



SC says, "Bilkis Bano case can't be compared to the single murder case"

PG 05 >>



Afternoon

VOIC E

TM

IEWS & VISION OF CITY

Volume: 15, Issue: 193

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19, 2023 MUMBAI

08 PAGES, ₹ 2/-

RNI No. MAHENG/2009/29332

www.afternoonvoice.com

Ajit Pawar denies rumors of switching to BJP



Senior NCP leader Ajit Pawar on Tuesday said he would work for his party till he is alive and scotched speculation that he and a group of MLAs loyal to him might align with the ruling Bharatiya Janta Party.

Talking to reporters here, the Leader of the Opposition said there is no truth in reports about any rift in the Nationalist Congress Party and his joining hands with the BJP.

Pawar dismissed reports that he had taken the signatures of 40 of 53 MLAs of NCP amid a buzz about his rumoured alliance with the BJP.

He said such unfounded reports hurt party workers and create confusion among them. "We (party MLAs) are all with the NCP. I will work for the NCP till I live," Pawar added.

He said the NCP has decided to strengthen the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) and the coalition has planned several rallies that target the Centre and the Maharashtra government over various issues.

The MVA comprises Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray), NCP, and Congress. Responding to a query, Pawar said no signatures of (NCP) MLAs were taken. "We are working as a family and will continue to do that," he added.

Rumours about Ajit Pawar's next political move started doing rounds last week when he suddenly cancelled his scheduled meetings and also made comments which were seen as being soft on the BJP and Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's camp.

The BJP is part of the Shinde govern-

ment. Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Sunday added grist to the rumour mill claiming Sharad Pawar recently told Uddhav Thackeray that his party will never join hands with the BJP even if anyone takes an individual decision to do so.

Ajit Pawar slammed Raut without taking the latter's name on Tuesday and said spokespersons of other parties are behaving like spokespersons of NCP.

The NCP leader said he would raise this issue whenever there is a party meeting. "No one knows who has given them this right. You speak about the party of which you are a spokesperson. You speak about your party's mouthpiece. We are very capable of making our stand clear. "There is no reason to take our brief. They can put forth respective (party's)

views. Our party's spokespersons, leaders at the state, as well as the national level, are capable of explaining the party's stand," he added.

When Maharashtra was under President's rule after the results of the 2019 Assembly polls were out and Shiv Sena (undivided) severed ties with ally BJP, Ajit Pawar secretly joined hands with Devendra Fadnavis and a government was formed with Fadnavis as the chief minister and the NCP leader as his deputy.

However, that government lasted for just 80 hours after Ajit Pawar resigned. After the Shiv Sena joined hands with the NCP and Congress to form a coalition government in November 2019, Ajit Pawar took oath as the deputy chief minister and handled the finance portfolio.

Maharashtra Bhushan Award turned out to be a disaster

Editoritis



Dr. Vaidehi

Just because a social reformer Appa Saheb Dharmadhikari was getting Maharashtra Bhushan Award his followers were asked to march towards Kharghar. Hot summer, lack of water and tired bodies gathered two days in advance have gone fragile. It was a display of power vs powerless. But what perhaps was not taken into account was the blazing sun, which made the water hot, leading to dehydration and heatstroke among many in the gathering and causing 13 deaths. The death of people due to sunstroke was really painful. Neither Dharmadhikari was bothered about the people nor the government authorities. Media was busy with a live telecast of such a huge gathering. No media or authorities noticed the inconve-

nience to the people until some of them died.

Besides Shah, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis, cabinet minister Sudhir Mungantiwar, MLAs and MLCs attended the event; the podium had air coolers, water, shed and almost all the luxurious facilities but the commoners were made to sit under hot sun and without any facilities. Dharmadhikari, 76, has a massive following in the state due to his tree plantation drives, blood donation and medical camps as well as de-addiction work in tribal areas conducted under the aegis of his organisation 'Shree Sadasya'.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 02

Editoritis

Maharashtra Bhushan Award turned out to be a disaster

▶▶▶ PAGE 1

Considering the heat aspect, the administration installed 2,100 water taps at the venue and also pressed into service 74 tankers. Besides this, more than 200 water tankers were stationed at various places such as parking and connecting roads.

The tankers, too, were not parked under the trees. As the water was hot, many could not hydrate themselves and due to dehydration felt dizzy, instead, distributing packaged drinking water would have been a better option

Irony is that Appasaheb Dharmadhikari, is social worker and instrumental in conducting various tree plantations, blood donation camps, free medical camps, job fairs, cleanliness drives, superstition eradication, de-addiction centers, etc. in Maharashtra.

People are gullible, they were told their leader was getting felicitated and one must come to Mumbai, most of them travelled for a day, some reached here by train, bus, walking. Considering the heat aspect, the administration installed 2,100 water taps at the venue and also pressed into service 74 tankers. Besides this, more than 200 water tankers were stationed at various places such as parking and connecting roads. But it was not of big help. Water in these taps and tankers became hot as there was no shed over the taps, pipes and tankers. The tankers, too, were not parked under the trees. As the water was hot, many could not hydrate themselves and due to dehydration felt dizzy, instead, distributing packaged drinking water would have been a better option but in this country no one bothers about the crowd.

Irony is that Appasaheb Dharmadhikari, is social worker and instrumental in conducting various tree plantations, blood donation camps, free medical camps, job fairs, cleanliness drives, superstition eradication, de-addiction centers, etc. in Maharashtra. But he forgot to ensure the wellbeing of his people. He should have instructed the government, or assigned some volunteers to take care of the invited crowd. In 2014, he was conferred Doctor of Letters by [D Y Patil University], Nerul. In 2017, he was awarded Padma Shri, India's fourth highest civilian honour, and Maharashtra Bhushan award for the year 2023.

The Opposition has targeted the Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party government over the tragedy with Shiv Sena-Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray leader Sanjay Raut alleging that 'politics behind the award prevailed over people's convenience'. Leader of Opposition in the Maharashtra Assembly Ajit Pawar, who belongs to Nationalist Congress Party, has sought an inquiry into how the event was organised during noon time when the temperature is very high. The Congress had demanded that accountability be fixed in what it said was a case of 'culpable homicide'.

While 11 people died on Sunday, two more deaths were recorded on Monday. Preliminary autopsy reports suggest all of them died of heatstroke. Around 650 people feel sick because of the heat conditions. The programme started around 10.30 am and concluded after 1 pm. The sun was on their head and the heat was unbearable. The temperature was 38 degree Celsius.

More than 300 doctors were there to help, with a facility of over 4,000 beds. But, due to lack of knowledge, the people did not report their condition to the medical teams available at the venue and collapsed. It was also alleged that after the event concluded, volunteers from the police and the local administration were seen in far less numbers at the venue. When people suffered severely then they were provided with cold water, Oral Rehydration Salt, food and wet towels. Many women collapsed due to excessive heat and the policemen on duty drove them on motorbikes through the crowd to medical assistance centres for first aid and saved their lives. There were no ambulances. Instead of asking for justice to his people Dharmadhikari chose to side with the ruling government, but he did not ask for compensation for those families who lost their loved ones. I am sure even Dharmadhikari will not pay them any losses.

Volume No. 15 | Issue No. 193

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

Flat No. 2, J- Wing Ground floor, Sumer Nagar Building 3, S.V. Road,
Near Gandhi Motors, Borivali - West, Mumbai - 400 092.

Editor

Dr. Vaidehi

Vaidehi has received several Awards like I Congo-karmavir chakra, Bedal Powell scout and guide awards 2021- best journalist, Newspaper Association of India award- best journalist. She received lot of awards for her contribution towards journalism.

www.afternoonvoice.com
www.beyondthenews.biz
www.mumbaimanoos.com

www.newsmakers.co.in
www.nbcaward.com
www.hackers5.com

Email- afternoonvoicedesk@gmail.com • SMS -9820199881

For any queries regarding the editorial desk, contact - 7506760610

Disclaimer : The views expressed in the edit are solely of the editor. The publication do not necessarily share the opinions expressed. Any litigation against the content or publication will be entertained under the Jurisdiction of Mumbai only.

Voices



Letters to the Editor

Politicians unnecessarily take credit whenever 'names' are changed to logical reasons!

The metro stations name in our locality finally got changed to 'Bangur Nagar' from 'Pahadi Goregaon' as the area is well known by the former name which was not just logical but appropriate as well. Metro Yellow Line 2A has some funny & illogical names like 'Lower Oshiwara, Lower Malad etc which are not just confusing but inappropriate as well. Station names should be such that public associate with them & names which has logic as well as some thought.

Politicians unnecessarily get involved & each political party get into action by taking credit whenever the names get changed to logical conclusion when the facts remain that they are altered by public demand & sentiment. A lot of money gets spent in the renaming process as changes have to be made at several places. Hence, all the more important to name each station after much thought & appropriately!

S. N. Kabra

Eradicate PFI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has attached two floors of a school building in Pune that was being used by the now-banned outfit Popular Front of India (PFI) as a training centre for terrorist activities. The PFI was found to be recruiting Muslim men into the outfit at these premises and providing them with arms training to carry out targeted killings and attacks against leaders and organisations of a particular community, the central agency said in a statement. The 4th and 5th floors of the Blue Bell School Building were attached by NIA as 'proceeds of terrorism' under the provisions of UAPA in a case registered by the agency last year. The central probe agency had named 20 accused, including the PFI, in its chargesheet last month. It had conducted a search of the two floors of the school premises on September 22 last year and had seized incriminating documents. These documents revealed that the said property was used by the accused, found to be associated with the PFI, for organising arms training for its cadres. This shows that even though PFI has been banned, its activities are still going on. What strict steps are the government going to take to eradicate PFI?

Ramchandra Lugade

Injustice to farmers

The central government has launched its latest attack on farmers by lowering the procurement price of wheat under the guise of grain quality. It is well known that crop quality suffered this season as a result of climate change and untimely rains. However, the government is now attempting to punish farmers for this natural disaster by lowering the purchase price for grains. The government's decision to lower the procurement price of wheat from farmers under the guise of quality is nothing more than a ruse to defraud farmers of their rightful dues. Previously, the government used quantity ceilings to reduce procurement. Now the Government is trying to reduce the procurement under the excuse of quality, which is entirely unacceptable.

Vijaykumar H K

Eradicate Child Labour

Child labour is a pressing problem in India and in many parts of the world today. It is a crime where children are forced to work at a very young age. It is like expecting kids to perform responsibilities like working and fending for themselves. There are certain policies which have put restrictions and limitations on children working.

The term "child labour" is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.

In India, the Constitution lays out rules against child labour under Article 24, which states, "No child below the age of fourteen shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or employed in any hazardous employment."

Thousands of children all over the world work in fast food centres, petrol pumps, selling newspapers, washing cars, in garment factories and in leather industries. They also work as street hawkers. Sometimes, they become pickpockets as well. They also work as labourers in small-scale industries. They even work in the houses of people as servants. In most cases, the owners are very harsh to them. They do not even regard them as humans.

The average age for a child to work is 14 years as per the Constitution of India. Children falling below this age limit should not be allowed to indulge in any type of work forcefully. Why is it so? Because child labour takes away its opportunity of having a normal childhood, a proper education, and a physical and mental well-being.

Child labour happens due



to a number of reasons. While some of the reasons may be common in some countries, there are some reasons which are specific in particular areas and regions. When we look at what is causing child labour, we will be able to fight it better.

Firstly, it happens in countries that have a lot of poverty and unemployment. When families do not have enough earning, they put their children to work so that they can have enough money to survive. Similarly, if the adults of the family are unemployed, the younger ones have to work in their place. Moreover, when people do not have access to education, they will ultimately put their children to work. Furthermore, the money-saving attitude of various industries is a major cause of child labour. They hire children because they pay them less for the same work done by an adult. As children work more than adults and also at lesser wages, they prefer children.

If we wish to eradicate child labour, we need to formulate some very effective solutions which will save our children. It will also enhance the future of any country

dealing with these social issues. To begin with, one can create a number of unions that solely work to prevent child labour. It should help the children indulging in this work and punishing those who make them do it. Furthermore, we need to keep the parents in the loop so as to teach them the importance of education. If we make education free and people aware, we will be able to educate more and more children who won't have to do child labour. Moreover, making people aware of the harmful consequences of child labour is a 'must'.

In addition, family control measures must also be taken. This will reduce the family's burden so when you have lesser mouths to feed, the parents can work instead of the children. Every family must be promised a minimum income by the government to survive.

- 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.)

City

Crackdown against more than 100 BEST buses for concealing reflective tapes under advertisements



The Regional Transport Offices (RTOs) here have taken action against more than 100 buses of the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport Undertaking (BEST) for violating rules about reflective tapes, an official said on Tuesday.

A drive has been launched against BEST buses for concealing reflective tapes under wrap-around advertisements, including those about state government schemes, he said.

The RTO at Tardeo has taken action against 89 buses of the public transport body since

the crackdown began last week, Bharat Kalaskar, RTO officer of Tardeo, which has jurisdiction of the entire city, told PTI.

Ashok Pawar, who is the deputy RTO officer at Borivali and holds additional charge of Andheri RTO in western suburbs, said at least 25 BEST buses were found violating the rule in his jurisdiction.

A BEST spokesperson, meanwhile, said a firm called Signpost India Private Limited had been given the contract from June 11, 2022 to June 10, 2027 for advertising on 3,115 buses at a cost of Rs 112 crore.

Road safety experts and retired RTO officials have expressed concern that concealed reflective tapes can cause accidents and hence, they had asked the authorities to take action against the violation that attracts Rs 1,000 fine for the first offence.

Last week, additional transport commissioner J B Patil, who also holds additional charge of joint transport commissioner of Maharashtra Motor Vehicles Department, had directed all RTO offices in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region to take action against BEST buses for violating road safety norms by putting up advertisements that concealed reflective tapes.

As per Rules 104 and 104D of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, it is mandatory for commercial vehicles to install reflective tapes in red, white and yellow for safety reasons, as it improves visibility and prevents accidents, officials said.

The BEST has taken permission from his office for displaying advertisements on 2,902 buses of its fleet by paying Rs 56.04 lakh, Kalaskar said.

No further court monitoring of CBI probe into killing of rationalist Narendra Dabholkar Bombay HC



The Bombay High Court on Tuesday discontinued the court monitoring into the probe being carried out by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the killing of rationalist Narendra Dabholkar in 2013, noting the chargesheet has been filed and the case trial has commenced.

A division bench of Justices A S Gadkari and P D Naik in its order also said the CBI's investigation officer has submitted the probe completion report to the agency's headquarters.

"It is, thus, clear that the investigation of the present crime has already been completed and the trial of it is steadily progressing. As of March 2023, the prosecution had already examined

18 witnesses," the HC said in its order.

Dabholkar (67), founder of the Maharashtra Andhashradha Nirmoolan Samiti, was shot dead by two persons, allegedly linked to the radical outfit Sanatan Sanstha, while he was on a morning walk in Pune on August 20, 2013.

The high court was monitoring the probe since 2014 when the case was handed over to the CBI for investigation, with the agency submitting periodical reports to the court. The HC said no further monitoring was required in the probe and disposed of the petition filed by Narendra Dabholkar's daughter Mukta Dabholkar seeking for the court monitoring to continue.

Mumbai police destroy more than 1 000 kg of seized drugs worth Rs 12cr

The Mumbai police have destroyed more than 1,000 kg of narcotic substances, worth Rs 12 crore, at a waste management facility in Raigad district, an official said on Tuesday.

The city police's anti-narcotics cell (ANC) on Monday destroyed the drugs that were seized in 201 cases registered under the

Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, he said.

The disposal activity was carried out in the presence of senior ANC officials at a waste management facility in Taloja area of Raigad district, the official said. Cocaine, heroin, mephedrone among other banned substances, weighing more than 1,000 kg, were destroyed, he added.

Facing flak, state passes buck for Kharghar tragedy

With the death toll due to heatstroke at Sunday's Maharashtra Bhushan award ceremony in Kharghar mounting to 13, the state government came in for criticism across party lines. With the Opposition questioning why an outdoor ceremony with several lakh people present was held at midday when the temperature had risen to 38 degrees, culture minister Sudhir Mungantiwar said the event timings were suggested by social activist Appasaheb Dharmadhikari who was the recipient.

emony with several lakh people present was held at midday when the temperature had risen to 38 degrees, culture minister Sudhir Mungantiwar said the event timings were suggested by social activist Appasaheb Dharmadhikari who was the recipient.

No threat to state govt even if SC verdict is against CM Shinde: Ajit Pawar

Leader of opposition Ajit Pawar had told media-persons on Sunday that even if 16 Shiv Sena legislators, including Eknath Shinde, are disqualified by the SC, there is no threat to the state government. Ajit Pawar said that when the Shinde government won the vote of confidence, it had the support of 165 legislators. Even if 16 legislators are disqualified by the SC, the government would have



the support of 149 legislators. "The strength of the House will be reduced to 272 and the party/

combine which has more than 136 members will be able to have its government," he had said.

Four women killed 2 injured in fire at candle making unit in Dhule

Four women were charred to death, while two others suffered injuries after a fire broke out in a candle making factory in North Maharashtra's Dhule district on Tuesday afternoon, a police official said.

According to the official, workers, including women, were

busy making candles at the unit in Veskedhi village of the district, located around 320km from Mumbai, when a fire suddenly erupted in the premises at around 2 pm. Six women received burn injuries and four of them were later declared dead at a rural hospital, he said.

The cause of the blaze was not yet known. The injured women were shifted to the hospital by fire department officials and police personnel. Police have registered an FIR (first information report) against the factory owner for negligence and launched an investigation, the official added.

Nation

SC says, "Bilkis Bano case can't be compared to the single murder case"



The Supreme Court on Tuesday said that "unequals can't be treated equally" while stating that the plight of Bilkis Bano, who was gangraped and her family members were murdered during the 2002 Godhra riots, can't be compared to the murder of single person. A bench of Justices KM Joseph and BV Nagarathna observed that the way the offence was committed is "horrendous".

"Crimes are generally committed against society, and the community. So when you give remission. You cannot compare the victim's plight with standard 302 (murder) cases. Unequals cannot

be treated equally," Justice Joseph said. "See, more than 1100 days of parole. 1200 days, virtually three years..1000 days....1400 days... 1500 days on parole? Is that even available to an ordinary citizen? What policy have you been following?" the bench said while reading the details of parole granted to the convicts. Senior advocate Sidharth Luthra, appearing for one of the convicts, contended, "One is normal parole for a month. Other is this court said that during Covid parole must be granted." Just because it is gruesome crime convict should spend more time is contrary to law, Luthra added.

Inquiring from the Gujarat government about the reasons behind its decision to allow premature release of 11 life convicts in the Bilkis Bano case, the bench said when remission is considered in such heinous crimes affecting the society at large, the power must be exercised keeping in mind public interest. Just because the Central government concurred with the state does not mean state is not required to apply its mind, the apex court told Additional Solicitor General SV Raju appearing for Gujarat government.

"The question is whether government applied its mind, what material formed the basis of its decision, etc. Law is clear. Just because Union has approved does not mean state not required to apply mind. What material formed the basis of this decision? They were released by executive order... Today it is this lady (Bilkis). Tomorrow, it can be you or me. There must be objective standards... If you don't give us reason, we will draw our own conclusions," the bench observed. ANI

Kerala HC said, "Every unmarried daughter has right to reasonable marriage expenses from father irrespective of religion"

Kerala High Court on Tuesday observed that the right of an unmarried daughter to get reasonable expenses concerning her marriage from her father cannot have a religious shade. The Division Bench comprising Justice Anil K Narendran and Justice PG Ajithkumar observed this while considering a question as to whether there is a provision entitling a Christian daughter to realize marriage expenses from the immovable property of her father or the profits therefrom.

The Court added, "It is the right of every unmarried daughter irrespective of her religion. There cannot be a discriminatory exclusion from claiming such a right based on one's religion. The right of an unmarried daughter to get marriage expenses from her father is a legal right. By taking an analogy from the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act that right, irrespective of religion can be enforced against the profits from the immovable property



of the father." Court considered this question while considering petitions filed by two daughters residing with their mother, following the estranged marital relations between her and the respondent. The petitioners submitted that the respondent had purchased the petition schedule property utilizing the fund raised by selling the gold ornaments of their mother and other financial help obtained from their mother and her family members, and a house was also built on the said property in which the respondent has been residing. ANI

Morbi Bridge Collapse case: Oreva Group Deposits Rs 14.62 Cr as Interim Compensation to victims



The Oreva Group informed the Gujarat High Court on Tuesday that it has deposited with the state legal services authority the entire amount of Rs 14.62 crore to be paid as interim compensation to victims of the Morbi bridge tragedy, as directed by the HC in February. The suspension bridge collapsed in Morbi town on October 30 last year, killing 135 people. The Oreva Group was responsible for the operation and maintenance of the British-era structure. The company informed a division bench of Acting Chief Justice AJ Desai and Justice Biren Vaishnav that it has deposited with

the Gujarat State Legal Services Authority the entire amount of Rs 14.62 crore to be paid as interim relief to the victims. The money was deposited in two instalments of equal amounts, it said.

The court said the amount shall be disbursed as per the February 22 order of the division bench. In the said order, the court had directed the member secretary of the Gujarat State Legal Services Authority to ensure the disbursement in coordination with the District Legal Services Authority and government officials concerned after due verification of the victims. PTI

Gangster Atiq Ahmad murder case: SC to hear plea seeking independent probe on April 24

The Supreme Court on Tuesday agreed to hear on April 24 a plea seeking an independent probe into the killing of gangster-turned-politician Atiq Ahmad and his brother Ashraf in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj. The duo were shot dead at point-blank range by three men posing as journalists in the middle of a media interaction on Saturday night while police personnel were escorting them to a medical college in Prayagraj for a checkup. A bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud took note of the submissions of advocate Vishal Tiwari who mentioned the matter seeking urgent hearing. The plea has also sought an inquiry into the 183 encounters that have taken place in Uttar Pradesh since 2017.

Just hours before the shooting, the last rites of Ahmad's son Asad, who along with one of his associates was gunned down in a police encounter in Jhansi on April 13, were held. Uttar Pradesh Police had said on Friday that it has gunned down 183 alleged criminals in encounters in the six years



of the Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath-led government and this included Asad and his accomplice.

The plea sought the setting up of an independent expert committee to probe the killing of Atiq and Ashraf. "Issue guidelines/directions to safeguard the rule of law by constituting an independent expert committee under the chairmanship of a former Supreme Court justice to inquire into the 183 encounters which had occurred since 2017 as stated by Uttar Pradesh Special Director General of Police (Law and Order) and also to inquire into the police custody murder of Atiq and Ashraf," it said. Referring to Atiq's killing, the plea said that "such ac-

tions by police are a severe threat to democracy and rule of law and lead to a police state". "In a democratic society, the police cannot be allowed to become a mode of delivering final justice or to become a punishing authority. The power of punishment is only vested in the judiciary," the plea stated.

It said extrajudicial killings or fake police encounters have no place in the law. When the police turn "daredevils then the entire rule of law collapses and generates fear in the mind of people against the police which is very dangerous for democracy and this also results in more crimes," the plea stated. PTI

World

Sudan clash: At least 180 killed, 1,800 injured; EU ambassador assaulted

At least 180 civilians have been killed while more than 1,800 civilians and combatants were injured in fighting between Sudan's military and the country's main paramilitary force, according to the United Nations envoy to Sudan, Volker Perthes, The New York Times reported.

According to NYT, the fighting has left many of the five million residents of the capital, Khartoum, stranded at home without electricity or water as they marked the last few days of Ramzan, the Muslim holy month when many fast daily from dawn until dusk.



Overwhelmed medical facilities have been targeted including a major medical centre northeast of Khartoum that was shelled, evacuated and shut down. More than a dozen hospitals have shuttered, according to NYT.

A European Union ambassador was assaulted by the members of the Rapid Support Forces paramilitary group inside his residence in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan on Monday afternoon, two Western officials said,

according to a New York Times report.

The EU's ambassador to Sudan, Aidan O'Hara, is a diplomat from Ireland, and was not injured after armed men barged in, threatened him at gunpoint and stole money, said the officials on the condition of anonymity for security reasons, reported New York Times.

The Indian Embassy in Sudan on Tuesday issued a precautionary advisory for Indian citizens against venturing out, suggesting to ration supplies as the "situation may continue for a few more days."

"We have come across many instances of looting. All Indian nationals are advised please not to venture out. Please ration your supplies. The situation may continue for a few more days. Please try to take help from your neighbours. Please stay at home and remain safe," tweeted the Embassy of India in Khartoum.

On Monday, the Ministry of External Affairs, in view of the current clashes between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), set up a Control Room to provide information and assistance to Indians.

Indian mountaineers Baljeet Kaur, Arjun Vajpayee rescued from Mt. Annapurna



Two Indians, prominent woman climber Baljeet Kaur and the youngest Indian to climb Mt Everest in 2010, Arjun Vajpayee, were rescued from Mt Annapurna in Nepal on Tuesday, officials from the expedition organisers said.

Kaur, 27, who scaled the world's 10th highest peak without using supplemental oxygen,

went missing near Camp IV while descending from the summit point on Monday. She was rescued from 7,363m after an aerial search team located her above Camp IV, Chairman at Pioneer Adventure Pasang Sherpa, was quoted as saying by the Himalayan Times newspaper.

"She has suffered from frostbite," Sherpa said. Kaur has been

admitted to CIWEC Hospital in Kathmandu for treatment. Kaur was seen descending alone towards Camp IV by the aerial search team, according to Sherpa.

The leading Indian woman climber, who was left alone below the summit point, remained out of radio contact till this morning, the report added. An aerial search mission was initiated on Tuesday morning only after she managed to send a radio signal asking for 'immediate help'.

Indian climber Arjun Vajpayi was also rescued from 6,800 metres, Seven Summit Trek's Expedition Director Chhawang Dawa Sherpa said. "He has sustained injuries," Department of Tourism Director Yubraj Khatiwada was quoted as saying in The Kathmandu Post newspaper.

Brazil parroting Russian, Chinese propaganda: White House

The White House on Monday was "Brazil is parroting Russian and Chinese propaganda". This comes after Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on a trip to China said the US was encouraging war in Ukraine.

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby, in response, told reporters, "In this case, Brazil is parroting Russian and Chinese propaganda without at all looking at the facts."

Lula during a visit to Beijing on Saturday said, "The United States needs to stop encouraging war and start talking about peace. The European Union needs to start talking about peace."

During the visit, Lula met Chinese leader Xi Jinping. US State Secretary Antony Blinken recently spoke with Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba and reiterated Washington's commitment to stand with Kyiv" for as long as it takes," the US State Department said.

"Secretary Blinken underscored Ukraine's success as vital to peace and security in Europe and reiterated the United States' commitment to stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes," said Principal Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel in a statement.

The two leaders discussed ongoing preparations for Ukraine's spring counteroffensive, including security assistance pledges from allies and partners, said Patel.

17 arrested for series of shootings within Sikh community in California



At least 17 people, including mastermind Pavittar Preet Singh, have been arrested in Northern California for a series of shootings within the Sikh community, local authorities revealed. A huge cache of arms, including 4 handguns and 2 assault rifles and large-capacity magazines, were also seized.

Those arrested include Karandeep Singh, Pardeep Singh, Dharamvir Singh a.k.a Minta, Jobanjit Singh, Husandeep Singh and others. California Attorney General Rob Bonta, Yuba City Police Chief Brian Baker, and Sutter County District Attorney Jennifer Dupre announced

the arrests after a months-long, multi-agency investigation of rival criminal syndicates operating throughout Northern California.

"These groups are alleged to be responsible for numerous violent crimes and shootings, including five attempted murders, in Sutter, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, Yolo, and Merced counties," read a press release issued from the office of the Attorney General.

Members of these groups were allegedly involved in a mass shooting at a Stockton Sikh temple on August 27, 2022, and a shooting at a Sacramento Sikh temple on March 23, this year.

Expression

Streamline Election Process



S. Krishna Kumar

Actor, Author & media
freelancer, Activist

With the announcement of the date and the schedule for the assembly elections in Karnataka, the political parties have already 'kick-started' their campaigns state-wide vigorously. Simultaneously, the 'Model Code of Conduct' as prescribed by the Election Commission will also come into force and which need to be strictly followed by the candidates and their political parties.

Assembly elections will be due in states like Rajasthan etc. And, of course, the grand general elections early next year 2024.

I would like to suggest the following additional measures to the Election Commission to implement:

- Today, any Tom, Dick and Harry can form a political party with a few followers. In India we already have too many political parties – national & regional parties. Many of them are with identical names too. Hence there must be a ban on the formation of a new party anymore. Needless to say, if a party doesn't score a specific percentage of votes overall, it must be de-recognised immediately.
- High time to enforce that only those candidates who have passed graduation from recognized universities (not

postal or private ones or honorary degrees), will be eligible to contest. Today as we have seen in M.P and Rajasthan, Bihar, those who were totally illiterate and could not even read, had not only got elected but were made ministers too! No candidate with "just 10th std. fail or 12th.std. pass" should ever enter the fray.

- No candidate who is above 75 years of age should be allowed to contest. We still have leaders who are 80/85 plus and even with ailments, health problems etc. wish to contest. Let us have young, educated and dynamic leaders in the fray.
- No candidate should be allowed to contest from more than one constituency. This is very essential. Presently, even prominent candidates contest from two or even three different constituencies, to play safe. Once they win from both (or all three) constituencies, they keep one and surrender the other, where an election needs to held again. "Playing Safe" by contesting from more than one constituency, should be banned.
- There should be restriction on the number of candidates contesting for a single seat/ constituency. In certain constituencies, the ballot papers (now EVMs) are as big as a newspaper! Apart from increased



costs, voters too become more confused.

- No "Post-Poll alliances" between political parties should be permitted. Depending on the results, smaller parties take advantage of the scenario to join hands with the "winning party" which would form the government. Such alliances lead to horse-trading and buying of elected representatives. Here's when the power of money comes into play.
- If an M.P./MLA during his/her terms in parliament/assembly, had not maintained minimum attendance and had also not cared for his constituency, he/she should be disqualified and not be given the ticket to contest again from any constituency.
- If he/she disrupts the houses of parliament/assembly & indulges in unruly scenes and protest, all his/her perks, including the security cover, should be withdrawn.
- Though the EC, instructs the candidates to specify the information related to criminals' cases, any candidate who has a criminal record and who is on bail due to corruption and other cases going against them, should not be allowed to contest. There is provision for this in the constitution and a few leaders who were found guilty and given jail term are already banned from contesting.
- Lastly, we have seen how

several political leaders have amassed wealth and properties. The candidates, therefore, must be asked to provide complete list of their wealth, assets and properties standing in their names and those of his/her family and 'benamis' too. And to make this public.

It's high to streamline the election process completely and discipline the candidates to a great extent. Mr.T.N.Seshan, during his tenure as the CEC, decades ago, initiated and enforced many reforms and introduced severe model code of conduct and disciplinary measures. Those were unthinkable then in the Indian political arena. But many of his reforms and many more which were introduced subsequently, are being successfully implemented by our Election Commission.

But we still have to enforce the above measures. Especially, to ban standing from more than one constituency, ban post poll alliances, age limit and educational background, provision of the list of wealth and asset etc. can be enforced immediately. Will our CEC team take note of the above for necessary implementation in the forthcoming assembly and then the general elections too? Hope they still have time to announce some of the major reforms as said above.

My best wishes to the CEC and his team for the great general elections to be conducted peacefully and successfully.



Entertainment

Chill mat karo. Kaam karo: Salman Khan advises fans

Superstar Salman Khan, in the early hours of Tuesday, took to social media and gave special advice to all his fans and said, "Chill mat karo Kaam karo" Taking to Instagram, Salman shared a picture and captioned it, "There is nothing better than work so chill mat karo. Kaam karo, 4 days to kkbkjj, mehnat nai karogay toh family ko family film kaise dikhaogay."

In the picture, Salman could be seen donning a formal look. He looked handsome as he wore a white shirt and a black tie. Soon after he dropped the post, fans flooded the comment section with red hearts and fire emoticons. A fan commented, "Handsome hunk My love." "Why are you soo handsome?," a fan wrote. Another fan commented, "Bhaijaan JAAN he le loge." "MOST HANDSOME MAN TO EVER EXIST ON THIS PLANET," a user commented. The 'Ready' actor is currently busy promoting his upcoming family entertainer film 'Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan' which is all set to hit the theatres on April 18. ANI



Actress Sara Ali Khan shares best part of her day with fans on social media

Actress Sara Ali Khan, who is gearing up for Homi Adajania's 'Murder Mubarak' on Tuesday, revealed the best parts of her day by sharing a couple of videos on social media. Taking to Instagram story, Sara gave a sneak peek into how she is spending her day.

In the video, she flaunted her swimming skills and started her day relaxing. Next, Sara dropped a boomerang of her breakfast table while she can be seen pouring some hot coffee into a cup. Sharing the video, she wrote, "Second best part of my day??"

And then the actor gave a glimpse of what she is reading these days. Meanwhile, Sara will be seen in director Laxman Utekar's next 'Zara Hatke Zara Bach Ke' romantic drama film alongside Vicky Kaushal.

Recently, a few pictures surfaced on social media from the sets of the film in which Sara could be seen donning a beautiful blue and red saree and sporting a mangalsutra and bangles. Vicky, on the other hand, could be seen riding a bike in his casual outfit. After finishing the shoot, Sara penned a heartfelt note in which she expressed her gratitude to her team. ANI



Actor Priyanka Chopra says, I also have men in my life who are insecure of my success

Actor Priyanka Chopra's journey has been an inspiration for millions of people across the globe. From winning the coveted title of Miss World at the age of 18 to putting India on the global map with her acting talent like no other, Priyanka is undoubtedly one name that is synonymous with power and success.

Speaking to ANI, Priyanka reflected on the issue of pay parity between men and women. She also discussed how the insecurity of men plays a role in pay inequality. "I have some incredible men in my life who are not insecure of my success but I also have men in my life who are very insecure of my success... So I think that men have enjoyed the freedom and the pride of being the bread winners or the leaders of the family... it's threatening to their territory when a woman does that or if a woman is more successful or a man is staying at home and woman is going out to work..." Priyanka emphasised on raising sons gender-based stereotypes. "They (men) will feel bad but we have to teach our sons that there is no shame in crying... there is no shame in shedding tears... there is no shame in giving spotlight to your mothers, sisters, girlfriends," she said. ANI

