wayanad MP, CM Shinde said, "Any criticism of Rahul Gandhi will be less-er compared to his deeds. Even today, he said that he was not Savarkar who would apologise. What does he think of Savarkar? He should spend a day in jail to understand the sacrifice of Savarkar."

Speaking on the conviction of Rahul Gandhi by Surat's Chief Judicial Magistrate's court, CM Shinde said Rahul has been suspended by the law made by the Congress party, adding several other politicians were disquali-

fied in the past as well. "Rahul Gandhi has been suspended by the law made by Congress. Lalu Yadav and several others were disqualified, but nothing of this sort happened then. Wasn't democracy in danger then?" remarked CM Shinde. Shinde said that Rahul Gandhi has not only criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi but the entire OBC community. He further warned that if Rahul Gandhi continues to speak in the same tone, it would be difficult for him to walk the road.

### Unbiased media is a Myth in India; if there are BJP workers there are Congress stooges too

Editoritis



Dr. Vaidehi

The media was never biased towards BJP, rather there is a big social media and mainstream media group that impatiently attacks BJP and its leaders. The media was always biased towards the Ruling Party of the time. Since BJP is ruling India now, the media naturally supports BJP. BJP does not control "all" media. That can never happen in a democratic country like India. If it did, you would be living in a dictatorship. If we believe we are living under dictatorship I wouldn't be writing this edit. Yes, BJP influences some media outlets who tow the BJP line. Media, whether print or electronic, is a costly proposition which requires a lot of resources. So when they do not toe the line of

the ruling party of the day, the government can and most of the time does try to block the flow of these resources - mostly in the form of advertisement revenue - directly by stopping government advertisements to these non-compliant media, and indirectly by inciting other private industries and trade to follow suit. No media house wants this, or can withstand this for long. When the government changes even the media changes it stands. But in the near future Congress has no such privilege; they really need to fight for their existence by all means.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 02

# Editoritis

# Unbiased media is a Myth in India; if there are BJP workers there are Congress stooges too

▶▶▶ PAGE 1

*Despite the huge strain on the state's exchequer, Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Devendra in the budget refrained from announcing a hike in stamp duty or taxes.*

*The high-end properties worth crores in elite areas are moving like hot cakes because buyers and sellers both are elite wealthy class but the commoners who own one bed room hall kitchen, not finding buyers because the buyers and sellers both are from economy class*

*Prices will not come down further. The industry itself has already said that prices have come down by 15% in the past year. Obviously, for some developers the cut could have been more, given the level of desperation there may exist. the construction costs haven't come down.*

Most media moguls also have many other business interests, for which they must always need some obligations or support from the governments of the day. So it goes against their grain not to be supportive of the ruling party in their media presentations. Same goes with most of the journalists, who feel it convenient to fall in line either to enjoy some inducements, or at least to avoid any harassment in the discharge of their journalistic activity. This applies to all ruling parties, whether the present BJP or the Congress in the earlier decades. Only the inducements/ threats might be sometimes overt but most of the times more covert and subtle.

Very few media houses and journalists show some spine to stand up for their professional independence and courage of convictions. If BJP has dedicated media barons as their flag bearers then we should know that the nexus of congress is also very strong that you can't imagine. They have their people everywhere even the paid historians who have written the history in childhood books of NCERT are in their favour. They too have their nexus with editors and writers who threw the word like ISI for RSS in the media when congress was at high pitch.

When Congress was in power almost all pro-BJP (or even centre-right ideologues) journalists were thrown out of their jobs due to pressure from the ruling party. Many journalists were arrested for the anti-Congress voices. No opposition was ever kind to the media because they blamed them for the ruling party's lap dogs. Remember the great venerable Ramnath Goenka, frustrated and broken by repeated I-T raids and ED investigations ultimately had to fire Arun Shourie twice from the Indian Express, which was once the best Indian newspaper in the 1970s and 80s. That was the team — Goenka the owner, Shourie the editor, and S. Gurumurthy the fearless journalist, that brought political heavyweights like Indira Gandhi down on her knees and even took on corporate honchos like Dhirubhai Ambani.

Very few centre-right ideologues then existed in Indian media, that too in minor publications. Almost all the mainstream media houses were thoroughly infiltrated and coerced into towing the Congress' line, sometimes just through ideology and relationships, and not even money power.

The Congress party essentially owned and controlled every

single mainstream media house in India, including Hindustan Times, The Times of India, NDTV, CNN-IBN, The Hindu, Tehelka, Outlook, etc. When BJP came to power the first thing they straightened was anti BJP campaigners. See I have a small media house which is considered to be a parallel media. We don't fit into mainstream media either by our reach nor by our size, but still the constructive criticism made by us is accepted by BJP and its leaders. We were never under pressure to speak the truth, be it against the BJP. PM Modi rather volunteered saying the media should make constructive criticism so that the ruling party can improvise on various fronts.

There is a stark gap in trust among supporters of political parties in news outlets. Patterns of news consumption differed among supporters of the ruling BJP and opposition parties. It is claimed that the most readers of English newspapers support the Congress, while consumers of Hindi news seem to incline towards the BJP. The proportion of individuals that mostly read the newspaper in English is around 3% but among this tiny segment, the Congress enjoys the most support. This is not the case among readers who read newspapers in other languages.

We have to believe that the Modi government is favourably sought in the Indian news media. Media is made of people who deal a lot with politics or politicians. And it's natural that they are still towards one or the other ideology. We are in a very complicated political environment where deciding what is right and what is wrong is difficult. Every event has multiple facets to it and it depends on the reporter as to what he sees and what he wants to show. But calling journalists a prostitute, Bazaru, bikau, darbaari or party workers is not new in Indian politics. What people need to understand is that they are served what they want to buy, and the media needs to realise that they still need a balance.

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# Voices



## Letters to the Editor

### Question on the credibility of digital media itself

Fake news is dangerous for Indian democracy. The volume of such news has increased due to digital and social media. Due to media trial and lack of diversity in the media, such news is creating a rift between two sections of the society. Due to this, there is a need to do a concrete work or create a system to verify the authenticity of such news. pronounced by Chief Justice of India Dhananjaya Chandrachud.

### Hathras case in Uttar Pradesh, Me too movement, COVID

The mistakes made by the administration during the period, the problem of migrants created in the lockdown, all these got good attention from the Indian media and journalists. But the work of spreading fake news in digital media is being done by some elements, there is a need to create some new system to prevent it. The credibility of digital media itself is questioned. Chief Justice Chandrachud said that I avoid looking at my Twitter account as much as possible. This has raised a question on the credibility of the digital and Social media.

Dattaprasad Shirodkar

### Government should pay attention

Passengers going to Konkan have to take private trains instead of Lalpari ST. Once upon a time passengers used to eagerly wait for ST buses going to Konkan. But now this picture has completely changed. So the ST administration should introspect on this. The current situation of government transport is very bad. But the government is not paying attention to it.

Uday Wahhvankar

### There are no permanent friends or foes in politics!

There are no permanent friends or foes in politics which can throw strange bed fellows at any given point. Nothing much must be read from Devendra Fadnavis - Uddhav Thackeray greeting each other with a smile as these are part & parcel of political debates over the years. Thackeray Party's political agenda is skewed towards Hindutva & so is that of the BJP. These Party's have in the past shared power & broken ties as well before coming together again whenever it suited their political agenda. A reunion certainly cannot be ruled out inspite of bitterness witnessed in the last few years.

However, coming together or parting ways should not be based on hunger for power but ethics needs to be followed apart from respecting the verdict of the voters!

S.N.Kabra

# Ramadan, the holy month of fasting

Ramadan (or Ramazan) is the ninth month of the Muslim Islamic calendar and Muslims all over the world fast during the whole of this month from sunrise till sunset. They also offer alms to the poor and recite the Holy Quran during this holy month.

According to Muslims, Allah tells them in the Holy Quran, "O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous."

Ramadan is one of the holiest months in the Islamic lunar calendar for Muslims. Unlike the Gregorian calendar which uses the sun as its guide, the Islamic calendar uses the moon.

While the months in the Gregorian calendar usually have 30-31 days, months in the lunar calendar have 29-30 days. This might not seem like much of a difference, but having one or two fewer days in the month means having almost 10 days less than the Gregorian calendar each year.

So, if a month falls on a certain day this year, next year that month falls on a day that is almost 10 days earlier than the previous year. These days add up and after a few years the month that fell in spring a few years ago now happens during the winter, and so on.

Fasting is a very important spiritual exercise to seek forgiveness of our shortcomings and improve our conduct. The last Prophet (PBUH) said, "The five (daily) prayers, and from one Juma prayer to the (next) Juma prayer, and from Ramadan to Ramadan

are expiations for the (sin) committed in between (their intervals); provided the major sins are not committed."

Fasting is to be purely out of love for God and to thank Him for what He has blessed us with in our daily life. One way to show this gratitude is to do extraordinary charity during this month. Because of this inconsistency, Muslims don't really develop a seasonal recognition of Ramadan.

Some people might see Santa Claus and think of winter but you can't do that with Ramadan. There were many lunar calendars before the Gregorian calendar was discovered, and even though there has been tremendous pressure for Muslims to abandon their calendar, they refused to do so. If you think about it, there is a lot of wisdom to the tradition.

If Ramadan always falls in winter in the northern hemisphere, and in summer in the southern hemisphere, then people in the southern hemisphere would be fasting a lot more than their counterparts in the north and Ramadan would be more difficult for them because it changes, people in both hemispheres get to experience Ramadan in different seasons, making it all the more fair.

Ramadan is a Muslim holiday, but it is not a holiday in the general sense of the word. In fact, it's not even a day, it's an entire month. Considered the holiest month of the year, Muslims believe this is when the Holy Quran was sent down from heaven, guidance unto men. After abstaining from food and beverages from sunrise to sunset, Muslims usually eat a heavy meal after sunset.

There are many reasons to fast, including the Muslim tradition. Other reasons include self-control. If a person is able to abstain from food and drink for that much amount of time, he/she learns to control his/her desires and temptations and thus has greater self-control.

Here is what the last Prophet (PBUH) said about fasting, "Fasting is a shield; it will protect you from the hell-fire and prevent you from sins."

When the month of Ramadan starts, the gates of heaven are opened and the gates of hell are closed and the devils are chained. At the end of Ramadan, Eid-al-Fitr is celebrated with much enthusiasm and fervour by Muslims from all strata of life.

All Muslim countries celebrate Eid as a sign of Muslim unity and values. Starting a day with special prayers and sweet dish called 'Sheer khurma' men, women and children wear new clothes, while women along with new clothes also wear bangles and apply mehendi. The children receive blessings and gifts from elders called Eidi. Being happy and thankful to Allah, we should not forget the workers who are not celebrating Eid because of their duties such as policeman, housemaids and gate keepers. We should share our happiness with them too, as Eid is all about sharing happiness and joy.

Jubel D'Cruz

Columnist

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[afternoonvoicedesk@gmail.com](mailto:afternoonvoicedesk@gmail.com)

No postal letters will be entertained (The views expressed are authors' own.)

## Fire broke 14-storeyed residential building at MHADA colony in Kanjurmarg



Five people, including three senior citizens and a teenager, were hospitalised after a fire broke out in a 14-storeyed residential building at MHADA colony in Kanjurmarg in the eastern suburbs of Mumbai, fire officials said. Prima facie, the blaze appears to have been triggered by a short circuit, they added. The five who were taken

to the hospital have been identified as Vimal Jalinder Sakte, 74, Alka Sakte, 40, Natasha Sakte, 13, Karuna Ubale, 65, and Anjali Mavlankar, 60. They are undergoing treatment and are currently in stable condition, civic officials said. The incident was reported at 9.30 am on Sunday, following which five fire engines and jumbo tankers were pressed into op-

eration. Officials from Mumbai Fire Brigade (MFB) stated that the flames were reported from the electrical meter cabin on the ground floor of the building. The flames were doused by 9.57 am.

“While the flames remained confined around the meter room, the smoke travelled upwards through electrical ducts, due to which five persons suffered from suffocation. All of them were rescued and transferred to Ambedkar Hospital,” said an official.

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## MNS leader claims life threat after party's demand to raze illegal places of worship



A case has been filed after a Maharashtra Navnirman Sena leader claimed a life threat to a colleague following the party's demand to raze illegal places of worship in Mumbra in Thane district, a police official said on Sunday.

The complaint was filed by Thane MNS chief Ravin-

dra More who said two videos in circulation on social media contained threats aimed at his colleague Avinash Jadhav, the Naupada police station official said. A case under Indian Penal Code section 506(2) for criminal intimidation has been registered and further probe was underway, he added.

## Tigress, cub died due to dehydration in Chandrapur



The bodies of a tigress and a cub were found in Maharashtra's Chandrapur district, with forest officials on Sunday citing dehydration and starvation as possible causes for the death of the cub.

The carcass of the 4-month-old cub was found on Friday evening in Dongargaon beat in compartment 163 of Dhaba range, while a search of the vicinity led to the recovery of the dead body of a tigress on Saturday in compartment 161, an official said. The site is some 78

kilometres away from the district headquarters, he added.

“All the organs of the female cub were intact and, prima facie, it seems it died of dehydration. However, the death of the tigress is under investigation as the body has decomposed,” he said.

“Representatives of the animal husbandry department, forest department and the National Tiger Conservation Authority are probing the case and have already completed the panchnama. Organ samples are being sent to the Forensic Sciences Laboratory here,” he added.

## Congress leaders hold Sankalp Satyagraha in city to protest against Rahul Gandhi's LS disqualification

Disqualification of Rahul Gandhi means hurting & ending democracy. We are making an effort to protect democracy. This is our peaceful Satyagraha. Further course of action will be decided...We'll legally appeal against this action

(disqualification), & legal battle. Congress leaders on Sunday held Sankalp Satyagraha in Mumbai to protest against Rahul Gandhi's LS disqualification. Prithviraj Chavan, Balasaheb Thorat, Bhai Jagtap and others were seen participating in the Satyagraha.

## Projects were a must during Covid: BMC

In response to the Comptroller and Auditor General's damning report, the BMC said it had to award projects without tendering, especially during the pandemic, because the works were urgently required for public safety. Listing lapses, the CAG report

said: “These major lapses point to scant respect for established procedures and weak internal controls in BMC leading to lack of transparency and probity in the execution of works undertaken at a significant cost.” Deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnavis said

the CAG report exposed corruption within the BMC. “The audit report shows that the working of the BMC lacks transparency and is corrupt. This is just a trailer because only a fraction of work was scrutinised,” he said in the state assembly.

## 10-fold rise in Maharashtra's active Covid cases since March 1

With Covid cases rising since mid-February, the number of active cases in Maharashtra has increased at least 10 times – from 198 on March 1 to 1,956 on Saturday. The active caseload in Mumbai is close to 500 (487).



In view of this rising graph, the central government on Saturday instructed Maharashtra, which

accounts for 21% of the country's Covid cases at present, to step up daily testing. Other states reporting a spurt in cases including Kerala (which accounts for 26.4% of the active cases), Gujarat (13.9%), Karnataka (8.6%) and Tamil Nadu (6.3%).

## Gokhale road bridge works delayed by 4 yrs, no timely action

Observing that there was a four-year delay in demolition and reconstruction work of Andheri's Gokhale road bridge, the CAG slammed the BMC in its report, saying that after the initial phase of Covid -19 lockdowns, the “work should have been planned to be executed in a timely manner”, which was not done, and that no action taken by the BMC to prioritise work was found on record, reports Chaitanya



Marpakwar. The CAG said better coordination with the Western Railways (WR) was required for timely completion of the project, the primary responsibility for which was with the BMC. The CAG pointed

out that even after the collapse of a part of the bridge in July 2018, and recommendations of the structural auditor, BMC did not plan for reconstruction of the bridge in a timely manner



Nation

# ISRO launched LVM3 rocket with 36 satellites in Andhra Pradesh's Sriharikota



ive Chairman of OneWeb, said, "In my work, I have seen the power of connectivity to bring benefits to all, wherever they are. Yet half the world's population does not have access to fast, reliable connectivity. Today's launch represents a major step towards closing the digital divide. OneWeb's global constellation will play a pivotal role in realising this dream."

Somanath S, Secretary, Department of Space and Chairman, ISRO, said that the launch is an important milestone for ISRO as it demonstrated the successful launch of a second consecutive commercial payload of OneWeb. "This valued customer trusted our capability and we have proved it in a very short span of time. This launch has created a new record in Indian space history. With this launch of LVM3, through NewSpace India Ltd, ISRO is confident of handling many more such launches on demand for both LEO and GEO missions in the future. I wish OneWeb great success in globalizing the completed constellation," he said. ANI

Bharti-backed OneWeb, the Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite communications company, on Sunday confirmed the successful deployment and contact of 36 satellites launched by NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC-SHAR) in Andhra Pradesh's Sriharikota. Lift-off took place on Sunday at 9 am. OneWeb's satellites separated successfully from the rocket and were dispensed in nine phases over a period of 1 hour and 14 minutes, with the signal acquisition on all 36 satellites confirmed.

launch, its third this year, bringing the total of OneWeb's constellation to 618 satellites. "The OneWeb constellation design calls for 588 satellites for global coverage and additional satellites are planned for resiliency and redundancy. With today's successful launch, the constellation is in place to soon deliver global services," the statement said.

"By the year-end, OneWeb will be ready to roll out global coverage, enhancing its existing connectivity solutions that are already live in regions north of 50 degrees latitude as it brings new areas online by partnering with leading providers," it added.

According to an official statement, this is OneWeb's 18th

Sunil Bharti Mittal, Execu-

# Khalistan leader Amritpal Singh created 'Warris Panj-Aab De' similar to 'Waris Punjab De' to piggyback Deep Sidhu's popularity

Seccessionist Khalistani leader Amritpal Singh chose to create 'Warris Panj-Aab De', phonetically similar to 'Waris Punjab De' already formed by Deep Sidhu's brother, to piggyback on the late actor's popularity after the radical preacher failed to take control of the existing outfit, documents confiscated during a crackdown on him show. Deep Sidhu's brother Mandeep created an organisation in Fatehgarh Sahib on July 4, 2022, in accordance with Deep's desires to promote 'Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan', spread awareness about pollution-related issues, draw drug-addicted youths towards sports, and aid people during natural disasters, among other goals. It was established with strict regulations in place, including the roles and election of office-bearers.

Mandeep stated that the organisation was created to fulfill his late brother's vision of serving the people of Punjab. When Amritpal returned from overseas in August 2022 and demanded



the papers for 'Waris Punjab De', Mandeep refused to hand them over. The Sidhu family refused to acknowledge Amritpal as the heir to Deep's ideology and said the actor had blocked his number before his tragic road accident in February 2022.

Out of the blue, a new organisation called 'Warris Panj-Aab De' surfaced, with Deep Sidhu's official Facebook page linked to it. It was registered in Moga district, with its inception date set being mentioned as December 15, 2021. The Facebook page amassed a huge following, causing confusion among people, who assumed that Amritpal had taken over the organisation created by Deep Sidhu. PTI

# Assam: oppn parties protested against disqualification of Rahul Gandhi from Lok Sabha

The Assam unit of the Congress on Sunday organised a 'Sankalp Satyagraha' here in protest against the disqualification of party leader Rahul Gandhi from the Lok Sabha following his conviction in a defamation case. About 10 other opposition parties of the state also participated in the programme, which was attended by Assam Congress chief Bhupen Kumar Bora and Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Debabrata Saikia.

Raijor Dal chief and MLA Akhil Gogoi and litterateur Dr Hiren Gohain, among others, joined the sit-in demonstration by the state's main opposition party.

Opposition parties of the state, including Raijor Dal, Left parties, Assam Jatiya Parishad, AAP and NCP, have lent their support to the Congress, Bora said. "Their representatives have also participated in the satyagraha here", the Congress leader said. PTI

# Centre notifies revised MGNREGA wage rates

The Centre has notified a hike in wage rates under the rural job guarantee programme for the 2023-24 financial year with Haryana having the highest daily wage at Rs 357 per day and Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh the lowest at Rs 221. The Union Ministry of Rural Development issued a notification on the change in wage rates under the Mahatma Gan-

dhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme on March 24. The notification was issued under Section 6 (1) of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005, that says the Centre may, by notification, specify the wage rate for its beneficiaries. The wage hikes, which range from Rs 7 to Rs 26, will come into effect from April 1. PTI

# Uttar Pradesh: Recent dip in temperature takes toll on mango crops, farmers seek compensation

Recent storms accompanied by rain and hailstorm have dashed the hopes of mango farmers in Uttar Pradesh, compelling them to appeal to the government for help. The mango growers of the state were expecting a bumper crop this time due to good flowering. However, the storm, rain, hailstorm and the resulting cold weather have damaged 2/5th of the crop so far.

Insrām Ali, president of the Mango Growers' Association of India, told PTI on Sunday, "The climatic conditions were very good 10 days ago but the recent drop in temperature caused by rain and hailstorm have destroyed nearly 40 per cent of the crop," adding that if the climatic conditions continue to be erratic, further loss is expected.

Ali said this year about 60



lakh metric tonnes of mango production was expected, but now it can get reduced to 35 lakh metric tonnes, which will be a big loss. If the weather remains like this for the next 10 days, then even more damage is possible. "Last year in March due to severe heat, the crop had suffered a lot and only about 20 lakh metric tonnes of mangoes could be produced in

the state. This year, mango growers have been hit by the weather for the second time in a row and the hopes of recouping last year's losses now seem bleak," he added.

Ali said the current damage has also affected the export of mangoes adversely. "If the domestic consumption is not met due to low production of mangoes, then it is bound to affect the exports," the farmer said. Ali said, "The government should compensate the mango growers for this loss. We demand that the way the government compensates the farmers of other crops due to natural calamities, similarly the mango growers should also be compensated." The Mango Growers Association of India has put forth its demand in front of the government. PTI



World

## Israel Defence Minister called upon govt to stop "judicial reforms" amid Netanyahu's decision to go ahead with the proposed "reforms"



Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant has called upon the government to stop the controversial judicial overhaul legislation that has sparked protests across the country, sticking his neck out amid Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's insistence to go ahead with the proposed "reforms". His intervention came as Israelis opposed to the changes held mass rallies across the country for the twelfth week in a row. "The security of the State of Israel is my life's mission. Over

the course of my entire adult life, I have dealt with Israel's security day in and day out," Gallant, Netanyahu's close aide, said on Saturday. He said that he still supported the need to revamp the court system, but acknowledged that unprecedented feelings of anger, pain and disappointment have risen within the military over the proposed changes to Israel's balance of power. The revamp includes enabling Parliament to overrule decisions made by the Supreme

Court - a move that critics say will undermine the independence of the judiciary and could be used for political ends. "Clothed in the IDF's (Israel Defence Forces) uniform, I have risked my life dozens of times for the State of Israel. And at this time, for the sake of our country, I am willing to take any risk and pay any price," Gallant said in a televised speech.

"I declare loudly and publicly, for the sake of Israel's security, for the sake of our sons and daughters the legislative process should be stopped," he asserted, pointing to the visible diminishing morale of the Army he could sense that is endangering Israel's security and unity.

Thousands of soldiers, including those in critical divisions of the Army, had called to stop reporting for reserve duty amid the ongoing judicial overhaul process stressing that it poses a grave danger to Israel's democracy and could turn it into a dictatorship. PTI

## 'There's nothing left': Deep South tornadoes kill 26 in Mississippi



Rescuers raced Saturday to search for survivors and help hundreds of people left homeless after a powerful tornado cut a devastating path through Mississippi, killing at least 25 people, injuring dozens, and flattening entire blocks as it carved a path of destruction for more than an hour. One person was killed in Alabama.

The tornado devastated a swath of the Mississippi Delta town of Rolling Fork, reducing homes to piles of rubble, flipping cars on their sides and toppling the town's water tower. Residents hunkered down in bathtubs and hallways during Friday

night's storm and later broke into a John Deere store that they converted into a triage centre for the wounded.

There's nothing left, said Wonder Bolden, holding her granddaughter, Journey, while standing outside the remnants of her mother's now-leveled mobile home in Rolling Fork. There's just the breeze that's running, going through -- just nothing. The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency announced late Saturday afternoon in a tweet that the death toll had risen to 25 and that dozens of people were injured. Four people previously reported missing had been found. PTI

## Prez Putin announced Russia to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus

Russian President Vladimir Putin announced plans on Saturday to station tactical nuclear weapons in neighbouring Belarus, a warning to the West as it steps up military support for Ukraine.

Putin said the move was triggered by Britain's decision this past week to provide Ukraine with armor-piercing rounds containing depleted uranium.

The Russian leader earlier made a false claim that the rounds have nuclear components. He subsequently toned down his language, but insisted in a state television interview broadcast Saturday night that the ammunition posed an additional danger to both troops and civilians in Ukraine.

Tactical nuclear weapons are intended for use on the battlefield,

unlike more powerful, longer-range strategic nuclear weapons. Russia plans to maintain control over the ones it plans to Belarus, and construction of storage facilities for them will be completed by July 1, Putin said. Putin didn't say how many nuclear weapons Russia would keep in Belarus.

The U.S. government believes Russia has about 2,000 tactical nuclear weapons, which include bombs that can be carried by tactical aircraft, warheads for short-range missiles and artillery rounds. In his interview, Putin argued that by deploying its tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, Russia was following the lead of the United States, noting that the U.S. has nuclear weapons based in Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey. PTI

## Hindus living in the UK are healthiest and Sikhs are most likely to own their homes: Census report

Hindus living in the UK are among the healthiest and well qualified religious groups and Sikhs are most likely to own their homes, according to latest census data for England and Wales.

The UK's Office for National Statistics (ONS) has been analysing census statistics to release information across various sub-categories for the country's population based on the responses of the online census conducted in March 2021.

In its latest release entitled 'Religion by housing, health, employment and education' this week, the ONS finds that life outcomes for religious groups varied considerably. "In 2021, those who identified as 'Hindu' had the highest percentage of their population reporting either 'very good' or 'good' health (87.8 per cent), compared with 82.0 per cent of the overall population," the ONS finds, adding



that the Hindus also reported the "lowest prevalence of disability".

"People who identified as 'Hindu' had the highest percentage a 'Level 4 or above' [certificate-level] qualification (54.8 per cent), compared with the overall population (33.8 per cent)," it noted. "People who identified as 'Sikh' were more likely to live in households that owned their home. 77.7 per cent of those who identified as 'Sikh' lived in households that owned their home," the ONS said.

The religion question is voluntary in the census and in 2021, 94 per cent of the overall population in England and Wales of 56 million chose to answer the question. The

ONS said that many of the life outcomes discussed in its analysis may be influenced by the differing age and sex profiles of religious groups.

"In 2021, people who identified as 'Muslim' were nearly four times more likely to live in overcrowded homes than the overall population of England and Wales," the statistics show. "In 2021, people who identified as 'Muslim' had the lowest percentage of people aged 16 to 64 years in employment (51.4 per cent compared with 70.9 per cent of the overall population); this resulted from the high percentages of people who were students or looking after home or family in this group," it said. PTI

# Promote Traditional Millet Crop in India



Vijay Garg

Retired Principal Educational  
Columnist Malout Punjab

The International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) to the Indian Institute of Millets Research (IIMR) and to scientists working with other universities and institutes, the emphasis now is on developing high-yielding millet varieties.

Being a trained plant breeder, evolving a scientific mechanism to develop high-yielding crop varieties has been an important tool in increasing crop productivity and thereby address the global hunger. In acknowledgement, plant breeder Norman Borlaug was bestowed with the Nobel Peace Prize known as the father of the Green Revolution, he developed the miracle dwarf seeds of wheat. This was followed by the development of high-yielding varieties of rice, and for other crops, in course of time.

But at a time when we produce enough food to feed the world twice over, I don't see the rationale behind the exuberance being exhibited by plant scientists (and policy makers) towards high-yielding varieties and bio-fortification in millets. I feel that this approach is highly misplaced because the gluten-free millets are not only drought-resistant but are also rich in proteins, micro-nutrient, dietary fibre and anti-oxidants. Already being nutritiously rich, the effort should instead be to supplement diets with millets. Policy makers have to be more imaginative in increasing production of millets than follow the same bias that industrial farming relies on: increasing crop productivity and build surpluses.

It doesn't mean that just because we have the hammer, we should treat everything else as a nail because not many people know that developing high-yielding crop varieties and hybrids is inversely proportionate to a fall in nutrients. The higher the crop



productivity, the steep is the decline in its nutritive value. That's the cardinal principle that plant breeding teaches us, which we forget in our quest to go one up. At the risk of reiteration, let me remind that the decline varies from 15 to 40 per cent on an average, with as high as 80 per cent slump in the availability of some minerals like cobalt, as in the case of wheat.

Before you utter 'so what', let me explain. The drastic fall in the share of a trace mineral like cobalt in wheat is believed to have resulted in elevated cholesterol levels and therefore the rise in heart diseases.

A study by Kansas University had earlier shown that after World War II there has been a visible decline of six nutrients – proteins, calcium, iron, phosphorous, riboflavin and Ascorbic acid – in crop varieties. The nutrient fall varies between six per cent in proteins and 38 per cent in riboflavin.

This means that the food that we eat is gradually becoming hollow. You can fill your stomach but it remains deprived of building elements that provides strength and bolsters healthy growth.

If that be so, the rationale in developing high-yielding varieties of millets that are devoid of essential nutrients that it now boasts of. They have 30 to 300 per cent more nutritional elements than wheat and rice. Breeding higher productivity millets will invariably result in loss of

the advantage they are known for.

Already 25 high-yielding and disease-resistant pearl millet hybrids have been developed. Another 35 sorghum hybrids have also been evolved. But it will be interesting to see whether these are equally as nutritious or more to what farmers are presently cultivating.

Take the case of bajra or pearl millet. Efforts to develop bio-fortified bajra hybrids, with iron and zinc, comes from the higher potential of iron and zinc available in the plants, varying from 30-140 mg of iron per kg and 20-90 mg of zinc per kg. But, as an ICRISAT study shows, commercial hybrids have a much lower nutrient content – 42 mg iron per kg of iron and 31 mg per kg of zinc. If more studies were to be undertaken on the nutritional properties of the high-yielding and hybrid varieties of millets, we would get a clearer picture about the drop in nutritional levels. Calling for a more expanded vision to promote millets, journalist Vibha Varshney (Down to Earth, Feb 25, 2023) rightly states: "If hybrids are not as nutritious as the wild varieties, then promoting them as nutri-cereals does not seem right."

This resonates with what Sheelu Francis, who leads the 100,000 strong Tamil Nadu Women's Collective, said in a recent interview. "A very important danger that we foresee is in fact the direction of research that

all agricultural universities are getting involved in with regard to millets."

The hybrid varieties, in particular, will impact traditional millet seeds and would lead to the extinction of these heirloom varieties. Along with the Deccan Development Society (DDS), TNWC has been the driving force behind the establishment of Millets Network of India (MILI), which spearheaded the movement to revive the ancient grain.

Raising millets production should be attempted on the lines that MILI has been asking for. This could be achieved by specially developing watershed on millet lands and by providing a higher price to farmers based on economic valuation of the immense ecosystem services that millets provide. Considering that energy requirement from chemical fertilisers, pesticides, water and power is near zero, plus the huge health and environmental advantages, an appropriate MSP that incorporates the cost the nation pays by way of health and environmental costs, should be announced.

Agricultural research should be dovetailed into what millets require to be the food of the future without trampling on its inherent strengths. This includes research on storage and processing. But we certainly don't want millets to become a hollow food. Let millets remain the millets that we all have known.



## Awards

# Newspaper Association of India's 30th felicitation ceremony held in Delhi

## Annual conference and felicitation ceremony on the problems of small and medium newspapers



Delhi Newspaper Association of India organized a national convention to solve the problems of small and medium newspapers. Many journalists from across the country took part in the convention and put their problems on the stage. After the convention, the felicitation ceremony started. The chief guest in the program was Shri Ajay Bhatt, Minister of State

for Defence, Government of India and the guest of honor was Sanjay Dwivedi, Director General, Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC).

Union State Defense Minister Ajay Bhatt said that it is a matter of great pleasure that the Newspaper Association of India has completed its 30 years. Today the 30th National Award ceremony is being held in

the auditorium of NDMC. 30 years ago Late Dr. M.R Gaur had laid the foundation of this organization for the benefit of journalists and today Newspaper Association of India is doing different efforts for the benefit of journalists not only in Delhi but also in the whole country.

I am happy that today I am a part of this program on this platform. Journalists have done a lot of

good work on different policies and systems of the country. Journalism is the mirror of society. We watch the news on TV, we get information about the whole country from there itself. I Congratulate all the office bearers of the News Papers Association of India that they do this type of program every year. We honor different celebrities of the country by bringing them on our



# Awards

stage. congratulate all the people who got the honor.

I congratulate Dr. Vipin Gaur, who is the general secretary of the organization, at a very young age, Vipin Gaur has done a lot of good work for journalism, whether it is related to the interest of journalists or the respect of journalists, it is not an easy task. What is being done by Vipin Gaur, he has invited people from different states of the country here today and is honoring them.

Sanjay Dwivedi said that from taking the problems of crores of

people to the government, the policies of the government to the people of the country, many such works have been done, which have been possible only through the media, people say that the country's media is playing the biggest role in democracy. Media hides the truth, but today it is not easy to hide any news through thousands of digital media and I am happy that the Newspaper Association of India has been dedicated for 30 years to the soldiers of the pen and every possible work for the benefit of journalists. is doing. I congratulate

all the awardees who are here today.

The program was organized by Vipin Gaur, the secretary of the organization, people and organizations working in many different areas of the country were honored in the program, in which the award for the best IPS officer was given to Delhi's Special Police Commissioner Sanjay Singh, Best News Channel Bharat 24 , Best Regional Channel Zee Uttar Pradesh Uttarakhand Best Editor Ramesh Chandra Zee Group Best Editor Satinder Tripathi Punjab Kesari Best

Rajeev Dhoundiyal Best Journalist Himanshu Shukla Best Editor Digital Shashikesh Ranjan Best Journalist Sapna Jha Best Social Worker Bimla Devi Best Advocate Mukesh Rana Best Vice President News Sarfaraz Selfie and many celebrities were involved.

Organization President Dr. Gururaj, Vice President Om Prakash, Executive Secretary Anant Kumar, Anil Nagpal Cultural Secretary Vivek Sharma and President Suryabhan Rajput participated in the program and Suryabhan Rajput propose vote of thanks.





# Entertainment

Actor Dia Mirza says she is delighted to see diverse parts written for women today, but she tends to gravitate more towards "positive" characters that can be imperfect.

Mirza said fans will see her in a different light in her latest release "Bheed", directed by Anubhav Sinha which hit the screens on Friday. In the social drama, the actor plays the role of Geetanjali, an elite woman stuck on the road amid the pandemic-induced lockdown making it impossible for her to reach her child.

"It all depends on the imagination of the filmmaker. We all suffer from being stereotyped and the problem of being boxed. The choices that we make, the things that we say, we can create our own path.

"I am quite kicked with the diversity of parts but I tend to resonate more with positive parts. Also, human beings even while they are positive, they can also be flawed. I find that interesting. I guess people will get to see a bit of that in 'Bheed'," the 41-year-old actor told PTI in an interview.

Over the years, Mirza said her choices have evolved and today she consciously chooses parts that are closer to reality. "Early part of my career went in understanding who I am, what I want, and what I don't want. Today, the kind of roles that I am playing are connected to reality, connected to everyday life of people, and their struggles and issues.

"And I learn about all this from whatever work I do in the social sphere. Besides, with life experiences you grow as a person and that starts reflecting in the choices that you make," said the former Miss India Asia-Pacific, who received wide acclaim for her small yet impactful role of an ambitious single mother in Sinha's 2020 drama "Thappad". PTI



Actor Manoj Bajpayee says, "Had started losing hope in independent cinema till OTT came"

Critically-acclaimed films have been the bedrock of Manoj Bajpayee's 30-year career but the actor says there was a moment when doubted his decisions to actively back independent cinema as there was no audience for his movies.

The actor said he was disappointed when the festival favourite film failed to lure audiences to theatres despite good promotions.

"Somewhere, in the process, a few years back, I started losing hope in independent cinema and my whole choice to go and support them because the audience was not showing interest in going to the cinema hall and watching them. "That was the time, somewhere I started questioning my choice of supporting independent cinema. For me, it is very important that people watch it and if they are not watching it, I am not ready to make films for four-five people who will watch it. And that time OTT wasn't there. So, somewhere it made me sad, not that I was heartbroken," Bajpayee told Agency in an interview.

The actor said, "I was thinking I am not going to be part of the clutter that is there on OTT, if it is offered to me. I had refused so many series. Then, 'The Family Man' and working with Raj and DK happened. "But to get that kind of success with the first season was unimaginable. Then pandemic happened and the second season came, it crossed all the records. In true sense that is the crossover from India. All the independent films that were released after season one on OTT, all of them were received so well," he said. PTI

Actress Dia Mirza says, "tends to gravitate more towards "positive" characters that can be imperfect"



Actor Shah Rukh Khan dropped a new picture with his family on social media

Sunday turned out to be a special day for superstar Shah Rukh Khan's fans as his wife Gauri Khan treated them to a perfect family picture. Taking to Instagram, interior designer Gauri announced a new coffee table book titled 'My Life in Design'. Alongside the announcement, she dropped the fam-jam picture. "Family is what makes a home... Excited for the @penguinindia coffee table book... coming soon" .she captioned the post.

In the professionally-shot photograph, Shah Rukh and Gauri are seen striking a stylish pose with their children – Aryan, Suhana and AbRam. All of them are dressed in black ensembles. King Khan twinned with his son Aryan in black leather jacket. The father-son duo paired the jackets with black T-shirt. Gauri looks gorgeous in a black dress with a plunging neckline. For the photo-op, Suhana looks classy in a white and black corset outfit. The little one looked super cute in an all-black outfit. SRK's family picture caught everyone's attention. Reacting to it, actress Neelam Kothari Soni commented, "Gorgeous picture. " Shweta Bachchan, Zoya Akhtar, Karisma Kapoor and Manish Malhotra dropped red heart emojis in the comment section.

Reportedly, Shah Rukh first met Gauri in 1984, when he was all of 18, while Gauri was just 14. He bumped into her at a party where she was dancing with her friend. After Gauri spoke to him for 'more than three seconds', he felt 'encouraged' and wanted to date Gauri. After dating for a couple of years, the two tied the knot on October 25, 1991. ANI