



2002 Godhra train burning case: SC to hear pleas of Gujarat govt, convicts on PG 05 >>



Afternoon

VOIC E

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IEWS & VISION OF CITY

Volume: 15, Issue: 185

MONDAY, APRIL 10, 2023 MUMBAI

08 PAGES, ₹ 2/-

RNI No. MAHENG/2009/29332

www.afternoonvoice.com



Pawar has all praises for Adani calling him hard-working person

Sharad Pawar recounts in his Marathi autobiography 'Lok Maze Saangati' has poured praise on Adani describing him as "hard-working, simple, down to earth" and with ambition to make big in the infrastructure sector. How Adani built his corporate empire from scratch starting as a salesman in Mumbai locals, dabbling in small ventures before trying his luck in the diamond industry. He was earning well in the diamond industry, but Gautam was not interested in that. He had ambitions to enter the infrastructure sector. He had good relations with Gujarat Chief Minister Chimanbhai Patel and had submitted a proposal to develop a port at Mundhra," the NCP chief wrote. The senior leader also wrote that it was at his insistence that Adani ven-

tured into the thermal power sector.

NCP chief Sharad Pawar may have broken ranks with other opposition parties on the Adani issue, but his friendship with Gautam Adani dates back to nearly two decades when the businessman was exploring expansion into the coal sector. The veteran leader also wrote that it was at his insistence that Adani ventured into the thermal power sector. He recalled that Mr. Patel had warned Adani of the port being closer to the Pakistan border and in an arid region. "Despite the adversities, he accepted the challenge".

Sharad Pawar wrote that later Adani made his foray in the coal sector and it was at his suggestion that the businessman ventured into the thermal power sec-

tor. Mr. Pawar, who was the then Union Agriculture Minister, said he had made the suggestion to Adani during a function to mark the death anniversary of NCP leader Praful Patel's father at Gondiya in Maharashtra.

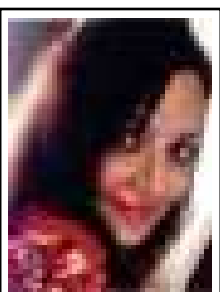
"Gautam acknowledged my suggestion in his speech. Usually, nothing much happens on statements made from the podium, but Gautam pursued the matter and established a 3,000 MW thermal power plant in Bhandara," the former Maharashtra Chief Minister said. In the book, Mr. Pawar recounts how he developed close ties with several businessmen as he sought to usher in development in Maharashtra during his decades-long political career. The NCP

chief said he remained in regular touch with business leaders who could meet him without appointment daily between 2 pm and 4 pm during his tenure as the chief minister.

Mr. Pawar recounted his arrangement with the then Gujarat Chief Minister Chimanbhai Patel, who would divert big projects to Maharashtra. Pawar said he reciprocated the gesture by sending some small projects to Gujarat, an arrangement that ensured the two states scaled greater heights on the economic front. Mr. Pawar has also written about how he helped Hyundai Motors set up a manufacturing plant in Tamil Nadu after the Korean carmaker faced some hurdles in setting up business.

Many women pretend to be a men for their social security

Editoritis



Dr. Vaidehi

There could be a number of reasons why females might pretend to be a male and male pretend to be a girl, but one of the most common reasons is because they enjoy the attention they receive from other users when they're pretending to be a woman. And women who pretend to be men seek social security. Social tolerance for gender swapping and the security of anonymity are particularly important in relation to the adoption of gender swapping as a behavior that may cause negative treatments. The second is the perceived security of anonymity is the most important aspect. Although from a certain aspect, the

lack of identity clues may make social relationships in virtual worlds seem empty and fragile. Rabat - A 57-year-old Indian woman made international headlines for her sacrifice to protect her daughter from what she has described as a "male-dominating society."

S.Petchiammal from Tamil Nadu, a state in southern India, pretended to be a man for 36 years to raise her daughter and to avoid sexual harassment following the death of her husband. Petchiammal's husband died 15 days after their wedding.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 02

Editoritis

Many women pretend to be a men for their social security

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The woman's story has gone viral, with both Indian and international media highlighting Petchiammal's courage and selflessness in raising her daughter in the face of daunting challenges.

Journalist Norah Vincent and author of Self-Made Man wanted to experience life as the opposite gender so she could write about it. She was a lesbian, not transgender, but her inquisitive nature made her curious about gender and identity.

And with the help of a Juilliard vocal coach, she was even able to train her voice to sound more manly. Norah Vincent was determined.

Aged only 20 at the time, the Indian woman found herself not just a widow but also pregnant with a daughter that she had to raise by herself. The woman's story has gone viral, with both Indian and international media highlighting Petchiammal's courage and selflessness in raising her daughter in the face of daunting challenges.

After facing sexual harassment and other challenges in her hometown, Petchiammal moved to another town to escape from patriarchy. She decided to cut her hair and change her attire, disguising herself as a man to raise her daughter and avoid the sexual challenges she faced in her own village after her husband passed away. She did all kinds of jobs, from working as a painter, tea master, parotta master to 100-day work. She saved every penny to ensure a safe and secure life for her daughter. After days, Muthu [a male name] turned out to be my identity, which in turn was mentioned on all documents, including Aadhaar, Voter ID, and bank account. She is not ready yet to change her attire back although her daughter is married. Her identity as a man ensured a "safer life" for her daughter and therefore she wants to maintain the same person until her death.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau's (NCRB) report on crime in India, total cases of sexual harassment stood at 17,003 in 2020. The number shows a slight decrease of 1,333 cases compared to 2019, when 18,334 sexual harassment reports were recorded.

53-year-old journalist Norah Vincent opted for assisted suicide on July 6, 2022, years after experiencing what it was like to live as a man. Journalist Norah Vincent and author of Self-Made Man wanted to experience life as the opposite gender so she could write about it. She was a lesbian, not transgender, but her inquisitive nature made her curious about gender and identity. In 2003, she hired a makeup artist to help her paint stubble on her face to match her short, dark hair. She worked out to build the muscles on her back, wore rectangular-framed glasses, and strapped her breasts against

her chest. And with the help of a Juilliard vocal coach, she was even able to train her voice to sound more manly. Norah Vincent was determined.

There was no stopping her from switching genders. But what she found in living life as the opposite sex wasn't "male privilege" — instead, Vincent learned what it was like to be at an incredible disadvantage. For 18 months, Norah pretended to be a man under a new name: Ned. She did "manly" things and joined a bowling league, a Roman Catholic monastery, and an awareness group for men. She went to strip clubs and dated women. She even worked in a male-dominated industry. But despite these adventures, Ned didn't feel alive, free, or fluid. In fact, Ned was wearing Norah down, and she began to fall into a deep depression. Norah Vincent's depression never went away, and she attempted suicide in 2014.

In what can be called absolutely shocking, a Pune man dressed as a woman for seven years so he could continue his romantic relationship with his former close friend's wife. The man tried to sedate the husband with chloroform every time he visited in his presence but got caught the last time he tried. He has been arrested by police and court proceedings are underway. There are men loving themselves in women's attire and there are women who are literally adopted to men's lifestyle. There are several social and personal challenges but in spite of going against the odds with such adoptions they could not live a normal life.

Volume No. 15 | Issue No. 185

Afternoon VOICE
RNI No. MAHENG/2009/29332
VIEWS & VISION OF CITY

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Voices



Letters to the Editor

Use mask, avoid corona

There are reports of increase in corona in the country. If this is true, then the government should think seriously about this. Citizens should be forced to wear masks. No one should die again due to corona in the country. Citizens should take care that corona does not increase in public places. Everyone should use masks. Instructions given by the government should be followed.

Uday Waghvankar

Affordable Premium ke Saath bhi?

"Zindagi ke saath bhi aur baad bhi" insurance companies collect insurance premiums from us. But when it comes time to pay back, the value is created by deducting administrative costs from the unrealized costs incurred on the insurance policy or the insurance agent's commission of 15% to 40% on the policy. However, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) has taken an important step in the interest of the consumers and has asked the insurance companies to reduce the costs and ordered that the saved funds should be used for the benefit of the consumers. has been announced.30%of the premium by general insurance companies.

15% management cost of first premium of deferred annuity plan 80% of other policies excluding 35% pension policy for single health is proposed. If this really happens then insurance companies' policies will be cheaper? Insurance customers want to take out the policy but seeing the unreasonable premium and oppressive terms of the policy, the customers hesitate to take out the policy. There is no problem in hoping that the steps taken by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) in the interest of the consumers will be life-enhancing.

Dattaprasad Shirodkar

Abetment to murder is a serious crime & those responsible should not be spared!

Abetment to murder is an heinous crime & IITian Darshan Solanki's suicide death is getting more murkier & mysterious after the revelation of the suicide note which raises a finger on the victims room mate for the cause of death. Every angle in the mysterious death should now be investigated as it could be due to serious ragging or murder for some reason which could be enmity as well.

An death in such an reputed institution like IIT which has produced so many famous corporate heads including Nandan Nilekeni has certainly put an stigma on the campus activities of not just IIT but other educational institutions as well. The investigating agencies should unearth the mystery soon & govt should take the right steps so that these incidents can be avoided in future!

S.N.Kabra

Traffic Congestion: The Reason for Its Increase and Ways to Reduce it

The increasing traffic congestion has become a major problem in many of the developing metropolitan areas across the globe. Peak hour traffic congestion has become something everyone has to face due to the way in which the current society operates. The timings which are in place in different parts of the world, has led to the inevitable overloading of the existing roads every day. The alarming issue is that in spite of many of the remedies that are tested out to reduce the traffic congestion, there has not been any major improvement in this aspect. The traffic is only getting worse with every passing year.

It is important to know the main source of traffic congestion. The main reason for traffic congestion is the fact that every single person wants to move at the same time every single day. This is because the school and economy system expect that people go to school and work at the same time. This is for the efficient operation of the systems as this is the only way people can interact with each other. Changing this system will have a serious impact on the society and therefore it is not feasible to make any changes to the existing system. While it is nearly impossible to completely eliminate traffic congestion, there are a lot of ways to curb the effect of traffic on our daily lives.

With the increase in the number of vehicles with every passing day, this does call for an increase in the size of roads to accommodate the extra vehicles entering the roads. This can only be done up to a certain limit. Even the roads cannot be extended more than a certain limit. India approximately has more than 5.4 kms of roads. The alarming statistic here is that almost all our cities, excluding Delhi have road surface areas well below the global norms.

Some of the basic measures that can be taken to reduce the amount of traffic on the roads

have been listed below:

The use of public transportation is one of the most obvious solutions to reduce the impact of traffic congestions. Public transport is a cheaper and a less stressful option to use to commute from one place to another. Many people shifting to using public transport will help reduce the number of vehicles on the roads which will help in reducing traffic congestion.

Carpooling is a very good option to reduce your contribution to the road traffic. Taking turns to drive to work is a great way to reduce the stress of driving in the traffic everyday. This will also help in reducing the maintenance costs of your vehicle while reducing the amount of pollutants emitted into the environment.

The roads are usually more congested during certain times during the day. This time is usually when people go to work or school during the morning or when they are heading back home in the evening. Avoiding these peak hours and scheduling errands during the afternoons or in the evenings after the peak hours can help reduce your contribution towards road congestion.

Stricter implementation of some of the existing traffic rules can have a great impact on the amount of traffic on the roads. Following of some of the road rules can have a positive impact on the traffic congestion on the roads.

There are some smart solutions that can be implemented to get the maximum out of the existing infrastructure without any additional expenditure. Listed below are some of the intelligent traffic solutions that will help deal with the existing road traffic problem:

Advanced traffic advisory is a system that can be used to provide real-time monitoring of the traffic on the roads. This uses many subsystems like CCTVs,

sensors, and other devices on roads in order to provide 24/7 traffic advice. This covers different types of incidents one can expect to face on the road like congestions, adverse weather conditions, roadwork and many others. All the information is sent to the commuter on their smartphones. Variable message signs can also be placed along the roadways to indicate real time information about emergencies and road closures.

Adaptive signal technology can be used to adjust the amount of time for a green light in a particular signal based on real time traffic updates. This technology has found a large amount of success in Japan reducing the amount of traffic congestion there by almost 35%.

There is a need for practical innovative systems, and variable lane capacity management is one such system. This system helps in improving the efficiency of congested highways. The roadways are configured with the help of movable barriers that help in changing the vehicle lanes based on traffic demand. This helps in a real-time increase of the road capacity which will help in reducing the road congestion.

It is almost impossible to completely eliminate traffic congestion from our lives. But we can definitely take some steps to reduce the impact it has on the society and the environment. Taking an initiative to implement some of the steps mentioned above will have a positive impact on the levels of traffic congestion experienced on the roads.

- Jubel D'Cruz

Columnist

Readers are requested to mail Letters to the Editor only at

afternoonvoicedesk@gmail.com

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

We accept Veer Savarkar's ideology: Dy CM Devendra Fadnavis in Lucknow



Reaching Lucknow, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said, "We accept Veer Savarkar's ideology. Whether anybody accepts or not the fact is

Hindus are in majority in India. In that sense it is a Hindu Rashtra." Responding to Opposition's criticism on Ayodhya tour, Fadnavis said, "For us Ayodhya is a matter of faith. It is our shraddh-

asthan."

He also reminded the audience that Mahatma Gandhi had always talked about Ram Rajya. "Lord Ram is the highest ideal of how a ruler should be and run administration. So, we have come to worship and pray at Ram temple in Ayodhya."

The opposition leader Ajit Pawar said that he was not questioning Fadnavis on the Ayodhya tour, but the "trumpet" blown around it to make it "known to the world". Pawar claimed, "Even we go to temples and pray. But we don't do publicity."

"Our only concern is don't ignore the larger issues of people; farm unrest, unemployment and price rise", said Pawar.

Dy CM Devendra Fadnavis bats for NCP president Sharad Pawar over his views on Adani

In a war of words that broke out between Congress leader Alka Lamba and Maharashtra Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis, Fadnavis supported NCP leader Sharad Pawar over his remark on Gautam Adani.

Alka Lamba in her tweet

posted put a picture of Pawar with Gautam Adani. It was followed by comments where she said that some people out of fear and vested interests were stopping low to sing praises of dictator, and power. Whereas, Rahul Gandhi alone was fighting the corrupt capitalists as

well as those "chowkidar" trying to save these "chor".

Pointing to Congress' Alka Lamba tweet, Fadnavis said, "Such words used against Pawar by Congress which have been NCPs alliance partner is highly condemnable".

As Eknath Shinde visits Ayodhya, Raut fires up: 'Copying us... public knows who's original and duplicate'



Taking a swipe at Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and the members of his government for their visit to

Ayodhya, Shiv Sena (UBT) Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Raut Sunday said, "Farmers in Maharashtra are facing problems. Ignoring all

these issues, the government of the state went to Ayodhya. Will Lord Ram bless them...?"

In an interview with news agency ANI, Raut added that the Shinde Sena was copying his party. "We also believe in Lord Ram. We have also gone to Ayodhya several times. But the BJP never came with our party. When the Babri Masjid incident happened, they ran away... They are copying us. The public knows who is the original and duplicate." "If you had so much faith in Lord Ram, you won't have fled to Surat and Guwahati, you would have gone to Ayodhya," Raut attacked the Shinde Sena referring to the political drama that unfolded in Maharashtra last year after Eknath Shinde fled the state with party MLAs.

Mumbai Police register case against rapper for 'anti-govt' song



Mumbai Police have registered a case against rapper Umesh Khade for his song allegedly against government and the administrative system, an official said on Sunday. With this, the Maharashtra Police have registered cases against two different rappers in a week for allegedly targeting the government.

In the latest case, a complaint was filed by an official of the Mumbai Police's Crime Intelli-

gence Unit.

Based on the complaint, an FIR was registered on Friday against rapper Umesh Khade, who stays in Wadala area of Mumbai, for his song "Bhongli keli janata" (referring to sufferings faced by people), the official said.

Khade had uploaded the song on a social media platform having the account name Shambho, and the song went viral, he said, news agency PTI quoted.

Their faith is in Ayodhya while our faith and commitment are towards farmers: NCP leader Sharad Pawar

NCP president Sharad Pawar at Nashik speaking to media said, "BJP will lose Karnataka assembly elections. The Congress will win the polls." The NCP will field candidates in five seats. Basically, NCPs attempt is to support Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti along the Maharashtra-Karnataka borders. On Shinde-Fadnavis Ayodhya tour Pawar said, "Their faith is in Ayodhya while our faith and commitment is towards farmers. We constantly strive to

see how we can wipe the farmers tears."

The unseasonal rain have wrecked farmers lives. The standing crop is damaged. They are in crisis. The Ayodhya tour by ruling parties and its leader is also a way to divert people's attention from larger and real issues. On Congress' Alka Lamba tweet, "Pawar said each one is entitled to their view. It is for individual to decide what to say and words to use when criticizing others. I have nothing against them."

Eknath Shinde and Devendra Fadnavis offer prayers at Ayodhya temple

Maharashtra chief minister Eknath Shinde, along with fellow Shiv Sena MPs and MLAs, arrived in Ayodhya on Sunday. This is Shinde's first visit to the temple town since being sworn in as Maharashtra chief minister in June last year. Deputy

chief minister Devendra Fadnavis also left for Ayodhya from Mumbai on Sunday. Shinde and other Shiv Sena leaders flew down to Lucknow on Saturday. Shinde was welcomed by his Uttar Pradesh counterpart Yogi Adityanath at the Lucknow airport, amid fanfare.

Nation

2002 Godhra train burning case: SC to hear pleas of Gujarat govt, convicts on Monday

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday bail pleas of several convicts serving life imprisonment in the 2002 Godhra train burning case. A bench of Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices P S Narasimha and J B Pardiwala is scheduled to hear along with the bail applications a batch of pleas of the convicts challenging their convictions.



On March 24, the top court had said it will dispose of the bail applications of the convicts on the next date of hearing of the matter. It had taken note of the submissions of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Gujarat government, that he has

to verify certain factual details with regard to some convicts.

The top court had, however, extended the bail granted to one of the convicts on the ground that his wife was suffering from cancer. Mehta had supported the extension of bail on medical

grounds. Earlier on March 17, the top court had said it will hear on March 24 the appeal of the Gujarat government and the bail pleas of several accused in the case.

On February 20, the state government had told the top court that it will be seeking death pen-

alty to 11 convicts whose sentences in the 2002 Godhra train burning case were commuted to life imprisonment by the Gujarat High Court. "We will be seriously pressing for award of death penalty to the convicts whose death penalties were commuted into life imprisonment (by the Gujarat High Court). This is the rarest of rare cases where 59 people, including women and children, were burnt alive," the solicitor general had said. "It is consistent everywhere that the bogie (coach) was locked from outside.

Fifty-nine died, including ladies and children," he had added. Giving details on the court case, the law officer had said 11 con-

victs were sentenced to death by a trial court and 20 others granted life term in the case. The high court upheld total 31 convictions in the case and commuted the death penalties of the 11 convicts to life term, Mehta had said.

On February 27, 2002, 59 people were killed when the S-6 coach of the Sabarmati Express was burnt at Gujarat's Godhra, triggering riots in the state. The state government has come in appeal against the commutation of death penalty into life term for 11 convicts, Mehta had said. Several accused, he added, have filed pleas against the high court upholding their convictions in the case. PTI

Congress takes credit and questions PM Modi's govt contribution to tiger conservation



As Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday launched the International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA) during his visit to Karnataka, the Congress questioned the contribution of his government to tiger conservation and claimed that the Congress government in 1973 had introduced the Bandipur Tiger conservation project. Ac-

ording to Karnataka Congress, Prime Minister and other BJP leaders are only after publicity.

"It is true that they (Prime Minister and other BJP leaders) got publicity by going on safari. What is the BJP government's contribution to the tiger conservation project? How much is the grant given? Why is the delusional "we did it" lying by @

BJP4Karnataka while not talking about their actual contributions to tiger conservation projects? answer", tweeted the Karnataka Congress.

In another tweet, the Karnataka Congress unit claimed that the Congress government in 1973 had introduced the Bandipur Tiger conservation project. It also appealed to PM Modi not to sell Bandipur to businessman Adani. "What Congress has done since 70 years" .It was the Congress government that implemented the Bandipur tiger conservation project in 1973, where you are enjoying a safari today. That is the result Today, the number of tigers has increased significantly. A special appeal to them - don't sell Bandipur to Adani!," tweeted Karnataka Congress. ANI

Pakistani intruder shot dead, search on for two others along LoC in J-K's Poonch

A Pakistani intruder was killed as Army troops foiled a major infiltration attempt along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district early Sunday, a defence spokesman said. Officials said the infiltration attempt by three suspected terrorists was foiled in Shahpur sector around 2.15 am when troops guarding

the LoC picked up their movement and engaged them in a gunfight. Jammu-based Army PRO Lt Col Devender Anand said troops detected suspicious movement of a group of individuals close to the border fence along the LoC in Poonch during the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday.

On being intercepted, in the

ensuing operations, one body was seen (lying near the scene of the firing) and the other intruders ran into the forest area. Cordon of the area has been established and search operation is in progress (to arrest them), the spokesperson said. Officials said the Army suspects the presence of two more Pakistani intruders in the cordoned off area. PTI

INS Vikrant gets back its 'original' 1961 bell



The bell installed on the first INS Vikrant which was part of the Indian Navy from 1961 for 36 years, has now been returned to the country's latest and first 'Made-in-India' aircraft carrier of the same name commissioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi last year. The bell was on the first INS Vikrant in 1961 after India bought a British-origin aircraft carrier HMS Hercules and gave it an Indian name.

"The bell was on the first INS Vikrant which served till 1997 before getting decommissioned. The bell was later out from there and put up at the earmarked residence of Indian Navy Vice Chief

5, Motilal Nehru Marg," the Navy officials told ANI. Traditionally bells have played an important role on both warships as they help in indicating the time to the sailors and officers performing different duties and also during emergencies, the officers said. The bell was returned to the INS Vikrant by retired Vice Chief of Navy Vice Admiral SN Ghormade on March 22 last month. The officials said the previous Vice Chief decided to return the bell as the force has got its maiden 'Made-in-India' indigenous aircraft carrier and would serve a better purpose there to motivate youth about the rich history of their ship and the Indian Navy. ANI

World

UK PM Sunak to receive Biden for Good Friday Agreement anniversary



British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak will welcome US President Joe Biden to Belfast in Northern Ireland next week as the UK commemorates the 25th anniversary of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement, the peace treaty struck for the region in April 1998, Downing Street said on Sunday. Biden will arrive in the UK on Tuesday evening, when Sunak will meet him off Air Force One and the US President will then undertake a programme of engagements in-

cluding a bilateral with Sunak. It comes as Monday marks a quarter of a century since the Good Friday Agreement was signed, transforming the political and economic landscape of the devolved region of Northern Ireland. The Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement was an incredible moment in our nation's history. It was a powerfully rare example of people doing the previously unthinkable to create a better future for Northern Ireland, said Sunak. It is that promise of a better

future that we offered to everyone in Northern Ireland that I will be thinking of first and foremost over the coming days. It is my responsibility as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to ensure we are making good on that promise, he said. The British Indian leader said that Northern Ireland is "teeming" with opportunities, talent and ingenuity. "The biggest thing we can do to improve people's standard of living and secure a prosperous and thriving Northern Ireland is economic growth. That's something I'm relentlessly focused on delivering, he added. The US strongly supported the Agreement process and played a pivotal role in boosting peace away from secessionist violence in Northern Ireland.

The UK government says it will use the Biden visit and his engagements with business leaders and others in the Northern Ireland capital of Belfast to celebrate the region's successes and encourage further long-term investment. PTI

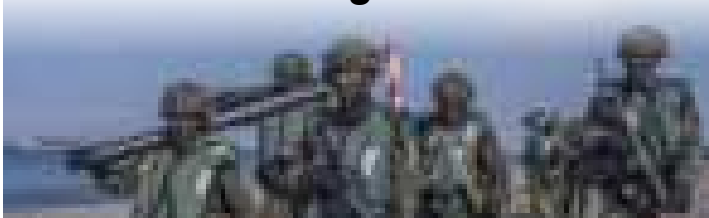
Sri Lanka Prez assures justice will be delivered to all victims affected in 2019 Easter bombings



Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe on Sunday assured justice for all the victims of the 2019 Easter bombings in which 270 people, including 11 Indians, were killed, saying legal proceedings are being processed independently and impartially, without any influence. President Wickremesinghe also pledged his unwavering commitment to ensuring the security of the country, by preventing any recurrence of heinous acts. On April 21, 2019, nine suicide bombers belonging to the local Islamist extremist group National Thawheed Jamaat (NTJ), linked to ISIS, carried out a series of blasts that tore through three churches and as many luxury hotels in Sri Lanka, killing 270 people and injuring over 500. "The legal proceedings related to this tragic incident are being processed independently and impartially, without any influence. The necessary groundwork towards this end has been laid, to ensure justice for all the victims," Wickremesinghe said in his Easter Sunday message.

"I pledge my unwavering commitment to ensuring the security of our country, by preventing any recurrence of such heinous acts," the President said. He also said that the Government is dedicated to realising the aspirations of all Sri Lankans regardless of race, religion, party or colour. "I strongly believe that we can overcome these challenges in the near future," he said. The Easter Sunday bombings triggered a political storm as then-President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Wickremesinghe were blamed for their inability to prevent the attacks despite prior intelligence being made available. PTI

Tensions escalate as China simulates 'strikes on targets in Taiwan'



Beijing performed "simulated coordinated precision strikes on important targets in Taiwan" on the second day of the drills, adding to the ongoing tense situation between Taiwan and China, Al Jazeera reported on Sunday. The drills kickstarted on Saturday (April 8) right after Taiwan President Tsai Ing-Wen returned from the US where she met House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, a meeting to which China strictly showed opposition to.

Al Jazeera reported that the declaration was made on Sunday as Taiwan's defence ministry said that it had discovered numerous Chinese air force sorties and was keeping an eye on Beijing's missile forces. Taiwan on Saturday

tracked 71 Chinese military aircraft and nine naval ships by 4 pm, reported Taiwan News.

The Ministry of National Defense (MND) said that it included 45 planes which either crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait or entered Taiwan's air defence identification zone (ADIZ) from the southwest. This comes after Beijing announced three days of military exercises around Taiwan on Friday, the day after President Tsai Ing-wen returned to Taipei from Los Angeles, where she met with US House of Representatives Speaker Kevin McCarthy. Meanwhile, Taiwan also lodged a protest against Chinese military drills around Taiwan, saying that the country would not yield to threats. ANI

Afghanistan: Farmers fear drop in crop yield in drought-prone areas



Some farmers in different provinces of Afghanistan have raised concerns over drought and are not getting the desired yield from their crops, TOLO News reported. Farmers said they fear a fall in their crops like in previous years in regions that are vulnerable to drought. Officials from the Taliban-led Agriculture and Irrigation Ministry have expressed hope that farmers will get rid of drought after the recent rains in Afghanistan, as per the news report. Misbahuddin Mustaeen, a spokesman for the Taliban-led ministry said that they have prepared for an emergency situation due to drought in Afghanistan.

"Droughts are increasing worldwide, but after recent rains in the country, it gave us hope that we would be less vulnerable to this compared to the past," TOLO News quoted Musbahuddin Mustaeen as saying. Meanwhile, Astashan, a farmer, said

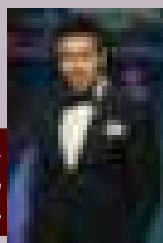
wells have been drying up for the past two years and they have not received any help. Ghulam Ali, a farmer called last year's drought "too much" and added that they were unable to irrigate their land even after 25 days.

"Neither from the dam nor from the sea, there is no water for us. Wells have been drying for the past two years, and we are vulnerable. Nobody is helping us," TOLO News quoted Astashan as

saying. The Taliban-led Chamber of Agriculture and Irrigation has termed the lack of water management in recent years as one of the reasons for the increase in drought in Afghanistan. Merwis Haji Zada, deputy of the Chamber of Agriculture and Irrigation, said Afghanistan will not face drought if Qosh Tapa Canal, Kamal Khan Dam, and Kunar Water Canal are built according to standards. ANI

Sattriya on World Stage

Duo Dipankar and Dipjyoti perform in London



Interview by
Sandip Soparkkar
Ace Dance Choreographer

There was a time when in the world of Indian classical dance, dancing solo was extremely important, as the times changed group dances started to get popular and dancing as a duo was always a privilege of couples, but here we have a rarest of the rare combinations, two male dancers dancing one of the rare classical dance Sattriya. Dipankar and Dipjyoti are two dynamic young men who recently won the Bismillah Khan Award by the Sangeet Natak Akademy for their passion for Sattriya dance.

I had met this supremely talented duo over a decade ago when they were a contestant on one of my dance reality shows which, I was judging. The day I saw them perform I knew that this Gen X dancers will soon take the essence and rich heritage of Sattriya dance to a brand new level. I spoke to them about their fascinating journey and struggles, excerpts from the interview:

Tell me a bit about both your dance training, how and where it all began?

We started out very young and our scenarios were quite different actually. Dipankar, hailing from Lakhimpur, was brought up in a culturally active family who encouraged his training in Sattriya from a tender age. Both of us started our official training in Sattriya under the expert guidance of our guru Bobby Rani Talukdar and Dolly Rani Talukdar, when we started going to college. We further fine-tuned our skills when we started learning under Guru Ramkrishna Talukdar who is a Sangeet Natak Akademy awardee for our advance training.

How and why did you decide to dance as a pair?

Ever since we were college mates, our energies synced and we kind of delved into this partnership without realising. This synergy of ours was noticed by our mentor Ramkrishna



Talukdar Sir and it was he who made our duo official. In the world of dance, it is difficult to find a duo who matched each other and we are thankful to our guru and to each other that we could discover his combination and more importantly keep it alive for so many years.

How difficult has it been to learn and popularise a dance like Sattriya?

Learning wasn't a big issue as we had full support of our family and of our gurus, yes more difficult was popularising the dance form. Before the burst of social media, we had to struggle a lot to introduce ourselves to people, but gladly, today we have the weapon of social media which gives us a golden opportunity to connect with the world audience at the click of our fingers. Although

we still hope our state and national governments take more initiative towards our beautiful art form and work towards its upliftment.

Congratulations, you both were awarded Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar by Sangeet Natak Akademy (SNA) how does it feel?

Oh yes, it definitely feels like a dream come true. We have worked day in and day out on our art of Sattriya, after working so hard for all these years and now to be noticed by such dignitaries, it is a surreal feeling. We are forever obliged to all of our supporters for their constant love and blessings without which we could never have achieved this nor reach so far in our dancing journey.

How difficult or how easy it is to dance as a duo, what is the positive

and negative side of the same?

It hasn't always been bees and butterflies, there have been many instances where we would be at each other's throats when a sequence wouldn't come out the way one of us wanted. But all things aside, we believe that we really complement each other. We both know our strengths and feed on the other's weaknesses to make us, as a duo stronger. Over the years, we have successfully meandered through the sharp turns of life together and now we are quite settled where we stand, as individuals, as well as duet performers.

Out of all the shows you have performed for which has been the most memorable and why?

Oh! there have been shows many that are close to our heart. Performing in Khajuraho was always in our bucket list, while dancing, we could feel the energies of the great souls that set their feet on the stage. It was an experience of a lifetime. Then there was time when we got to present Sattriya on a reality show for the first time ever in the history of the dance form. We were in our early 20s, complete amateurs in this multi-faceted industry and the family of 'Bharat ki Shaan Rum-Jhum', and the sheer guidance and encouragement of Dr. Sonal Mansingh Ji, played an immense role in the upliftment of our careers. This was the dame show sir which you were also a jury on. Then comes our very recent performance at the Nehru Centre, London checks a box off our bucket list as well. It was our first international dance tour towards the west and the response by people who were complete strangers to Sattriya culture was quite overwhelming.

Dipankar and Dipjyoti are a rare Jodi who are totally passion driven, for them Sattriya is their life and soul, through their art of Sattriya they pray, they educate, they entertain and they give out messages that are much needed to understand the rich culture of this not so popular Indian classical dance form. Let us come together to congratulate their recent honour and wish this young duo all the very best for their future endeavours.

Entertainment

Filmmaker Karan Johar shares cryptic post amid claims he ruined Anushka, Priyanka's careers



Karan Johar penned a cryptic post on Saturday after receiving backlash over claims that he sabotaged the careers of actors Priyanka Chopra and Anushka Sharma. Taking to Instagram story, the filmmaker wrote, "Laga lo ilzaam, hum jhukne waalon mein se nahi, jhoot ka ban jao ghulam, hum bolne waalon mein se nahi, jitna neecha dikhaoge, jitne aarop lagaoge, hum girne waalon mein se nahi, humara karam humari Vijay hai, aap utha lo talvaar, Hum marne waalon mein se nahi."

Recently, an old video of Karan went viral where he was heard saying jokingly, that he wanted to 'murder' Anushka Sharma's career. Karan Johar initially did not like Anushka's pictures when she was about to make her debut in Aditya Chopra's 'Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi.' During the promotion of 'Ae Dil Hai Mushkil', Anushka and Karan both talked about it candidly during a media interaction. Anushka jokingly said then, Karan tried to 'finish' her career before it even started.

The video resurfaced after Karan received immense backlash for apparently also coming in the way of actor Priyanka Chopra's career. This video resurfaced after Priyanka Chopra recently opened up about the reason why she left Bollywood and started looking for a career in the US.

During a conversation with Dax Shepherd on his podcast 'Armchair Expert', Priyanka Chopra revealed why she started looking for work in the US, saying, "I was being pushed into a corner in the industry. I had people not casting me, I had beef with people, I am not good at playing that game so I kind of was tired of the politics and I said I needed a break. This music thing gave me an opportunity to go into another part of the world, not crave for the movies I didn't want to get but I would require to schmooze certain clubs and cliques of people. It would require grovelling and I had worked a long time by then that I didn't feel like I wanted to do it." ANI

Actress Sara Ali Khan poses in serenity in Delhi, fans wonder how she took pictures



Sara Ali Khan is shooting in Delhi for Homi Adajania's 'Murder Mubarak' and sharing BTS (behind-the-scenes) moments on her Instagram handle. Taking to her Instagram story, Sara shared a picture with her team at Bangla Sahib Gurdwara. Sara is seen in a white and black salwar Kameez. She captioned the frame "When we have a long lunch break." Sara shared three solo pictures at the scenic backdrop of India Gate. Sara seemed to be taken over by the charm of Delhi, as she posed in the lush green in the backdrop of the setting sun. But Sara's solo pictures left the fans baffled.

One wrote, "How do you manage to take such pics publicly?" Another one wrote on her post, "Ma'am ko kisine pehchana kese ni yaha?". The actress had visited this place when she was working for her upcoming film. ANI



Taylor Swift, Joe Alwyn part ways after six years of relationship

American Singer-songwriter, Taylor Swift is roaring in her career with Era Tour, US leg being sold out but her love affairs are still suffering from instability in view of the fact that Swift has broken up with 'Stars at Noon' actor Joe Alwyn after dating for 6 years.

As reported by People, a US-based media house, news of separation is confirmed by a close source to the pair. Joe was also not present at any of the concerts in Era Tour. The couple parted ways a few weeks ago. "It wasn't dramatic." [The relationship] just ran its course," a source confirmed to Page Six.

Swift has never commented about the status of her relationship neither has Joe ever given a firm response to the dating speculations. But several incidents have always proven how well the couple was in love.

Joe has always been sarcastic towards the media asking for his confirmation of the relationship. When asked by reporters about getting engaged with the singer-songwriter, he replied "If I had a pound for every time I think I've been told I've been engaged, then I'd have a lot of pound coins," actor later added, "I mean, the truth is, if the answer was yes, I wouldn't say, and if the answer was no, I wouldn't say." ANI