



Govt should talk to locals opposing refinery find alternative site if issue not resolved: Sharad Pawar

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11 jawans soldiers have received Veergati in Dantewada Naxalite attack



Security forces encounter with Naxalites in Dantewada, Chhattisgarh. Naxalites have blown up a vehicle with a bomb. In this attack, 10 soldiers have received Veergati. The 10 security personnel and a driver were killed in an improvised explosive device blast carried out by naxalites in

Dantewada district. The incident took place under Aranpur police station limits when a team of the state police's District Reserve Guard (DRG) was returning after an anti-Naxalite operation, news agency PTI reported citing a senior official. The area is located around 450 km from state capital Raipur. Chief Minis-

ter Bhupesh Baghel said that we will not spare the Naxalites, we will eliminate them. Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday spoke to Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and took stock of the situation after 10 security personnel were killed in a blast carried out by Naxals in Dantewada. Shah as-

sured CM Baghel of all possible help from the central government to deal with the situation. In a tweet, Shah said: "Anguished by the cowardly attack on the Chhattisgarh police at Dantewada. He spoke to Chhattisgarh's Chief Minister and assured all possible assistance to the state government.

Who will win the next American election?

Editoritis



Dr. Vaidehi

As US President Joe Biden launched his 2024 re-election campaign, he possibly set the stage for a potential rematch of his showdown four years ago with Donald Trump. Trump is signalling that he intends to run in 2024. Biden is the lowest polling president in history but plans to run for re-election because people might choose him over trump. Trump is certainly going to lose in 2024. He lost by 7 million votes in 2020, and he has not expanded his base at all since then. Trump has only become more fascist, intolerant, and racist. He has now been indicted, and will be in-

dicted again this year, for either Georgia election interference or obstruction of justice as to classified documents, or both.

Joe Biden has to make a lot of balance if contest for president again in 2024. Prior to the 2020 election, Joe Biden suggested that given his age, he would only serve one term. He put this forward to say that he would not be afraid to make courageous decisions for America. He could not take any such challenging decisions so far but gave non corrupt governance, and whatever decisions he made are detested in the

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Editoritis

Who will win the next American election?

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Donald Trump will be able to hold on to the leadership of the GOP until then. Trump did absolutely nothing for the US, to his glee, a genuine, honest, politically-experienced and moral man gets hung out to dry because a narcissistic

Trump broke every law that governs the US presidency, up to and including treason and sedition, and he simply walks away from it all free to do it all over again?

Joe Biden has kick-started his campaign after much speculation that he may choose not to run for the post as he is already the oldest person to hold the office.

short term but are necessary for America's long-term interests. His age is the biggest concern, if his health remains steady, Joe Biden could well see himself seeking a second term in 2024. If he continues his current clean record, he will be the favourite.

If you consider Donald Trump, he is clearly hoping to take on Joe Biden for revenge. Donald Trump will be able to hold on to the leadership of the GOP until then. Trump did absolutely nothing for the US, to his glee, a genuine, honest, politically-experienced and moral man gets hung out to dry because a narcissistic, he has uncanny ability to manipulate an entire country and cause division and total chaos that prides itself on being the best when it is undoubtedly proving itself to be the opposite. Trump running in 2024 makes absolutely no sense. Trump is considered to be the worst president in US history and still he is preferred by certain voters than someone as respectable and productive as Biden?

Trump broke every law that governs the US presidency, up to and including treason and sedition, and he simply walks away from it all free to do it all over again? Biden literally saved the US from a very negative position on the world stage that Trump had placed the country into but Biden never got any praise for doing so! But if Trump had done what Biden has, he would have been highly praised for his accomplishments.

Joe Biden has kick-started his campaign after much speculation that he may choose not to run for the post as he is already the oldest person to hold the office. Other potential challengers from his party include California Governor Gavin Newsom and Illinois Governor J.B Pritzker, while Marianne Williamson and Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., have already announced their bids against him. Meanwhile, Donald Trump, 76, faces challenges from prospective Republican candidates like Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, Nikki Haley and Tim Scott. His main challenger seems to be Ron De-



Santis but polls show that Donald Trump could easily defeat DeSantis by double-digits. Donald Trump currently stands to win his party's nomination by anywhere between 15 and 35 points based on current polling.

Pollster Rasmussen delivered Joe Biden's best approval ratings to date in some of their recent polls but predicted his loss by near-double digits to either Donald Trump or Ron DeSantis. Joe Biden's disapproval rating is at 56 present in a recent Quinnipiac University poll while Donald Trump's disapproval rating is two points higher, at 58 present. My gut tells me it will be a Democratic whoever that may be. The damage Trump and the current republicans in both the house and senate have done will take at least a decade to repair. The Republican Party is shrinking. The Independents and Democratic Party are growing. Republicans need a new platform and mission statement in order to have any chance of gaining political

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Voices



Letters to the Editor

IITs in our country are losing its sheen & the entire system needs retrospection!

IITs in our country are losing its sheen in recent times & recent incidents of suicides, allegations of discrimination & harassment apart from the rising number of dropouts are reasons for cause of concern. 63% of undergraduate dropouts in the last 5 years only put a question mark on the entrance exams for IITs that recruit unfit students for the highly intensive studies at the once premier institute of our country.

The Central decision-making body of IITs too is concerned & rightly looking into it to take measures to fix the real problem so that the reputation of IITs in our country can be restored. Competition is welcome but the mental state of students cannot be compromised. Entrance Tests for such exams must be made tougher so that the percentage of dropouts reduces. Reserved categories need to go but the fees of poor students can be subsidized so that it is not a hindrance for intelligent students from the backward class to crack the grades.

S.N.Kabra

Great loss

The death of Shri. Parkash Singh Badal, former Punjab Chief Minister, and veteran Akali Dal leader, is a great loss not only to Punjab but also to the nation. Shri Parkash Singh Badal was one of the most prominent political figures since the country's independence. Though his distinguished public service career was largely limited to Punjab, he was well-regarded throughout the country. His death has left a void. He was a towering figure in Indian politics and a remarkable statesman who made significant contributions to our country. He worked tirelessly for the advancement of Punjab and helped the state through difficult times. The central government's announcement of two days of state mourning across India to pay tribute to the veteran politician is a thoughtful gesture. Further, he deserves Bharat Ratna posthumously.

VijayKumar H K

Poor plight of labourers

Every year on May 1, people across the world, including India, celebrate Labour Day as a public holiday. A few arrange get-togethers to enjoy the much-needed holiday while others spend it either watching TV, playing games or sleeping all day. The idea is to gain as much from this day as one can – for oneself. But, what no one does is think about what this day truly stands for. Has any of us done something of value for the labour class or tried to resolve their problems?

There are countless problems which are being faced by our labourers such as poverty, illiteracy, food and water crises and so many others. A vast majority of labourers and daily-wage workers remain outside the field of labour laws, which means that workers have no paid holidays, no job security, no medical coverage, no pension, no provident fund, no limit on working hours and are paid no overtime. In India with all this, there is also an issue of child labour. Child labour in India is growing at a disturbing rate. Hundreds and thousands of children struggle to achieve their basic necessities of life. Children are the future of any country and we should all work to help them become better people. Child labour is a very complex problem with its root in the socio-economic environment of the country. The children suffer from lack of education and health facilities and better employment.

It is important to note that India became a member of the International Labour Organisation right after its independence in 1947. However, there is not much change when I look at the present situation as there seems to be no labour laws implementation. There should be international monitoring in the country and people should be held accountable who use child labour and bonded labour. I know many people who are working as labourers just for a small amount of money and they don't even have a day off, because the day they don't work, there is no food in their house.

Jubel D'Cruz

And once upon a time church opposed it!

European countries fulfill more than half of their electricity needs from natural gas. In the face of an energy crisis led by war-lock Ukraine and Russia, European countries have now come to depend upon, along with other countries, India too to meet their demand for gas. For though we import crude oil, but export refined petroleum products that the refineries of the companies like 'Nyara' and 'Reliance' produce. Of such petroleum products most prominent is Vacuum gas oil (VGO), which is used as refinery feedstock and happens to be the main source of gasoline essential for electricity production. And it is this gasoline that the European countries use for themselves. But among them, France is exception to this. For within time it had fast started working in the direction of nuclear sector as an alternative to petrol. And therefore, it is unaffected with the present crisis, as its 70% of electricity need gets fulfilled through nuclear power.

Along with hydro- solar-wind power sector India also has long back taken forward the steps toward the acquiring nuclear power capabilities like France. One such plant is under construction in Kudankulam, Tamilnadu. It is notably regarding the same nuclear power plant that once church came into limelight for its protest against it. Demonstration, agitation and all the tactics that were possible it adopted to have the project shut down. The then minister of Manmohan Singh-led UPA government, Narayan Samy, even had alleged that the two NGOs affiliated with bishop were given 54 crores rupees in the matter. Fortunately, all the tactics failed, and construction of nuclear plant went ahead.

Being built with the cooperation of Russia, the first phase construction of the plant had been completed in 2013.



Second and third phases would have been completed by 2023. While rest of the phases are expected to have been completed by 2026-27. Today the biggest nuclear power plant of the Europe lies in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine, which now has come under the occupation of Russia in the war. But now with completion, Kudankulam will get to be bigger than that, the cost of which is expected to be 90,000 crores. Now two reactors have got be operative, their electrical production capacity

being 1000 megawatts. While with 4 more reactors to have come into operation the total capacity will get to be 6000 megawatts.

- Rajesh Pathak

Columnist

Readers are requested to mail Letters to the Editor only at

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

Govt should talk to locals opposing refinery find alternative site if issue not resolved: Sharad Pawar



Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) president Sharad Pawar on Wednesday said the Maharashtra government should hold a dialogue with local villagers who are opposing a refinery project in the coastal Ratnagiri district. If the issue was not resolved even after that, an alternative site should be found, he said.

Pawar spoke to reporters here after state industries minister Uday Samant met him to

discuss the issue. Residents of Barsu village in Ratnagiri district's Rajapur tehsil, more than 400 km from Mumbai, are up in arms against the project and the Shiv Sena (UBT) and Congress, the NCP's allies in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) coalition, are supporting them.

Pawar said his party did not oppose development projects in Konkan, but finding out the opinion of the locals was a must. "The government needs to find out

why the locals are angry... having a dialogue with them is the only solution. If the matter is not resolved through a dialogue, an alternative site should be found," the former Union minister said.

On the state government's contention that Uddhav Thackeray, when he was chief minister, had suggested Barsu as an alternative instead of Nantar, the original site, Pawar said he was not aware of that.

"Industries minister Uday Samant who met me assured that a dialogue will take place tomorrow. Yesterday only soil testing was being done at the site," he further said.

NCP leaders will visit the site and talk to the locals, Pawar added. Samant, who is the guardian minister of Ratnagiri district, told reporters that the women protesters detained at the project site have been released. "The government will speak to the villagers," he added.

Have been battling for transparency in departmental postings, but not getting success, says BJP minister



Maharashtra Public Works Department (PWD) minister Ravindra Chavan has said that despite instructing officials that

there should be transparency in departmental postings, he has not been getting enough success. Chavan said he has often told engineers to create something that they can claim to be theirs after superannuation.

"I have tried to tell this in every departmental meeting that there should be transparency in postings," Chavan said at a news conference on Monday.

Aurangabad university professor booked on charge of raping student

A professor from Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University in Maharashtra's Aurangabad city has been booked for allegedly raping a student for over a year and harassing her parents, an official said on Wednesday. The professor's wife has also been named in the first information report (FIR) for supporting

the professor in the alleged crime and telling the complainant that they wanted a son from her, the official said.

The FIR was registered at Begumpura police station on Tuesday night under Indian Penal Code sections 376 (rape), 109 (abetment), 114 (abettor present when offence is committed) and 504 (intentional insult).

Maharashtra: 11 IPS officers transferred



The Maharashtra government on Tuesday transferred or promoted 11 Indian Police Service officers between the ranks of Deputy Inspector General (DIG) to Additional Director General of Police (ADG). According to the orders issued by the home department, senior IPS officer Sanjay Saxena has been transferred as ADG Law and Order at the state police headquarters in Mumbai. Anup Kumar Singh has been posted as Principal Secretary of the home department.

Shiv Sena (UBT) to launch agitation against refinery in Maharashtra's Ratnagiri district



The Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) has decided to launch an agitation against a proposed petroleum refinery at Barsu village in Maharashtra's coastal Ratnagiri district amid protests against the project by local residents.

A decision to this effect was taken on Tuesday at a meeting of Shiv Sena (UBT) MPs called

by party president Thackeray in Mumbai. The meeting was called to take a stand on the multi-billion project and decide the future course of action.

The decision was taken on a day when the Ratnagiri police arrested 111 people, most of them women, during a protest against the proposed refinery, an official said.

Fire destroys makeshift godown in Thane district

A fire destroyed a makeshift godown that stored plastic and materials for hoardings in Maharashtra's Thane district in the early hours of Wednesday, an official said. No one was injured in the accident at Kausa in Mumbra, said Avinash Sawant, chief of the Regional Disaster Management

Cell (RDMC) of the Thane civic body.

The fire broke out at the godown around 5.10 am, he said. Two fire engines and water tankers were sent to the spot and the fire was brought under control in nearly two hours, he said, adding that the cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained.

I am not on leave, says Maha CM Shinde

Amid claims by the rival Shiv Sena faction that he was on his way out, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde told reporters on Tuesday that the reports that he was "on leave" were wrong. Shinde is on a three-day visit to his home district. Speaking to reporters at Mahabaleshwar, he said he has been



reviewing various works, meeting people and holding meetings with officials since arrival in the district.

Maha sees 722 Covid-19 cases, three fatalities; active tally at 5,549

Maharashtra on Tuesday reported 722 fresh Covid-19 cases and three fatalities, taking the tally of infections to 81,62,842 and the death toll to 1,48,507, the

state health department said. The fresh cases rose thrice compared to Monday when 226 infections were recorded in the state. No Covid-19 fatality was recorded a day before.

Nation

Delhi excise policy case: court is likely to pass Manish Sisodia's bail plea on Friday



A court here is likely to deliver on April 28 its order on the bail application of former Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia in a money laundering case related to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam. Special Judge M K Nagpal, who was scheduled to pronounce the verdict on Wednesday, deferred the matter, saying the order was

not ready. The court had reserved the order after hearing arguments on Sisodia's plea seeking relief claiming that his custody was no longer required for investigation. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) had opposed the application, asserting the investigation was at a "crucial" stage and claiming the senior AAP leader had planted fabricated e-

mails to show there was public approval for the policy. The federal agency had also said it has found fresh evidence of his complicity in the alleged crime.

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Withdrawing summons issued to Arvind Kejriwal in property defacement case: Goa police tell HC

The Goa police on Wednesday told the Bombay High Court that they are withdrawing the summons issued to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, in which he was asked to appear before them on April 27 in a case related to the illegal sticking of posters on public properties during the 2022 Assembly elections campaign. The police had issued the notice suo motu to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener on April 13 under section 41 (A) of the Code of Criminal Pro-

cedure (CrPC). But Kejriwal challenged the summons issued to him by the Pernem police, asking him to appear before the investigating officer on April 27 in connection with the case.

The case was heard by a division bench comprising Justices Mahesh Sonak and Valmiki Menezes of the Goa bench of the Bombay High Court on Wednesday, during which the police submitted that they are going to withdraw the summons issued to Kejriwal. PTI

Unseasonal rains damage standing, harvested crops in Telangana

Heavy rainfall lashed Telangana resulting in damage of standing and harvested crops at several places. According to the 'Daily Weather Report of Telangana State Wednesday, issued by the Met Centre of IMD here, heavy rainfall occurred at a few places in Medchal-Malkajgiri and Narayanpet districts and at isolated places in Jangaon, Khammam, Kamareddy, Medak and other districts of the State on Tuesday. Rain also occurred at most places across Telangana, it said.

Mirdoddi in Siddipet district received 10 cms of rain, followed by Mominpet in Vikarabad district and Bhuvanagiri (both 9 cms). The rainfall caused damage to standing and harvested crops, including paddy, maize and red chillies in Khammam, Warangal and other districts.

Ruling BRS Working President and State Municipal Administration Minister K T Rama Rao said in a release that the State government would stand by farmers whose crops were damaged due to unseasonal rains. PTI

148 students in residential schools of Jharkhand tested positive for Covid-19

One-hundred and forty-eight students in four girls' residential schools in Jharkhand's East Singhbhum district have tested positive for Covid-19, an official said on Wednesday. Deputy Commissioner Vijaya Jadhav on Tuesday directed to carry out Covid-19 test in all Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) schools in the district after 69 students tested positive for the virus on Monday, the official said.

Led by Civil Surgeon Dr Juhar Majhi doctors carried out Covid-19 testing in three other KGBV schools in Dumaria, Potka and Jamshedpur blocks of the district and detected 79 more students inflicted with the virus. While KGBV Dumaria recorded for 14 cases, KGBV Potka 10 and



KGBV Jamshedpur 55 Covid-19, an official statement said.

All the students were isolated as per Coronavirus protocol and the school premises were completely sanitised. On the directive of Jadhav, the Civil Surgeon had a virtual meeting with the wardens, teaching and non-teaching

staff of all KGBVs and ordered them to implement Covid-19 guidelines. The deputy commissioner also directed health officials to conduct Covid-19 tests in railway stations, bus stands, schools and colleges to contain the spread of the virus in view of increasing coronavirus cases. PTI

Centre to SC: Consider leaving questions raised in same sex marriage pleas to parliament

The Centre on Wednesday requested the Supreme Court to consider leaving questions raised in the pleas seeking legal sanction for same sex marriages to Parliament. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, told a five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud that the apex court is dealing with a "very complex subject", which has a "profound social impact". "The

real question is who would take a call on what constitutes marriage and between whom," Mehta said on the fifth day of hearing.

He told the bench, also comprising Justices S K Kaul, S R Bhat, Hima Kohli and P S Narasimha, that there would be ramifications on several other statutes which would need a debate in the society and also in various state legislatures. Hearing in the matter is underway. PTI

Delhi: 30-year-old cab driver arrested for sexually assaulting six-year-old girl

A 30-year-old cab driver was arrested on Wednesday for allegedly sexually assaulting a six-year-old girl while ferrying her to school, said Deputy Commissioner of Police South East Rajesh Deo. The police informed that the accused had been identified as Mohd Azhar.

According to the police, the accused has been arrested on the



basis of a complaint registered by the victim's mother.

Giving details, DCP Deo said, "The complainant reported that the accused driver engaged a cab for ferrying her six-year-old daughter to school." "On Wednesday, the victim informed her mother that the driver of the cab has been touching her private parts inappropriately while ferrying her from school for about last one year," added DCP. ANI

World

Global community urges China to release 11th Panchen Lama



On the occasion of the 34th birthday of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the global community on Tuesday urged China to provide proof of life and account for his whereabouts.

Thirty Spanish senators called on the Chinese government on Tuesday to allow the Panchen Lama to exercise his fundamental freedom in accordance with the PRC's international commitments and call for the immediate release of the Panchen Lama, his family and all other Ti-

betan political prisoners, reported The Tibet Post

The Spanish Senators said, "Tibet remains the third least free country in the world, tied with Syria and South Sudan. Tibet has been under the tight control of China for more than six decades. This type of repressive regime is best exemplified by the case of the Panchen Lama".

"We call on the Chinese authorities to allow him to fully exercise his fundamental freedoms, as established in the international commitments of the Chinese

Communist Party. And we call for the prompt release of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his parents, immediately and unconditionally, together with all Tibetan political prisoners," the Senators added.

The Inter-Parliamentary Group for Tibet in the Spanish Senate demanded China provide proof of life and account for his whereabouts, reported Central Tibetan Administration. The inter-parliamentary group for Tibet in the Senate was established and launched earlier in February this year at the initiative of Senator Robert Masih Nahar, and this is one of its first political activities.

US Republican Senator Jim McGovern also called the Chinese government to release Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. "On his 34th birthday, I call on the Chinese government to release Gedhun Choekyi Nyima--the Panchen Lama--one of the highest positions in Tibetan Buddhism. Tibetans deserve to venerate their leaders without interference, and he and his family should be released immediately," tweeted McGovern.

"Can take war to enemy's territory..." Pak threatens India as Hamid Mir reveals Bajwa's confession



In a face-saving manoeuvre, Pakistan upped the ante against India after two senior journalists spilt the beans that Islamabad lacked the ammunition and economic strength to fight against India.

DG ISPR Maj General Ahmed Sharif negated the claims about the Pak army's 'operational preparedness'. Maj Gen Sharif also threatened to take the 'battle to India's territory' if the situation arises.

He claimed that Pakistan's Air Force during Operation Swift Retort showed the "resilience of nation and resolve of Air Force." Forty Central Reserve Police

Force (CRPF) personnel were killed in the terrorist attack on a convoy of security vehicles in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama on February 14, 2019.

As a response to the Pulwama terror attack, 12 Indian Air Force Mirage-2000 fighter jets struck on Jaish-e-Mohammed training camp in Balakot inside Pakistan in the early hours on February 26 with precision-guided munitions.

The entire operation of launching the airstrikes and coming back to Indian soil safely was codenamed 'Operation Bandar.' The name was given to maintain secrecy and ensure that the plans of the airstrikes don't leak out.

Exercise Orion 23: Indian male, female IAF warriors take part in multinational wargame

In a first, both female and male Indian Air Force warriors are taking part in the ongoing multinational wargame Exercise 'Orion' at Mont-de-Marsan in France. The multinational wargame code-named 'Orion' is being hosted by France involving many of its NATO and other important allies.

Taking to Twitter, Indian Air Force on Wednesday said, "Busy Minds, Busier Skies! A detailed pre-flight brief is as important as the flight itself. #IAF Air Warriors busy planning their routines during the ongoing #ExOrion 23." France and India began a military exercise 'Orion' at Mont-de-Marsan, an Air Force base of the French Air and Space Force (FASF) on April 17.

Taking to Twitter, France Ambassador Emmanuel Lenain earlier said, "France warmly welcomes the @IAF_MCC contin-

gent that will take part in exercise #Orion2023 from today! French & Indian #Rafale jets will soon fly together in the skies of France."

The exercise is being conducted from April 17 to May 5, 2023, with the IAF Contingent comprising four Rafale, two C-17, two Il-78 aircraft and 165 air warriors. This is the first overseas exercise for the IAF's Rafale aircraft, according to the statement released by Defence Ministry.

"Besides the IAF and the FASF, Air Forces from Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Spain and the United States would also be flying in this multilateral exercise. Participation in this exercise would further enrich the employment philosophy of the India Air Force, by imbibing the best practices from other Air Forces," the statement read.

360 Indians leave Jeddah under 'Operation Kaveri' on New Delhi-bound flight

As 'Operation Kaveri' continues, 360 Indians left Jeddah Airport on a flight bound for New Delhi and will soon be reunited with their families, the Union Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan said on Wednesday.

As the fighting between the Sudanese Army and paramilitary groups intensified in the capital Khartoum, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar informed on Monday that its 'Operation Kaveri' to evacuate its citizens from battle-torn Sudan is underway.

Operation Kaveri is a rescue operation launched by the central government to evacuate stranded Indian citizens from Sudan. "Happy to see off 360 Indians at Jeddah Airport in a flight bound for New Delhi They will be reaching the motherland soon, reuniting with their families Under #Operation-Kaveri the Government is working relentlessly to evacuate Indian nationals from Sudan & bring



them home safely," MoS Muraleedharan tweeted.

India has deployed its military planes and warships to rescue Indians from there.

Sudan is experiencing bloodshed as a result of clashes between the army and paramilitary forces. Even though there is a 72-hour ceasefire, there have been allegations of violence.

Fighting has erupted between soldiers loyal to Sudanese army leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his deputy, paramilitary

Rapid Support Soldiers (RSF) commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

The evacuation operation started in Port Sudan. Till now, an estimated 300-500 Indian citizens have been evacuated by ship and other evacuation processes are going on. The government sources also stated that the INS Teg is stationed at Port Sudan to bring back Indians from there to Jeddah.

Earlier, the INS Sumedha has already disembarked 278 Indians from there to Jeddah.

Chit..chat...

Delhi International Art Festival Makes a Splash

There are some art festivals in India that are iconic and every artist looks forward to being a part of it either as a participant or as an audience. Delhi International Art Festival (DIAF) is one for sure that everyone awaits eagerly. For the last few years due to Covid the festival did not take place and finally it did come back for the art lovers and what a splash it made, that it mesmerised one and all. I spoke with the very elated festival curator and director Padmashree Prathibha Prahlad and this is what she said, excerpts from the interview:

Back with a bang, after covid, how do you feel?

This year's Delhi International Arts Festival was nothing short of magic. It had divine blessings. Though talks were on about getting the Festival back since April 2022, things were not definite and funding was in huge doubt. It was only in November that we got a go-ahead for the Festival. I was overjoyed and I am glad it all fell into place and we could get DIAF to the audience. I am glad honourable Minister of State for External Affairs Ms. Meenakshi Lekhi and Honourable Ms. Maneka Gandhi came to support us along with many others.

I believe DIAF had interesting themes this year, please explain?

Yes, the festival this year was thematic with the three broad themes a) our epics and cultural treasures b) unsung heroes and heroines of the freedom struggle c) policies of the current Govt. that effect change in environment and ecology, not polluting the rivers, nurturing the girl child, and such like.

The venue was magical isn't it?

When Kartavya Path was decided as the main venue, the excitement was palpable. We never knew how challenging it was going to be or how expensive it would be to mount a huge festival for full 15 days in the two open air amphi-theatres of Katavyapath. There was only one thought on my mind. DIAF had reached India Gate and we had to do the best possible with the very meagre funds we had to ensure that our arts and our cultural legacy got a pride of place in our polity and



engaged, educated and entertained the masses and those not exposed to our arts in a meaningful manner. I think we accomplished this because we had overflowing audiences every single evening and people seemed to be thrilled that DIAF exposed them to our invaluable artistic wealth.

During Covid, many festivals went online but you choose not to, why?

I believe that performing arts have to be live and have a live audience for lasting impact. Editing videos, putting out 2-10 minute pieces online, trying to get maximum viewership and likes, fabricating numbers, pretending that online presence and number of likes was actual and real is all a mis-representation and a lie. To me, DIAF is a passion to engage and educate people about the depth, diversity and the invaluable wealth

of India's intangible heritage- not just a festival to earn money. I detest online dance videos and did not involve myself in anything to do with it - be they my own performances or festivals.

As always DIAF rocked, which was the most favourite part of the show for you?

The Festival really did Rock and How!!! Like I mentioned, the engagement was phenomenal, the whole place looked like paradise and I kept looking at our stage and backdrop and thinking the stars were dropping down from Heaven. There were many extraordinary performances, but my productions Walking with the Mahatma and Warrior Women of Bharat were truly special and got huge standing ovations.

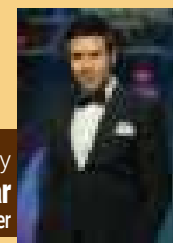
What was the highlight of this year's show?

There were exceptional productions based on epics-like Jaya Ram by Sutra Dance Company and Sri Ramayan by Pavitra Bhatt, Rasa United's Trayambakam, Prasiddha Repertory's Ekam Sat, Kathastra by Prabhat Group, theatrical productions like Veer Abhimanyu, Chavundaraya, Bacchi, productions on India's Freedom Struggle like Warrior Women of Bharat, Samarpan by Pulakeshi Kasturi's group, Rudramma by Alekhya Punjala's group etc., productions on environment & water preservation like A drop to the Ocean by Meera Das, Earth Diaries by Gauri Diwakar, Rivers to Reverse by Sruti Gopal, Guhya by Poornima Gururaj, productions on the girl child such as Ma Mujhe To Jeene Do by Shovana Narayan's group, Su-Shakti & others.

How difficult was it to get the show back on ground?

The number one difficulty is adequate funding. While the Government and Corporates spend crores on meaningless festivals with hundreds dancing or other such events, they do not grant adequate funds to a Festival that projects India in a strategic manner and brands it as a cultural super power on the world stage such as DIAF. I cannot understand why, even after 15 years of consistent and top quality work, we should struggle for grants and sponsorships every year. So, every year, it is a huge challenge to match the money we have with the visibility and expectations that people all over the world in culture have of DIAF. The second is a committed and talented office that knows administration of culture. Culture administration is a specialist's job, not everyone can easily manage that. It has been a real challenge to train people every year. I am praying that our Prime Minister intervenes and sets this right so that there is a course correct in arts administration by the Government machinery.

Interview by
Sandip Soparrkar
Ace Dance Choreographer



Entertainment

Bollywood Actresses have left stunned everyone with their action films on big screen



While it is often the male actors, who earn plaudits from fans and critics for their mind-bending action sequences in films, the Bollywood women are now giving their male counterparts a run for their money when it comes fighting villains on the big screen. Affirming that action films are no longer a male domain, some of the industry's best-known female faces have delivered stunning action sequences and more are joining Bollywood's very own Powerpuff Girls and aiming even higher.

Here's a list of leading Bollywood women, who have delivered high-octane action sequences, rivalling their male counterparts: 'Desi Girl' Priyanka Chopra has acted in several, hardcore action films, including 'Drona'. She was trained in Gatka, Capoeira and other martial arts for her role of a bodyguard in 'Drona'.

Actor Deepika Padukone delivered an action-packed performance in her recent release 'Pathaan'. She left audiences in awe with her impressive stunts and heart-stopping action sequences.

Katrina Kaif also impressed her fans with dizzying action sequences in films such as 'Tiger Zinda Hai', 'Ek Tha Tiger' and 'Phantom'. ANI



Singer Halsey, Alev Aydin parted ways?

If reports are to be believed, singer Halsey is no longer in a relationship with Alev Aydin. The duo called it quits after two years of dating, with the songstress seeking full custody of their 1-year-old son, Ender Ridley, Page Six reported.

According to court documents obtained by Page Six, the 28-year-old filed for full physical custody on April 5. However, Halsey requested joint legal custody and joint expenses with visitation rights. The 'Closer' singer -- who uses "they/them" pronouns -- announced they were expecting their first child in January 2021, while simultaneously confirming their relationship with the 40-year-old. "Surprise!" the singer captioned a series of topless, baby bump-baring photos at the time. Six months later, the couple welcome their child. ANI

Amid dating rumours, Gulshan Devaiah teases Vijay Varma with 'Tammannah' comment, Vijay responds with 'ek tarfa pyaar'



Has Gulshan Devaiah confirmed the relationship rumours between Vijay Varma and Tamannaah Bhatia? Vijay also cheekily replied to the 'Hunter' actor's 'punning' with words! Vijay shared the teaser of the upcoming web series 'Dahaad' on his Instagram handle on Wednesday. "Here's a sneak peek into Dahaad! #DahaadOnPrime, Trailer out on May 3", wrote Vijay in the caption.

Gulshan Devaiah wrote, "Meri Tammannah toh tu tha... achcha dhoka Diya hai tune mujhe. Thank god meri izzat nai luti... nai toh... hey ram..." This deliberate use of the word 'Tammannah' didn't go unnoticed by the netizens. Vijay also reacted to Devaiah's comment saying, "ek tarfa pyaar bhi pyaar hota hain gullu!"

For the last few months, the speculation was rife that Vijay and Tamannaah have been dating. They were spotted together on multiple occasions. They reportedly spent the New Year's eve together in Goa. A video went viral in which they could be seen cosying up and hugging each other at a popular restaurant in Goa. Although their faces weren't visible properly, eagle-eyed netizens were convinced that they were the ones present at the restaurant. ANI