



"Nothing wrong to have ambition in politics..." Supriya Sule on Ajit Pawar's

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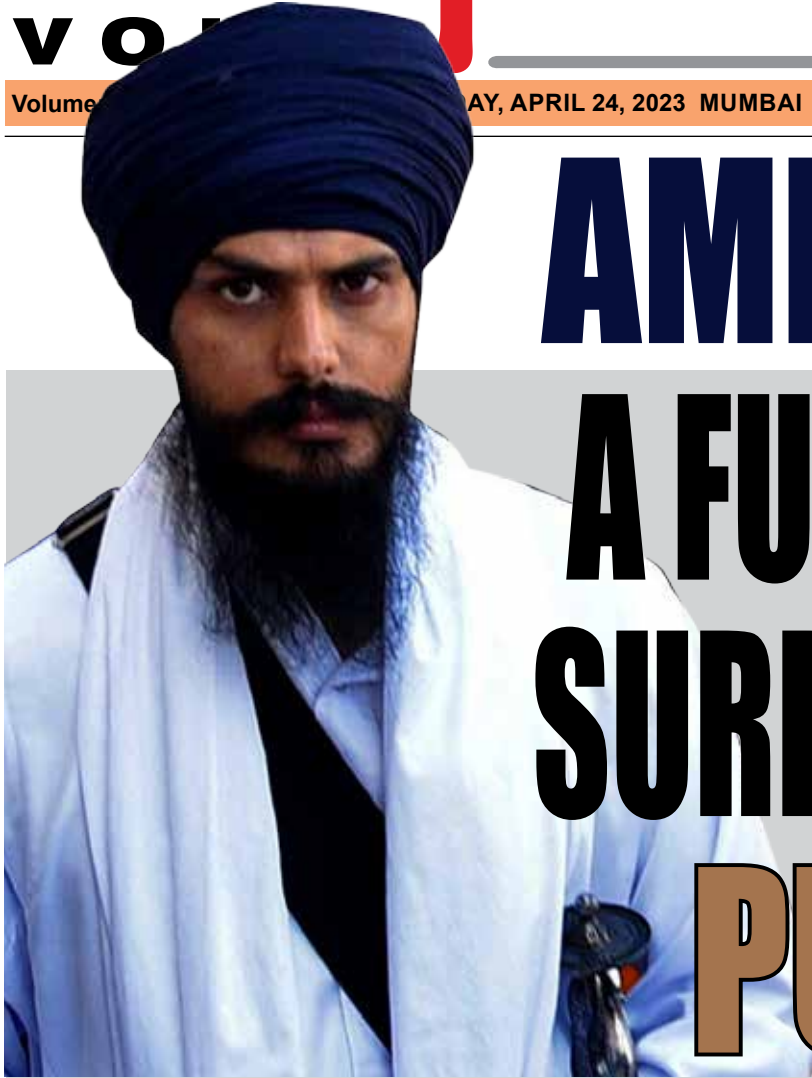


Afternoon

V O I C E

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AMRITPAL SINGH, A FUGITIVE PREACHER SURRENDERED BEFORE PUNJAB POLICE

Amritpal Singh, first address the gathering in Gurudwara in Moga and then surrendered before Punjab police in Moga. Confirming the arrest, Punjab Police asked people to maintain peace and not spread false news.

In the meantime, police tweeted "Urge citizens to maintain peace and harmony, don't share any fake news, always verify and share.". Special aircraft carrying Amritpal Singh has landed at Assam's Dibrugarh airport. He will be taken to Dibrugarh jail where eight of his associates, including

main aide Papalpreet Singh, are already being held under the National Security Act, which allows detention up to a year without any charge.

He was on the run since March 18 after the Punjab police launched a crackdown following the storming of the Ajnala police station by his supporters to secure the release of an arrested associate. Recently, his wife was stopped at the Amritsar airport by immigration officials while she was trying to board a flight to London. Amritpal Singh married UK-based Kirandeep Kaur

in February this year. Those who try to disturb peace and harmony will face action as per law, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said on Sunday, hours after radical preacher Amritpal Singh was arrested. Mann also thanked the people of Punjab for maintaining peace in the state during an over 30-day-long hunt for Amritpal.

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Surabh Bharadwaj lauded the work done by the Punjab police and said that everything will be further done legally. "This is a great achievement for the Punjab police and the

government. Punjab is a sensitive state and the entire operation against Amritpal was done keeping in view that the situation should not worsen. The people in the state do not want violence but peace and harmony," he said.

National Security Act (NSA) warrants were issued against Amritpal Singh and those warrants have been executed this morning, said Punjab's Inspector General of Police (IGP), Headquarters, Sukhchain Singh Gill after 'Waris Punjab De' chief's arrest.

Brahmavadini- Lady who chose the path of Vedic studies

Editoritis



Dr. Vaidehi

In ancient times there was one very efficient woman called Brahmavadini. She was known for her struggle to survive against all odds. She chose the path of Vedic studies. Brahmavadini exactly means 'a woman who speaks about Brahman (Parabrahma). The prehistoric philosophical concept of shakti, the feminine principle of energy, admires the immense mental and physical abilities of women.

While many civilizations have seen disappointing history as regards the position of women, we find that Vedas mention the scholarship of educated women like Vaak Ambhrni, Romasa, Gargi, Ghosha, Maitreyi and Lopamudra. During the Vedic times, women were placed high in society. They shared an equal status with their men folk and enjoyed societal sanctions. Indian women were models in maintaining the basic

principles of Santhana Dharma. Brahmavadini was also called as Apala, meaning most beautiful, she was mentioned in the Rig Veda. Apala was a happily married housewife, but then her husband disowned her because she was suffering from an incurable skin disease.

She had no other option than going back to her father, Apala vowed to find a cure for herself. Using a required ritual and the leaves of the Soma plant, she prayed to Lord Indra. Her desire was so ardent and her prayers so genuine that it forced the king of gods to descend upon earth and bless Apala. She was cured of her disease and once again regained her former glow and radiance, giving justice to her name Apala, the most beautiful. She was most expressive among all Brahmavadinis women who studied Vedic texts.

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Editoritis

Brahmavadini- Lady who chose the path of Vedic studies

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Mythology mentions that God created Satarupa, the first woman, to bear and nurture the human race. Similarly as Adishakti (Devi Durga), a woman manifested the combined strength of all the gods to destroy demon king Mahisasura

According to the Śivapurāṇa 2.3.30 The Celebration of Pārvaṭī's Return, Brahmā narrated to Nārada: "On hearing that Pārvaṭī was returning, Menā and Himavat excessively delighted went ahead seated in a divine vehicle.

rahmavadini alias Apala was a saint mentioned in the eighth mandala of the Rig Veda Samhita. She is also mentioned in the Satyayana Brahmana. It is believed that Apala is the daughter of Sage Atri.

Mythology mentions that God created Satarupa, the first woman, to bear and nurture the human race. Similarly as Adishakti (Devi Durga), a woman manifested the combined strength of all the gods to destroy demon king Mahisasura. This reverence for women was also reflected in societal norms. During the Rig Vedic period, women were allowed to pursue education and had the liberty to practice specific rituals, study the scriptures and even choose their own husbands. The hymns of Rig Veda are replete with praises of several eminent female poets, princesses, sages and merchants. Even today, many orthodox Hindus begin their day by reciting the names of five mythological women—Ahalya, Draupadi, Tara, Kunti and Mandodari.

According to the Śivapurāṇa 2.3.30 The Celebration of Pārvaṭī's Return, Brahmā narrated to Nārada: "On hearing that Pārvaṭī was returning, Menā and Himavat excessively delighted went ahead seated in a divine vehicle. The auspicious water-pot was placed in the main highway decorated with sandal paste, aguru, musk and branches of trees with fruits. The priests, Brahmins and sages reciting the Vedas (brahmavādin), dancing girls, all went ahead seated on lofty elephants to receive her. All round stumps of plantain trees were fixed. According to Monier-Williams's Sanskrit-English Dictionary, "brahmavādin" means 'discoursing on sacred texts, a defender or expounder of the Veda, one who asserts that all things are to be identified with Brahman'. It doesn't mean "one who speaks like God".

Brahmavadini alias Apala was a saint mentioned in the eighth mandala of the Rig Veda Samhita. She is also mentioned in the Satyayana Brahmana. It is believed that Apala is the daughter of Sage Atri. In That era the parents had acceptance for their daughters, when Krshasava abandoned her it was Atri Muni who inspired his daughter to live with divinity and self-confidence. Himalaya is a place which is blessed with herbs and medicines. It used to be considered as a medicinal hub; even Rudra resorted to Himalaya for peace and rumination. Atri Muni and Anusuya inspired their daughter to

understand the healing abilities of mountain plants. Perhaps this was the place where Brahmavadini alias Apala did a lot of tapasya and could find medicine for her skin. Her skin disease was very acute and she was looking awful and fragile. Her aged skin and incurable patches made her husband to detach from her. When she reached Himalaya, the mythology says she not only looked beautiful but found a medicinal cure of many illnesses. She was curing people and also did research on those herbs around her. She is believed to have offered the juice of somalata plant to Indra when she appeared before her. It is believed that Apala asked for three boons – one to transform the barren field of her father into fertile land, cure for her father's baldness and a cure to her skin disease. Indra grants all the three boons.

To eradicate her skin disease Indra cleanses her thrice – first her human body, next her vital breathing and finally her soul. After this ritual Apala transforms into a most beautiful woman, her story is found in the Sukta 91 of the 18th mandala of the Rig Veda. Seven mantras here dedicated to Indra were chanted by Apala. In Hindu religion we have beliefs that if someone wants to heal their skin and hair they should recite these mantras, and while reciting these mantras if you happen to be in the Himalayas, you can transform yourself into the most beautiful human. It is also believed that the people staying in Himalayan region don't age fast and they look evergreen because this place has medicine and divine energies.

Vaidehi Jaman

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Voices



Letters to the Editor

Sunstroke Deaths in Mumbai

It is sad to note people are dying due to sunstroke and the 14 reported deaths at the Kharghar event, although the figure could be much higher, was very unfortunate. Can the one-member probe committee bring back those lives which are lost? It could prove to be a meaningless exercise, a wasted effort. On the contrary, the authorities and the general public need to think seriously about the reality called, 'Climate Change'. Why are temperatures soaring in Mumbai and in the rest of the country and in the world? The authorities need to ask themselves, what can they do to stop these adverse effects on our lives. As a first step, they ought to rethink Infrastructure projects which destroy the environment. The metro car shed at Aarey for instance must be scrapped. Thousands of trees have been cut down, without giving a thought to the impending ecological disaster. Destruction of wetlands and mangroves must stop. We are destroying our 'Green cover' and we wonder why temperatures are rising.

What about the general public, what are we doing to stop this climate change? Can we take small steps like growing more trees in our own surroundings and avoid generating avoidable garbage? On April 22, we celebrated 'Earth Day', how much do we care for the Earth?

Climate change is for real, if not taken seriously, brace for more uncertain weather! We can continue to ignore all warning signals from Nature, to our own peril!

Melville X. D'Souza

Safety measures need of the hour to prevent accidental deaths on tracks!

Safety concerns on railway tracks on suburban lines is the prime reason for 1184 Mumbaiers losing their lives on tracks in 2022 & thousands getting injured. Difficult to prevent commuters falling from packed compartments during peak hours but Railways certainly should provide emergency medical rooms at Stations round the clock apart from Ambulance service which will save many lives.

Grills between adjacent tracks will prevent commuters from crossing tracks which is the major reason for most accidents on Railway lines. Foot overhead bridges at reasonable intervals apart from escalators & lifts will drive a safety sense among commuters which will considerably reduce accidents on tracks.

S.N.Kabra

"Mission Quantum"

The Center has now planned to launch a "National Quantum Mission" for its development of quantum mechanics, which is used to study the atoms and molecules of matter based on physics. This campaign will run from 2023-24 to 2030-2031. The Center has made a provision of 6003.65 crores for that purpose. This fund will be given under the National Mission on Computing Technology and Application. The computer technology currently in use will reduce the time required to perform tasks at a much faster speed. Superconducting in the next 8 years under this National for Quantum Mission.

Computers of 50-1000 physical qubits will be created for various fields such as photonic technology. This is an important and very necessary step of the center in the field of quantum mechanics.

Dattaprasad Shirodkar

Inequality and Indian Imagination

While India is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, it is also one of the most unequal countries. Inequality has been rising sharply for the last three decades. The richest have cornered a huge part of the wealth created through crony capitalism and inheritance. They are getting richer at a much faster pace while the poor are still struggling to earn a minimum wage and access quality education and healthcare services, which continue to suffer from chronic under-investment. These widening gaps and rising inequalities affect women and children the most.

Let's look at the numbers

India is back in the news for all the wrong reasons. Two weeks ago, the World Inequality Report was released in the public domain and since then, there have been a lot of reactions about the same. Authored by Lucas Chancel, the co-director of the France-based World Inequality Lab, and co-authored by around 100 renowned experts and economists, the report serves as an eye-opener. The harsh reality is that India has come out on top as one of the most 'unequal' countries on a global scale with a mere 1% of the population holding 22% of the total national income in the year 2021.

While inequality has always existed for ages throughout the globe, the recent inequality report paints a dismal picture of India. There is a dire need for the country to be concerned about rising inequality, and rightly so. The rise of inequality is not inevitable. Rather, it is more a result of the policy choices of successive regimes. As Lucas Chancel says, "This inequality does not question democracy, but rather the choices we make under democracy."

The growth strategies enacted by successive governments over the past few decades have largely resulted in



inequality on a large scale. The governments have depended on excess privatization and focused mostly on the private sector. This is evident in the salaries of workers in most private firms. The report states, "Deregulation and liberalization policies have led to one of the most extreme increases in income and wealth inequality observed in the world." The flip side is that there is considerable agreement that concrete steps do help to reduce inequality.

Many things are required to be done to decrease inequality. Most importantly, one of the solutions to curb these inequalities is to focus on balancing income and wealth redistribution policies. There is a need to concentrate on a draconian taxation pattern for the super-rich to help poor people prosper. Progressive taxation, where corporations and the richest individuals pay more to the state to redistribute resources across society, is essential. Governments, multilateral institutions, and financial institutions would do well to address the problem of social inequality by focusing on more social expenditure and creating sustainable opportunities for the lower sections of society's strata to succeed.

While the government

spends a good amount of money on digital infrastructure, there is a need for more attention to poorer regions of the country, which are the most affected due to inequality. Investments in these regions can create an increasing number of jobs and thereby increase access to opportunities for the lower sections of society. If we are serious about fighting the threat of inequality, then we need newer methods to obtain accurate community-driven data in real-time. This data can help generate opinions and help in the initiation of favorable policies that can mitigate inequality. Access to good education for all should be the top-most priority. Education can offer individuals a means to exercise their right over policies and decisions which affect their lives. Better education will lead to better opportunities and ultimately reduce inequality. The right mix of all the solutions mentioned can go a long way in making a more equitable country.

- C.K. Subramaniam

Columnist

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

City

"Nothing wrong to have ambition in politics..." Supriya Sule on Ajit Pawar's "prepared for CM post now" remark



Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) MP Supriya Sule on Sunday backed Ajit Pawar over his statement that he is prepared for the Chief Minister's post in the state and said that there is nothing wrong to have ambition in politics.

have ambition or a dream in politics, everybody has it, so I don't think there is anything wrong with saying openly about it. In fact, he is very honest in talking about his ambition," NCP leader Supriya Sule told ANI.

Earlier in an interview, reacting to the question of whether he

aspires to the post of Maharashtra Chief Minister in the 2024 elections, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Ajit Pawar asked why 2024, he is prepared for the CM post even now.

When asked about the speculation over roaming around Ajit Pawar if he is leaving NCP to join BJP, Sule replied and said, "I find it very amusing. I am very busy with the development works of the state. I hate to say this but there is a lot of gossip going on right now it's unfortunate that nobody focusing on agrarian crises and farmer issues. These issues should be high on the agenda instead of rumours and speculation about Ajit Pawar in the media."

Speaking about his aspiration for the CM post, Ajit Pawar said, "Why 2024, even now prepared for the post."

BJP files complaint against NCP's Jitendra Awhad for 'anti-Hindu statement'



Mumbai Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Secretary Advocate Vivekanand Gupta on Saturday filed a complaint with Thane police and Mumbai Police against senior Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Jitendra Awhad for his remarks on Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti.

In the letter written to the police, Gupta stated, "The statement made by Awhad is not only provocative but is an attempt to create communal riots in the state. The said statement has also hurt the religious sentiments of Hindus. His statement

is a deliberate attempt to promote religious enmity between different groups."

Gupta further added, "The said statement is also a deliberate and malicious act intended to outrage religious feelings by insulting the religious beliefs, and feelings of a Hindu. Awhad has uttered this Anti-Hindu word with deliberate intent to hurt the religious feelings of a Hindu. He is fully aware of what he is saying and has complete knowledge of it. It is his deliberate intention to provoke and cause communal riots and hurt the religious feelings of Hindus."

Ekhnath Shinde-led Maha govt will collapse in 15-20 days, claims Sanjay Raut

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Sunday claimed the "death warrant" of the Ekhnath Shinde-led Maharashtra government has been issued and it will collapse in the next 15-20 days. Talking to reporters, Raut, a key leader of former CM Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT), said



his party was waiting for court's order and expecting that justice will be done.

20 bikers arrested for rash negligent riding

At least 20 motorcyclists were arrested and their vehicles were seized by the Mumbai police for allegedly riding in a rash and negligent manner on Bandra-Worli Sea Link and other arterial roads in the western suburb on Sunday, an official said.

The action was taken in the early hours of the day after motorcyclists were spotted riding

rashly on the sea link, Carter Road, Bandstand among other places in Bandra, he said.

The accused, including pillion riders, were residents of Kurla, Chembur, Panvel and other places, the official said.

The accused have been booked under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Motor Vehicle Act and their vehicles have been seized, he added.

Police seize drugs valued at Rs 5 lakh, one peddler arrested



An alleged drug peddler was arrested and drugs valued at Rs 5 lakh were seized from his possession in Goregaon, police said on Saturday.

Mumbai's Dindoshi Police said that the drug peddler has been identified as Sashikant Jagtab (31). He was arrested from MHB Colony in Goregaon.

The seized drugs are valued at Rs 5 lakh in the international market, the police said. While patrolling, the police noticed a suspicious person, who started running. But the police nabbed the accused. Upon searching him, the police found MD drugs in his possession.

The police have also registered a case against the accused under Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substance (NDPS) Act. The accused was presented in a court which sent him to judicial custody.

Further investigation is underway in the case.

Three including 71-year-old man held for killing robbing senior citizen in her flat

Three people including a 71-year-old man were arrested here on Saturday for allegedly killing a senior citizen and robbing her mobile phones and jewellery in suburban Malad, police said.

The 69-year-old woman was found dead in the bathroom of her flat in Orlem locality on Thursday, said an official.

CCTV footage showed that

the victim's woman domestic help had left the building with two men who were wearing masks on the day of the incident.

During interrogation, the trio confessed to strangulating the woman and robbing her belongings. One of the male accused is 71 years old, the official said. They were arrested and further investigation is underway, he added.

Man gets life imprisonment for robbing, murdering senior citizen

A court in Maharashtra's Thane district has sentenced a man to life imprisonment for robbing a 62-year-old woman of her jewellery and killing her in 2011. District and Additional Sessions Judge Rajeev P Pande, in the order passed on April 19, also imposed a fine of Rs 20,000 on the 43-year-old accused - Santosh Shridhar Nambiyar.

Nation

Organs of minor declared brain dead give new lease of life to 2 children



The family of a six-year-old boy who was declared brain dead at AIIMS, Delhi following a head injury donated his organs giving a new lease of life to two children. The child was declared brain dead at 10.11 pm on April 24 and the family gave consent to donate the organs following counselling. The patient had suffered a severe head injury after being hit by a two-wheeler on April 15 and was admitted to AIIMS Trauma Centre.

This is the fifth paediatric

donation (in the 1-6 years of age group) amongst 19 donations to have taken place at JPN apex trauma centre, AIIMS, here since last April. Children are a very special group and need targeted approaches for brain death certification, maintenance of donor organs after brain death, subsequent organ retrievals and transplantations, Dr Deepak Gupta, Professor of Neurosurgery at AIIMS, Delhi.

There is a large unmet need for organs by children suffering from end-stage diseases of the

kidney, liver and heart across India and training of doctors in transplants in children needs to be reinforced at regular intervals. "Incidentally, 6 year old Master S was born with only one kidney (as was confirmed on CT and USG abdomen) and hence only one kidney was retrieved to be transplanted to another boy at AIIMS Delhi, while liver was transplanted at ILBS to another 16-year-old boy in Delhi as per allocation by NOTTO," Dr Gupta said.

National Organ & Tissue Transplant Organisation is an organisation set up under the Directorate General of Health Services of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Both corneas retrieved by the RP Centre Eye bank team will be used to give new vision to patients in need at AIIMS in subsequent days, he said, adding that heart valves were also retrieved for later usage. PTI

Jammu & Kashmir: Massive search operation underway in Poonch to Track Terrorists



Army's Northern Commander Lt Gen Upendra Dwivedi on Sunday said that necessary action is underway against the terrorists responsible for the deadly attack on an army truck in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district that left five soldiers dead. A massive search operation to track down the terrorists is underway in Bhata Dhurian following the ambush on the army vehicle carrying fruits and other items to a border village for an Iftar that was to be hosted by the Rashtriya Rifles unit on Thursday evening, officials said. In a tweet on its official handle, the Army's Northern Command shared Lt Gen Dwivedi's visit to the Command Hospital in Udhampur and his interaction with the survivor of the terror attack. "#LtGenUpendraDwivedi #ArmyCdrNC interacted with the survivor of the 20 Apr 23 #Poonch incident at Command Hospital #Udhampur and assured that necessary action

is underway," read the tweet accompanied by two pictures of the soldier.

The Northern Army Commander on Saturday visited the attack site at Bhata Dhurian, an area that is a preferred infiltration route for terrorists from across the Line of Control because of its topography, dense forest cover and natural caves. Dwivedi reviewed the security in the border area and the ongoing combing operation to track down the terrorists. The Northern Command said in a tweet that he was briefed on the actions undertaken so far and exhorted the troops to be steadfast in their resolve. While the search operation is underway amid a high alert in the twin border districts of Poonch and Rajouri, the traffic on Rajouri-Poonch highway was restored on Sunday morning after remaining suspended since Thursday evening, the officials said. PTI

Prohibitory orders imposed in Bengal's Kaliaganj after protests over girl's death

Prohibitory orders under Section 144 of CrPC were clamped in parts of Kaliaganj in West Bengal's Uttar Dinajpur district on Sunday following clashes between police and locals over the death of a 17-year-old girl, an official said. The prohibitory orders were imposed hours before the visit of representatives of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights led by its chairperson Priyank Kanoongo to the deceased's family. "Prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPC have been imposed for a fortnight from today as a precautionary measure, though the duration is subject to review. As per the law, we will not allow congregation of four or more people. Action will be taken against violators," the official said.

Kanoongo, however, was allowed to visit the girl's family along with three other representatives of the NCPDR. He was accompanied by police. The West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights alleged that



Kanoongo and his team have visited the area in a bid to "politicise the matter" and that they were violating the CPCRA Act. WBCPCR chairperson Ananya Chakraborty alleged that the NCPDR team's visit was "absolutely not needed". "The NCPDR blatantly violated the CPCRA Act and entered West Bengal illegally with the

sole purpose of maligning the state. They took along with them a large contingent of journalists to the deceased's house in complete violation of the prohibitory orders. This is shameful. They should have informed us about their visit and taken our feedback in the case," Chakraborty told PTI.

Those who try to disturb peace, harmony will face action: Mann on Amritpal's arrest

Those who try to disturb peace and harmony will face action as per law, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said on Sunday, hours after radical preacher Amritpal Singh was arrested. Mann also thanked the people of Punjab for maintaining peace in the state during an over 30-day-long hunt for Amritpal. "Today, Amritpal Singh has been arrested after 35 days," Mann said in a video message. "Those who try to disturb peace and harmony and break the law of

the country will face action as per law," he said, adding "We will not trouble any innocent person. We do not do vendetta politics." "I thank 3.5 crore Punjabis for maintaining peace and harmony during these 35 days," the chief minister said. Amritpal was arrested in Moga district's Rode village this morning after police personnel surrounded him, leaving him with no way to escape, police said. He has been taken to Dibrugarh in Assam under the National Security Act (NSA). PTI

World

Taiwanese firms exiting China amid rising tensions

There are signs that the economic ties between Taiwan and China have started to decouple as Taiwanese trade and investment are exiting the mainland rapidly amidst growing geopolitical tensions between the US and Beijing over the Taiwan issue.

The growth rate of Taiwanese exports of electronic products to China and Hong Kong has decelerated from 24 per cent in 2020 and 2021 to 11 per cent in 2022. Taiwanese investment in China fell by over 50 per cent from 2018 to 2019 alone. The timing strongly indicates that changing US trade policies toward China played a significant role.

According to recent statis-



tics from the Investment Review Commission of the Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Republic of China, new Taiwan's investment in the mainland declined by 10.40 per cent in the first quarter of this year to USD758 million. That follows an almost 14 per cent decrease in such investment

last year. Taiwanese companies are cutting their exposure to China just as they ramp up investment in other parts of the world.

Taiwanese companies, traditionally among the biggest investors in China, have been reducing new capital expenditure in the world's second-largest economy

over the past decade. The slowdown has accelerated since former US president Donald Trump began pushing US companies to decouple from China, a policy continued mainly by the administration of US President Joe Biden. In addition to the slowdown in new money, Taiwanese firms pulled a record amount of profit out of China last year, Chinese-language media reported.

Taiwanese-listed companies repatriated USD3.72 billion of investment income from China last year, the Investment Review Commission stated. The paring back of cross-strait investment comes as China has ratcheted up the political, military, and economic pressure on Taiwan since

the 2016 election of President Tsai Ing-wen.

China responded to Tsai's stopover in California early this month, during which she met with US House of Representatives Speaker Kevin McCarthy with military drills around Taiwan. Beijing officials have been keen to reverse the trend of Taiwanese firms exiting China.

Wang Huning, the No. 4 official in the Chinese Communist Party, promised greater efforts to persuade Taiwanese businesses to invest in China and to help them integrate into the Chinese economy. Slowing investment in China stands in contrast to a rapid increase in Taiwanese investment elsewhere.

Russia announces "tit-for-tat" expulsion of more than 20 German diplomats

Russia has announced "tit-for-tat" expulsion of more than 20 German diplomats following the "mass" removal of Russian embassy staff from Germany and accused Berlin of destroying ties, Al Jazeera reported citing Russian state media.

Russian Foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told state-run television Zvezda on Saturday that "more than 20" German diplomats would have to leave. Her statement came

shortly after the ministry denounced "another mass expulsion of employees of Russian diplomatic missions in Germany", Al Jazeera reported.

The German foreign ministry said it took note of the Russian statements. Moscow accused Berlin of "continuing to demonstratively destroy the entire range of Russia-Germany relations". "As a response to Berlin's hostile actions, the Russian side has decided to mirror the decision and expel

German diplomats from Russia," the foreign ministry said.

Assured Gold Voucher On Every Booking With Fixed EMI At The Views Adani Realty PG Program In Artificial Intelligence And Machine Learning TechGig Moscow will also limit the maximum number of employees in German diplomatic missions in the country, and it said Germany's ambassador Geza Andreas von Geyr was notified of the measures on April 5.

World War II ship found after 80 years



A Japanese transport ship that sank during World War II with over 1,000 people on board has finally been found, reported Voice of America.

The wreck of Montevideo Maru, the Japanese ship, was carrying 850 prisoners of war and about 200 civilians, who were captured by the Japanese in Papua New Guinea in 1942. Not knowing, who was there on the ship, the ship was torpedoed by the USS Sturgeon, an American submarine.

Its sinking was initially heralded as a success by Allied forces before the identity of most of those onboard was finally revealed. The wreck was found earlier this week in the South China Sea off the Philippines. The mission was a combined effort of the Australian Defense Department, marine archaeologists from Australia's Silentworld Foundation, and experts from the Dutch deep-sea survey company Fugro. The search operation started earlier this month off the coast of the Philippines. Within two weeks, the positive sighting of the Montevideo Maru was made before

the identity of the vessel was officially verified. It was the culmination of years of research and preparation by the search team.

According to VoA, almost 1,000 Australians died in the disaster. The wreck was discovered on a mission put together by the Silentworld Foundation, which is dedicated to maritime archaeology and history and Fugro with support from Australia's Department of Defense.

The tragedy affected more than a dozen countries. There were victims from Denmark, New Zealand and the United States as well as Japan. No items or human remains will be removed from the Montevideo Maru, reported VoA.

Reacting to the new discovery, Richard Marles Deputy Prime Minister of Australia, tweeted, "For more than 80 years, hundreds of Australian families have waited for news of the Montevideo Maru. This week, thanks to an extraordinary search effort, the ship's final resting place has been discovered." "The 850 Australian service members on board were never forgotten. We will remember them," he added.

Days after top PMO meet, Jaishankar's call to Saudi counterpart, Indians evacuated from Sudan



Indian nationals are among 66 people from "friendly and brotherly countries" evacuated by Saudi Arabia from violence-torn Sudan.

The evacuation came days after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar spoke to his Saudi Arabia counterpart. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday chaired a high-level meeting to review the security situation in Sudan.

Sudan is facing violence due to fighting between the army and the paramilitary forces. There are reports of violence even amid 72-hour ceasefire.

"In the implementation of the directives of the Kingdom's Leadership, we are pleased to announce the safe arrival of the evacuated citizens of the Kingdom from Sudan and several nationals of brotherly & friendly

countries, including diplomats & international officials," Saudi Arabia Foreign Ministry statement said.

The Ministry said that not only its own citizens but also a number of citizens of allied and friendly nations were evacuated from the North African country of Sudan.

"We are happy to announce the safe arrival of the Kingdom's citizens who were evacuated from the Republic of Sudan as well as a number of citizens of allied and friendly nations, including diplomats and international officials, who arrived in an evacuation operation conducted by the Royal Saudi Naval Forces with the assistance of other armed forces," the statement said.

Expression

A wake-up call for India's Panchayati Raj system



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State governments bind local governments through local bureaucracies. For example, approval of public works projects often requires technical approval and administrative approval from local officials of the rural development department, a tedious process for sarpanches that requires repeated visits to government offices. The capacity of the sarpanches to exercise administrative control over the local staff is limited. In many states, local functionaries reporting to the panchayat, such as village watchmen or sanitation workers, are recruited at the district or block level. Often the sarpanch does not even have the power to dismiss these local-level employees.

Nowadays we are getting to hear and read such news that the sarpanch of a certain village in the country committed suicide due to debt. Why is this happening? In India's Panchayati Raj system, there is a Gram Panchayat or Gram Sabha at the village or small town level, which is a major component of India's local self-governance. The Sarpanch is the elected supreme representative of the Gram Sabha. Since ancient times, Panchayat has had an important place in the social, political, and economic life of India. Every aspect of public life was governed by it. At present, in protest against e-Panchayat, village secretaries are holding dharnas in gram panchayats across Haryana state and BDPO offices are being locked, the government is going to start an e-system in gram panchayats. The Sarpanchs of Haryana say that such a system will not work in the Gram Panchayat. In such a situation, the development work of the villages will be affected. If the development work

is not done, the villagers will also come to the streets.

By the 73rd Constitutional Amendment in the Indian Constitution, a provision has been made for the participation of local people in the development of rural areas through the Panchayati Raj system. More than three decades after the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, state governments, through local bureaucracies, continue to exercise considerable discretionary power and influence over panchayats. In India, the powers of local elected officials (such as the sarpanch in Telangana) are severely limited by state governments and local bureaucrats in several ways, undermining the spirit of constitutional amendments to empower locally elected officials.

Gram Panchayats are financially dependent on grants (discretionary and non-discretionary grants) from the state and the Center for day-to-day activities. Broadly speaking, panchayats have three main sources of funding – their sources of revenue (local taxes, revenue from common property resources, etc.), grants-in-aid from central and state governments, and discretionary or plan-based funds. Its sources of revenue (both tax and non-tax) constitute a small proportion of the total panchayat funds. Access to discretionary grants for panchayats depends on political and bureaucratic relationships.

Inordinate delay in transferring sanctioned funds to panchayat accounts stalls local development. There are also severe restrictions on how to use the funds allocated to them. State governments often impose expenditure limits on various expenditures through panchayat funds. Like recently in Haryana government going to start an e-system in Gram Panchayat. This type of system will not work in the Gram Panchayat. In such a situation, the development work of the villages will be affected. If



the development work is not done, the villagers will also come to the streets. The Panchayat provides for the dual authority to spend the fund. Even with sarpanches, bureaucratic consent is needed for payments. Sarpanch and Panchayat Secretary should co-sign the check issued for payment from Panchayat Fund.

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Unlike elected officials at other levels, sarpanches can be dismissed while in office. Gram Panchayat Acts in many states have empowered district-level bureaucrats, mostly district collectors, to take action against sarpanches for official

misconduct. Across the country, there are regular instances of bureaucrats taking decisions to dismiss sarpanches from office. More sarpanches have been dismissed from office in recent years.

Sarpanches need administrative or financial autonomy for meaningful decentralization. The Ministry of Panchayats should monitor the release and expenditure of Finance Commission grants to ensure that there is no delay in their release. Panchayats should be encouraged to conduct local audits regularly so that Finance Commission grants are not delayed. The Ministry of Panchayats should make serious efforts towards recruitment and posting of supporting and technical staff to ensure the smooth functioning of Panchayats. Strengthening of Panchayats through capacity building and training should be given more encouragement from the Central and State Governments. This will enable them to prepare better Gram Panchayat Development Plans, as well as become more responsive to the needs of the citizens.

This is a wake-up call for state governments to re-examine the provisions of their respective gram panchayat laws and consider greater devolution of funds, functions, and functionaries to local governments.

Entertainment



Not a conventional star kid, but consider myself privileged: Palak Tiwari

Newcomer Palak Tiwari, daughter of popular TV actor Shweta Tiwari, says even though she realises her privilege of being a celebrity kid, she is trying to pave her own path in the entertainment world.

Palak recently made her Hindi cinema debut with "Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan". Fronted by Salman Khan, the movie released on Friday ahead of Eid. "I'm not a conventional star kid. Neither am I exactly a star kid, nor am I a common person. The benefit was that I got recognised from the get-go. It wasn't like I was getting a lot of offers. (But) I do consider myself privileged.

"This new mould I'm making for myself – it's like a hybrid. Nobody has been in this position before. People recognise me, but it has to do with what my mother has achieved," the 22-year-old actor told PTI. Palak was supposed to debut with "Rosie: The Saffron Chapter", produced by Arbaaz Khan, but the film did not materialise. "Whatever happens, happens for the best. For whatever reason, 'Rosie' didn't come to fruition. But, I got a much bigger opportunity with a much bigger man (Salman), whose magnanimity is well known. I don't think anybody could have asked for a better debut," she added. The young actor first met Salman on the sets of "Bigg Boss", which he hosts. PTI

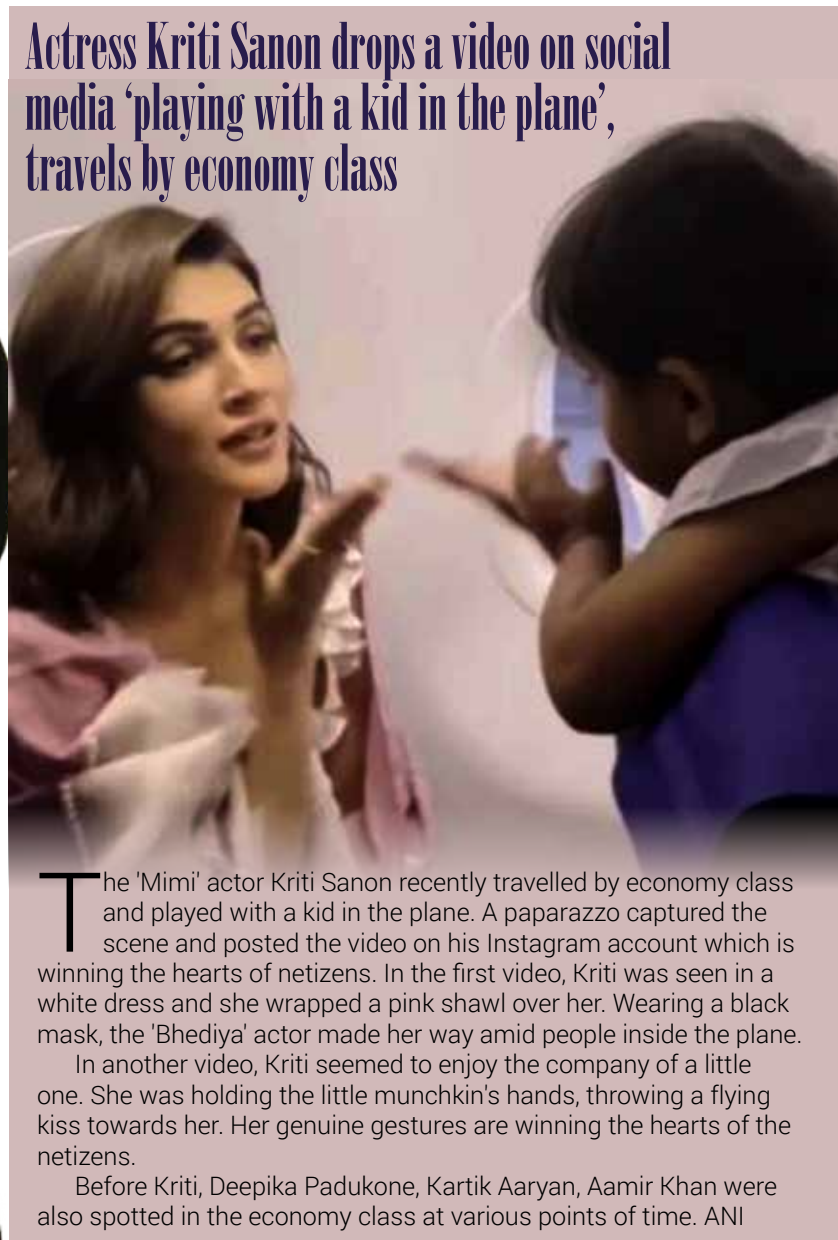
I'm enamoured by negative characters: Sunny Kaushal



With his latest release "Chor Nikal Ke Bhaga", actor Sunny Kaushal says he wanted to test if audiences would accept him in a "negative character".

"Chor Nikal Ke Bhaga", directed by Ajay Singh, revolves around Neha, an air hostess (Yami Gautam) and her businessman beau Ankit (Kaushal) who are on a mission to steal diamonds to free themselves from the clutches of a loan shark. However, the heist goes horribly wrong when the very plane carrying the diamonds is caught up in a hostage situation. Kaushal, who has played boy-next-door characters in films such as "Shiddat", "Hurdang", and "Mili", said it was "refreshing" to play Ankit, a despicable man who can go to great lengths to satisfy his greed, in the film. PTI

Actress Kriti Sanon drops a video on social media 'playing with a kid in the plane', travels by economy class



The 'Mimi' actor Kriti Sanon recently travelled by economy class and played with a kid in the plane. A paparazzo captured the scene and posted the video on his Instagram account which is winning the hearts of netizens. In the first video, Kriti was seen in a white dress and she wrapped a pink shawl over her. Wearing a black mask, the 'Bhediya' actor made her way amid people inside the plane.

In another video, Kriti seemed to enjoy the company of a little one. She was holding the little munchkin's hands, throwing a flying kiss towards her. Her genuine gestures are winning the hearts of the netizens.

Before Kriti, Deepika Padukone, Kartik Aaryan, Aamir Khan were also spotted in the economy class at various points of time. ANI