



Rahul Gandhi arrives in Parliament after his Lok Sabha membership reinstated



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## I will be always with Sharad Pawar Saheb- Jayant Patil

Putting full stop to the rumours about Jayant Patil joining BJP, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) Maharashtra chief said that he is always committed to the party and its supreme leader Sharad Pawar. Speaking to afternoon Voice Jayant Patil said “I don’t know from where these rumours are coming from but such news are just speculations by some minds. I will be always with Sharad Pawar Saheb and Na-

tionalist Congress Party (NCP), there is no question of switching sides.”

When asked about the news that he met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Pune, Patil said, “I have no idea from where this information is coming. I met Sharad Pawar Saturday evening. Along with party colleagues, we were at my residence in Mumbai till 1.30 am. On Sunday morning, I met Sharad Pawar. And now I am heading to NCP office.”

When Pawar senior offered to step down a month ago, Patil broke down in public and prevailed on the NCP chief to change his decision.

During Shah’s Pune visit there were assumptions that Jayant Patil along with some MLAs were likely to join the Ajit Pawar faction of the NCP. In the recently concluded monsoon session of the Assembly, Deputy CM Ajit Pawar jokingly said, “We have set our eyes on you. But

you are not responding.” On July 2, Ajit Pawar along with over 35 MLAs joined the BJP-led coalition government in Maharashtra. Ajit Pawar was made deputy CM and was given finance portfolio, while eight others with him were made cabinet ministers.

Jayant Patil further stated, Ajit Pawar is my friend and leaving political differences aside we share that bond where one can have lighter moment.

## 2024 - Crucial but not difficult for BJP

Editoritis



Dr. Vaidehi

BJP has played quite a lot of twists and turns in politics. BJP is accused of accommodating all the corrupt politicians of other parties in alliance with them. In our culture the dreaded criminal Valya became Valmiki when he got right directions and orders in life, when a corrupt leader comes to BJP, it is chronicled that he will not do corruption again. All those corrupt leaders of other parties such as Shiv Sena and NCP are tamed down in alliance. No case against Ajit Pawar has been withdrawn since he joined BJP. But somewhere Maharashtra people are not happy, due to manipulative politics played in the open by BJP.

First, Eknath Shinde was cracked out of Shiv Sena, with snatching away the name and symbol of Shiv Sena the original. Now, Ajit Pawar faction has been lured to join the alliance of BJP. The mounting ED pressure and speculations of Ajit Pawar getting arrested made people believe that the BJP and Modi are definitely going to punish the corrupts. On several occasions Devendra Fadanavis and Modi made scorching attacks on Ajit Pawar and NCP by calling it a National corrupt party. The chances of BJP coming back to power in Maharashtra rests on the three-party alliance.

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# Editoritis

# 2024 - Crucial but not difficult for BJP

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*Third option is if BJP does extremely well in the local body and by polls there are chances of mass exodus from the alliance.*

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*A lot depends upon the general elections' result that will happen around May, 2024. Again, if BJP shows itself as too powerful engulfing the entire political field of the nation, becoming impressively strong, there is a possibility of the alliance crumbling.*

The three parties together have a comfortable majority and they can rock the boat at any cost. If the present coalition has to fall any one of the partners withdraw support. Why should they do that unless they have a better option.

Third option is if BJP does extremely well in the local body and by polls there are chances of mass exodus from the alliance. But in the recent local body election BJP's performance is just average. However, if BJP is able to do well in municipal elections there is a possibility of the party attracting MLAs. Also, if BJP does extremely well in assembly elections of other states, that too may have its reflections.

Right now many political parties in alliance with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Maharashtra, such as Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP) (mostly in Goa neighbouring area), Nationalist Congress Party of Ajit Pawar, Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde), Prahar Janshakti Party (PJP), Rashtriya Samaj Paksha (RSP), Republican Party of India (Athawale) (RPI(A), The parties that may possibly join the alliance in future - merely on account of them being part of the NDA earlier are Goa Forward Party (GFP) and Some small unknown parties may align as per the direction of the wind at that time.

A lot depends upon the general elections' result that will happen around May, 2024. Again, if BJP shows itself as too powerful engulfing the entire political field of the nation, becoming impressively strong, there is a possibility of the alliance crumbling. Undoubtedly, the BJP will emerge as a big party with a record-breaking and thumping victory. I can envisage Mr. Modi becoming PM for the third time in the 2024 elections.

Considering the opposition party's lack of vision without any constructive manifesto, a trustable face and conflict of interest could end the journey of many parties and politicians. In Maharashtra, the government should last till 2024, unless some constituent party goes crazy withdrawing support. Bawankule already made a statement to the media that, "In Maharashtra, we have started our work across 48 Lok Sabha seats and 288 Assembly constituencies. Irrespective of which seat who contests among our alliance partners, we will put our best efforts. BJP is leaving no stone unturned to attain its

goals." Political parties remain in power or vibrant in politics so long as the party follows its ideology. If the party try to change its ideology only to suit the particular time and space, the party will start its downward trend. Gradually the party becomes extinct too.

Already people have formed an opinion of Shiv Sena. The series of events that have shook the state have harmed Shiv Sena and Uddhav Thackeray. Regional parties in other states too lost their ground because of their arrogance. In Karnataka Deve Gowda who took over power from Ramakrishna Hegde in 1994, became too aggressive and arrogant. The party started diminishing. Now even the top leaders of the party are unable to win an election. Similar is the case in respect of Samajwadi Party, BSP, RJD, RLD, INLD, TDP, CPIM, etc. and Congress, too are following them in letter and spirit.

All these parties have been too powerful regional or national parties who never expected to be overpowered. But now they are finding survival difficult. In the past two successive elections in 2014 and 2019, the Narendra Modi factor played a significant role in Lok Sabha polls. The state BJP poll strategists believe Moditva will remain the integral factor even today. And people will decide on the Modi factor. Yet, the party believes it will have to strengthen its own organisation to take up the election challenges. Unlike in the past when Shiv Sena and BJP alliance fought against Congress-NCP alliance, the dynamics have changed. In the past one year, BJP's Operation Lotus led to splits in two regional parties-Shiv Sena led by Uddhav Thackeray and NCP led by Sharad Pawar. The Shiv Sena led by CM Eknath Shinde and NCP led by Deputy CM Ajit Pawar have pledged support to BJP both in government and pre-poll alliance for 2024. This time the elections ahead would be really interesting for everyone.



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Vaidehi has received several Awards like Icongokarmavir 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.

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## Letters to the Editor

### Hearty congratulations on completing 15 years

Anniversaries come and go but my love for 'Afternoon Voice' will remain forever. I am happy to know that AV has completed fifteen years of publication today and has now entered its sixteenth year. It seems just like yesterday that the paper have been started and today it has completed so many years of publication. Your main aim, Vaidehi fifteen years back was to make this newspaper as successful as the other newspapers available in the country and today it stands popular among the people of Mumbai and its suburbs.

Congratulations to you Vaidehi and the entire editorial team, especially Akshay Redij ji for making this newspaper a grand success and may it reach great heights in the years to come (For your kind information dear readers, Akshay Redij has been putting in a lot of effort in bringing out the online edition in time and has been working till late hours just to give us the latest information on what's happening in Mumbai and elsewhere in the country).

The one thing I also like about 'Afternoon Voice' is that it has given a place to new writers, which is a very good thing unlike other newspapers in the country. AV also does not contain yellow journalism.

Lastly, I would like to thank the editor Vaidehi Taman for giving me a trophy every year at the end of the function on May 1 at the Yashwantrao Chavan Auditorium for all the articles and the letters that I have contributed to the newspaper during the last fifteen years of its publication.

I am proud to be associated with this newspaper and write for it since its inception and will continue writing for this wonderful newspaper even in the future when I turn old and my hairs will turn grey. Feliz Aniversario (Anniversary wishes to you in Spanish).

Jubel D'Cruz

### US downgrade is a boon in disguise for our country & economy!

Markets needed a reason for correction & Fitch credit rating downgrading US from AAA to AA+ sent global markets tumbling down after a one-way rally. AA+ rating for US markets is nothing to worry much & credit rating agencies may have their own reasons to change their rating points which is subjective. US economy is in a fine fettle & the govt in power too have immediately questioned the ratings and denied any shortcomings as far as financial stability of their nation is concerned. America is the richest country in the world & the globe looks towards business opportunities with US irrespective of any rating downgrades.

It could be an boon in disguise for India which is slow & steadily improving its economy over the years & any US downgrade only reduces the gap between the economies of India & the United States. India undoubtedly is on a strong footing & we will be competing favorably with US economy in a couple of decades from now. Fall in markets is an buying opportunity for those who were waiting on the sidelines to invest & one can stagger their purchase at every fall!

S.N.Kabra

### Supreme Court's instructions

After the violence in Haryana's Nuh, the Supreme Court has instructed the Central, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi governments to take necessary steps to stop hate speech. This instruction is indispensable, but the Supreme Court should also define inflammatory speeches. Many inflammatory speeches are ignored in the name of freedom of expression. After the violence, hate speech is used from the both sides. The government should take necessary steps to stop it strictly without any discrimination.

#### Stoppage On Hate

Nowadays, there is a lot of competition from anti-social elements to spread and disseminate true and false videos and news with the intention of spreading toxicity, chaos and anarchy in the society. It is difficult for the reader, listener and viewer to decide what is right and what is wrong. There is an urgent need to tighten the code of conduct to prevent controversial, misleading and inflammatory content posted on social media. Those who make hate speech or spread hatred, anarchy and caste discrimination in the country, likewise, uploading fake videos should be strictly monitored. Criminals should be severely punished. Then, the dream of a developed country will be come to true.

N.Mateeni

# 5 Days Banking – Need of the Hour



Bank employees have been demanding for a long time to declare 5 working days. Bank staff currently are working on alternating Saturdays, which has caused considerable confusion among consumers who need to know if it is a working Saturday. Bank unions have long advocated for a five-day work week. Demand has increased since LIC approved a five-day week proposal ahead of its IPO. The demand for a 5-day work week first came after the policy was implemented in the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India, in May 2021.

The demand of bank employees' is not unreasonable because Central Government and most State Government offices work only five days. Forget Central & State Governments, Our regulator, the Reserve Bank of India works only 5 days a week. LIC is also working 5 days only. At the time of deciding 2 Saturdays off in 2015, there was an understanding that the outcome of 2 Saturdays off shall be analyzed and a decision to have 5 days banking will be taken in the next bipartite settlement.

According to bankers, mobile banking, ATMs, and online banking have become the key means for customers to access their bank accounts over the years. However, a subset

of customers remained reliant on bank branches. Banks are increasingly transferring clients to self-service by installing cash deposit machines and passbook printing devices. A five-day working week at banks may still be some time away. While an in-principle agreement has been reached between the Indian Banks' Association and public sector bank unions, a broader consensus will have to be reached with private sector banks and cooperative banks before this can be implemented.

At present, bank employees get off on Sundays, and second and fourth Saturdays. They also get holidays on festivals, and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) prepares the holiday list. Online services, however, remain functional on holidays as well. Further, with the advancement of technology, most of the transactions can be processed without physically visiting branches. Since 2015, the banks have developed various alternative delivery channels for delivery of various services and most of the services like, fund transfers, bank statements, cheque book requests, loan applications, cash withdrawal, transaction enquiry, account opening, life certificates etc. are available online without human intervention.

Negotiations between the Indian Banks' Association

(IBA) and the United Forum of Bank Employees have made significant progress towards implementing a five-day work week for banks. The IBA has agreed, in principle, to this proposal in exchange for longer work hours. According to the circular issued by the All India Bank Employees Association near the Indian Banks' Association, the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) is considering the demand of five days working in banks of bank unions. But, instead of this, the total working hours will have to be increased by 40 minutes per day.

If this proposal is implemented without further delay, it would provide much-needed relief to bank employees who have been working six days a week for several years. The change in the workweek would also bring banks in line with other industries that already operate on a five-day workweek. It would also allow bank employees to spend more time with their families and pursue other interests outside of work.

- Vinod Chandrashekar Dixit

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.)

# BJP MLAs mega meeting on August 18

The Lok Sabha elections are likely in April-May 2024 and Assembly polls in October-November 2024. The BJP, which is the largest party with 106 MLAs, knows that the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls are going to be little challenging especially seat sharing. In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP won 23 seats out of 48. Now, it has set an ambitious target of 48 out of 48 seats. However, BJP will have the alliance partner Shiv Sena (Shinde faction) and NCP (Ajit Pawar faction) with them. To discuss all the aspects and kick start its election campaigns, Maharashtra BJP has

convened a meeting of MLAs on August 18. The meeting at BJP headquarters in Mumbai will be addressed by Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis and party state chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss electoral challenges ahead of 2024 Lok Sabha and Assembly polls.

Bawankule already made statement to the media that, "In Maharashtra, we have started our work across 48 Lok Sabha seats and 288 Assembly constituencies. Irrespective of which seat who contests among our alliance partners, we will put out best efforts. BJP is leaving

no stone unturned to attain its goals."

In the past two successive elections in 2014 and 2019, the Narendra Modi factor played a significant role in Lok Sabha polls. The state BJP poll strategists believe Modi factor will remain the integral factor. And people will decide on Modi factor. Yet, the party believes it will have to strengthen its own organisation to take up the election challenges. Unlike in the past when Shiv Sena and BJP alliance fought against Congress-NCP alliance, the dynamics have changed.

In the past one year, BJP's Operation Lotus led to splits in

two regional parties—Shiv Sena led by Uddhav Thackeray and NCP led by Sharad Pawar. The Shiv Sena led by CM Eknath Shinde and NCP led by Deputy CM Ajit Pawar have pledged support to BJP both in government and pre-poll alliance for 2024. A senior BJP functionary revealed, "The task before us is to bridge the differences between BJP, Shiv Sena (Shinde faction) and NCP (Ajit Pawar). Unless there is unity at grassroots level, it will defeat the stated objective." Another issue which confronts BJP is the sense of having to take backseat in the three-party coalition gov-

ernment.

The party workers are not very pleased with the developments where BJP with 106 MLAs have only nine ministers in government. While Shinde faction with 40 MLAs and Ajit Pawar's NCP with 36 plus get same the share of nine cabinet ministers each. Insiders indicated that Fadnavis's address to BJP MLAs will be to impress upon them the larger picture and prepare them for coming polls. With the party determined to bag each and every seat, the mantra to party MLAs, cadre is to treat the 2024 polls as a do or die battle.

## It is mandatory for sugar mills to pay FRP to sugarcane farmers - DCM Fadnavis



Deputy C Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis told media that the empowerment of primary agriculture credit societies with multi-purpose status will bring real transformation at grassroots "A 20-point programme for strengthening Primary Agriculture Credit Societies (PACS) is a big step forward. The revival and strengthening of PACS will pave the way forward for expansion of agriculture businesses and help farmers," D CM said. It must be mentioned here that PACS is a basic unit and smallest cooperative credit institution in state/

country. It functions at grassroots essentially at village and gram panchayat levels.

Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis also stated that the reforms started by the Centre in cooperative sector has helped Maharashtra the most. The Centre's decision to exempt the tax on amount above FRP (Fair & Remunerative Price) paid to sugarcane farmers has seen the state getting maximum benefit worth Rs 8,000 crore, Fadnavis said. It is mandatory for sugar mills to pay FRP to sugarcane farmers. But those mills which paid farmers an amount higher than FRP were

taxed. As a result, farmers were deprived of higher rates. Over the years, the cumulative tax amount worth Rs 8,000 crore was unpaid. Despite repeated requests from a delegation led by sugar federation, the issue remained unresolved. After Amit Shah took charge as Minister for Cooperation, he addressed the issue of not only exempting tax on funds paid beyond FRP, but also accumulated tax with retrospective effect.

There is a total of one lakh PACS across the country. Maharashtra leads with maximum number of over 21,000 PACS. The main function of PACS is to provide short and medium-term purpose loans to its members. It draws funds from central financial agencies to help its members. Through PACS, the larger objective is to drive cooperative sector through grassroots institutions to ensure it benefits the smaller and marginal farmers living in distant villages. Earlier, responding to a question from media on whether Amit Shah and NCP state chief Jayant Patil held a meeting in Pune, Fadnavis said, "It was not true."

## Mumbai: 796 buses remain off roads as strike by drivers of private operators hired by BEST continues

As many as 796 of the more than 1,600 buses wet leased by Mumbai's civic transport utility BEST remained off roads on Monday as drivers of the private bus opera-

tors continued their strike for the sixth day over salary hike and other demands, officials said.

Sunil Vaidya, spokesperson of the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST),

said the public transport body operated 603 wet leased buses with its own drivers on various bus routes, along with operating around 1,390 of its own buses. PTI

## Sanjay Raut: During elections, BJP said it would give statehood to Delhi, but lost to Kejriwal... they are jealous

Head of Union Home Minister Amit Shah moving the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2023, for consideration and passing in Rajya Sabha, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP from the House that the Opposition bloc INDIA would oppose it.

He also said that BJP had promised statehood for Delhi in the 2020 Assembly elections, but lost to the Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). "This bill is an attack on the federal structure of India... Kejriwal's



govt is doing good work in various fields including education, health. They are jealous... We will oppose it in the Rajya Sabha," he said.

## Train firing: Accused RPF constable's police custody extended till Aug 11

A court here on Monday extended the police remand of Railway Protection Force (RPF) constable Chetan Singh till August 7 for allegedly shooting dead his senior colleague and three passengers on a moving train.

The Government Railway Police (GRP) sought the extension of his custody for seven days, saying they need to identify the witnesses and scan CCTV footage. The magistrate, however, granted Singh's custody to the police till August 11. The GRP has added Indian Penal Code section 153-A, for promoting

enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, in the case against Singh. The incident took place on July 31 on board the moving Jaipur-Mumbai Central Express near Palghar railway station in Maharashtra. Accused constable Chetan Singh (34) allegedly shot dead his senior - RPF Assistant Sub-Inspector Tikaram Meena - and three passengers on board the train, officials said. Singh was nabbed with his weapon later while trying to flee after passengers pulled the chain of the train which stopped near Mira Road station (on the Mumbai suburban network). PTI



## Nation

### Parliament Day 13: Delhi Services bill to be moved in RS, Data Protection bill likely to be passed in Lok Sabha



Lok Sabha after a walkout of the Opposition.

In the Rajya Sabha, there are a total of 245 seats, out of which 8 are currently vacant. This means the current strength is 237. Thus, the majority mark to pass the Bill in the Upper House will be 119. On the other hand, the combined strength of all the parties that have extended support to the AAP, including the Congress, is 107. YSRCP and Biju Janata Dal (BJD) have extended their support to the bill, which will be tabled in the Rajya Sabha. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has 112 seats. With support from BJD's 9 seats, YSRCP's 9 seats, and TDP's 1 seat, the total will reach 131 seats, paving the way for the bill to be passed in the Upper House. ANI

Parliament is expected to face a logjam on Monday between Treasury and Opposition Benches as the government attempts to seek passage of the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2023, in Lok Sabha. The introduction of the bill last week was vehemently opposed

by the Opposition. According to the listed legislative business of Rajya Sabha for the day, Union Home Minister Amit Shah is set to move for consideration and passing the Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2023 today. The bill was cleared in

### Rajya Sabha Chairman revokes suspension of Congress MP Rajani Patil from House



Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on Monday revoked suspension of Congress MP Rajani Ashokrao Patil after a motion was moved and adopted in the House. The MP was suspended from the House in February this year for videographing proceedings and violating rules.

Patil was initially suspended for budget session of Parliament but her suspension was extended on the last day of session. Invoking Rule 266 read with Rule 256, the Chairman then had said that the February 10, 2023 suspension order of Rajani Ashokrao Patil may continue to be in force beyond the current session and till the House has the benefit of the

recommendations by the Privileges Committee.

The opposition parties have been seeking revocation of her suspension. Dhankhar announced the decision to revoke suspension of Patil after BJP MP Saroj Pandey raised the matter. Not much business could be transacted on Rajya Sabha in the morning session on Monday as the House was adjourned till 2 pm following protests by opposition. ANI

### Nuh violence: 156 people arrested, 56 FIRs registered so far

As many as 156 people have been arrested and 56 FIR's registered so far in connection with the violence and rioting at Haryana's Nuh district on Monday, officials said. With this, six people have been confirmed dead and eighty-eight are injured so far in the district, officials confirmed.

District Magistrate, Nuh, on Monday said, "Banks and ATMs will remain open in the district till 3 pm today during the relaxation of the curfew," The curfew in Haryana's violence-hit Nuh district was lifted for the movement of the public from 9 am to 1 PM on Monday as part of the attempt to restore normalcy. ANI

### Rahul Gandhi arrives in Parliament after his Lok Sabha membership reinstated

Congress MP Rahul Gandhi arrived in Parliament on Monday after the Lok Sabha secretariat revoked his suspension from the House today. Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (I.N.D.I.A) alliance leaders raised 'Rahul Gandhi Zindabad' slogans as they welcomed him to Parliament.

Upon reaching Parliament House, the Congress leader paid tributes to Mahatma Gandhi. He also updated his account bio on X (formerly known as Twitter) from 'Dis'Qualified MP' to 'Member of Parliament'. Congress leaders were also seen distributing sweets outside the Parliament. Earlier today Lok Sabha Secretariat Gandhi's membership



after Supreme Court had on August 4 stayed his conviction in the 'Modi' surname remark case. The apex court issued notices to the Gujarat government and the complainant in July on an appeal of the Congress leader challenging the Gujarat High Court order. The Gujarat High Court, had, in

its order earlier, declined to stay his conviction in the criminal defamation case in which Rahul was sentenced to two years in jail by the Surat court over the 'Modi surname' remark. After his conviction in the case, Gandhi was disqualified as MP from Kerala's Wayanad on March 24. ANI

### ASI survey of Gyanvapi resumes on day 4; start delayed due to rush at Kashi Vishwanath

The Archaeological Survey of India resumed the survey of the Gyanvapi mosque here on the fourth day on Monday but the start of work was delayed by three hours on account of the rush at the adjacent Kashi Vishwanath temple.

Government counsel Rajesh Mishra said all the three domes and basements of the Gyanvapi complex were covered in the survey on Sunday. But the resumption of work on Monday was delayed by three hours and it could start only by at 11 am due to the rush of devotees at the Kashi



Vishwanath temple, he said. The work of mapping, measuring and photography of the places covered on Sunday will continue, he said. "The work of photography, mapping and measurement was done and the basement of Vyas ji has also been surveyed. The work of the survey will take more time," he had said on Sunday. PTI

### Rajya Sabha MPs move suspension of business notice to discuss Manipur

Rajya Sabha MP Manoj Kumar Jha, AAP MP Raghav Chadha, Congress MPs Jebi Mather and Syed Naeer Hussain gave suspension of business notice under Rule 267 in Rajya Sabha to discuss the situation in Manipur in the House.

According to the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of



States, Rule 267 relates to suspension of rules. It says, "Any member, may, with the consent of the Chairman, move that any

rule may be suspended in its application to a motion related to the business listed before the Council of that day and if the motion is carried, the rule in question shall be suspended for the time being: Provided further that this rule shall not apply where specific provision already exists for suspension of a rule under a particular chapter of the Rules."



World

## Russia has all capabilities to counter security threats at Black Sea, says senior diplomat



Russia has all military and military-technical capabilities to counter threats in the Black Sea, and the country's security will be ensured, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov told TASS. "The main thing is that we have all military and military-technical capabilities to stop this situation without compromising the interests of our security, the security of our people and facilities," the deputy minister said.

"We will never compromise our security interests and will reliably ensure them," he added. According to Ryabkov, Russia keeps on focusing the West's attention on the security situation

in the Black Sea and the United States and United Kingdom's policy on this matter has no common sense. "I think that Washington and London's escalators and dangerous course have no spark of common sense. We will continue relevant efforts," he said.

"The Americans are playing with fire and this is dangerous. In the past, we saw situations when they were on the brink of a more far-fetched incident but have been managing to escape it so far. This is why we call on them to show more wisdom and not to believe allegations of their own propaganda that they can resolve these or those tasks they have set for themselves the way they need. No way. We will never bargain our security interests and ensure them reliably," he added. ANI

## Australia to host the latest edition of 10-day Malabar exercise for first time



The latest edition of the Malabar exercise is all set to commence in the Australian waters from August 11-21 that will see the participation of the United States, Japan, India and Australia. Australia is also the host for this mega event which is being hosted there 'for the first time'.

The ten-day exercise aims to deepen the interoperability between the key partners, Australia, India, Japan and the United States who are also members of the Quad or the Quadrilateral se-

curity dialogue. The exercise is also designed to deepen the partnership for the Indo-Pacific, for shared aspiration, for a free, open and resilient Indo-Pacific and it will be followed immediately afterwards by AUSINDEX, the bi-annual naval exercise between India and Australia.

The Malabar series of exercises began as an annual bilateral naval exercise between India and the US in 1992. Japan joined the Naval Exercises in 2015. Malabar 2020 saw the participation of the Australian Navy also. ANI

## Armed attack on Philippines would invoke US mutual defence commitments: State Department



The US State Department on Sunday condemned China's aggression against the Philippines in the South China Sea where it blocked Filipino manoeuvres with water cannons. "The United States reaffirms an armed attack on Philippine public vessels, aircraft, and armed forces—including those of its Coast Guard in the South China Sea—would invoke U.S. mutual defence commitments under Article IV of the 1951 US Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty," the statement warned China in a press statement.

"The United States stands with our Philippine allies in the face of dangerous actions by the

Coast Guard and maritime militia of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to obstruct an August 5 Philippine resupply mission to Second Thomas Shoal in the South China Sea," Mathew Miller, US Department of State spokesperson said in a press release. "Firing water cannons and employing unsafe blocking manoeuvres, PRC ships interfered with the Philippines' lawful exercise of high seas freedom of navigation and jeopardized the safety of the Philippine vessels and crew," the release added. The US State Department Spokesperson said the actions by China threaten the status quo of the South China Sea. ANI

## UK PM Sunak unveils tech partnership to crack down on illegal migration

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has unveiled a voluntary partnership between social media companies and the UK government to accelerate action to tackle people smuggling content online, such as criminals sharing information about illegal English Channel crossings.

In an announcement over the weekend, Sunak said the move would help meet his "stop the boats" target of clamping down on illegal migrants being charged large sums by human traffickers to make dangerous crossings across the high seas. The online content being targeted by the new partnership would cover discount offers for groups of people, free spaces for children, offers of



false documents and false claims of safe passage – all of which the government says target vulnerable people for profit and put people's lives at risk through dangerous and illegal journeys.

"To stop the boats, we have to tackle the business model of vile people smugglers at source," said Sunak in a statement released by

10 Downing Street. "That means clamping down on their attempts to lure people into making these illegal crossings and profit from putting lives at risk. This new commitment from tech firms will see us redouble our efforts to fight back against these criminals, working together to shut down their vile trade," he said. PTI

## Pakistan's return to Khalistan Playbook needs urgent, proactive approach from India

The rise in Khalistan activities in Punjab as well as overseas countries is of utmost concern and requires a proactive approach from policymakers and the national security establishment to counter the Pakistan-sponsored threat, author Antariksh Singh wrote in a piece in Khalsa Vox. Notably, the Khalistan movement — supported by Pakistan — has lately seen a steady rise among the Sikh diaspora in Canada, Aus-

tralia, the US, and the UK, where it holds a significant presence.

This upswing in activity since 2022 appears to be externally instigated, with elements associated with the Pakistani ISI calling for a 'referendum' on Khalistan. The author stated that the Khalistani groups abroad have resorted to violent acts, primarily targeting Indian interests, especially in Punjab. Diplomatic missions have been vandalized, temples defaced, and

past incidents of Khalistan terror in India have been glorified. A concerning incident occurred in July 2023 when the Indian Consulate in San Francisco was set on fire by Khalistan separatists belonging to the newly formed group 'Sikhs for Justice.' This organization further escalated the situation by calling for the 'killing' of Indian diplomats stationed in Canada, the US, the UK, and Australia, Khalsa Vox piece stated. ANI



# What if Thar Desert is Covered with Solar Plants?



C.K. Subramaniam

In a world exhausted by fossil fuels solar panels can provide a sustainable solution to energy problems. But they also come up with a couple of issues for one, solar farms are massive and they to be set up somewhere that gets lot of sunlight. Now if only we had a large mass of unused land, that gets guaranteed sunlight every day. Could we cover an entire desert in solar panels and would that be enough to power the whole world? This is what if and here is what would happen, if we covered Thar desert with solar panels.

The Thar Desert, also known as The Great Indian Desert, is a large, arid region in the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent that forms a natural boundary between India and Pakistan. It is the world's 17th largest desert, and the world's 9th largest subtropical desert. If we covered the Thar Desert with just 1.2 percent of the large land on sand in solar panels, we could harness enough power to meet the energy needs of the entire country. How would we overcome the obstacles? How could this project change the deserts climate.

Usually, a solar farm is built to prevent changes to environment, but if we built one in Thar desert, it might cause some changes of its own. If we lined the desert floor with giant solar panels, it would double the rainfall in the region and increase vegetation cover by about 20 percent. It sounds a little unbelievable and appear to be a miracle, but you look at the benefits then you can get a clear picture. Thar sand is usually light in colour, which means it tends to reflect a lot of light and heat back up in the air, if we covered the sand in dark solar panels and the ground temperature would increase warmer air rises to areas in the atmosphere, where it's cooler and moisture there condense and falls as rains.

Before you knew it, one of the most extreme climates on Earth would undergo a significant make over. So provide sustainable energy solutions, but also add much needed greenery to our largest desert, then why we wait so long and make our dreams of having continuous power supply through solar energy. We may



now think why we have not this already and solved our power problem. It may appear little more complicated than it appear to be.

For one thing, it is great to produce enough energy power to the country but then you have to worry about how you are going to get it in our daily usage. The most likely place this energy would travel to first Central India. Energy so produced can be used for our indigenous requirement in industry and the need for coal, electricity and diesel can be curtailed to the bear minimum. We should have the will to do it.

Currently electrical grids in India are not reliable and they are wide and far away and it is somewhat difficult to get where they need to go. Transporting power over long distances leads to power loss up to 10%, which cost most dear and the struggle for energy would go on. It would probably better to attempt it on a small scale first and assess the success and make an all out attempt to try on a larger scale. Solar panels have come up in Pune, Manipal, Bengaluru, some other southern states as well and other places in India as well. It is time to start the process from grass root level from housing societies and save energy to the hilt. We all need to make the solar endeavour a popular one and gain optimum benefit of lower cost once it is established.

Solar energy products are an unique innovation and its use should be fully taken advantage of. Even Nationalised Banks are financing for such schemes including that of installation of Solar panels at a concessional rate of

interest. By making use of solar energy, we can save Power generated by the regular methods. So, it is time for the Government to offer tax rebates to the individuals and offices preferring to us Solar energy in their daily consumption of electricity. Though the progress in making use of the alternate energy is slow, it is a great relief for the Government and they must sponsor such group loans and provide subsidy to attract more users of Solar energy. As a matter of fact, the power generated by Solar panels provide hot water in our wash rooms and help to reduce power tariff very much. Common lights used in housing complexes, corridor and parking lots can be managed by Solar Power.

Saving Electricity should be our first aim and it is up to Government to chalk out a policy by which more and more Tax Rebate should be extended so that more and more people go for the option. Necessary expertise should be provided to install Solar Panels in Terrace and even in balconies of the building. Powers shortage is posing a big problem in Maharashtra in general and the country in particular. Erratic power cuts cause innumerable problems to people in metro cities. People go in for generators and inverters to solve this perennial problem. With so many reservoirs at our disposal we can solve the problem without much fuss.

Windmill can also solve the power problem partially. However, the best remedy is using Solar Power for domestic usage. Solar water heater is a device that can heat the water up to a

temperature of 80 degree centigrade. The system consists of a flat plate collector, a Water Tank, pipes and fittings. The solar water heater can be used both for commercial as well as domestic purposes. You can harvest abundant solar energy through Solar Water Heating system, which can reduce your electricity as well as gas bills. Solar water heater usage should be given more publicity and the necessary feedback to be passed to the individuals through advertisement and Television coverage. It is a right step in the right direction go in for Solar energy products and use in in the best way possible.

The latest conceptual thinking world over in the generation and conservation of power is Solar energy. It is being propagated world over by many of the developed countries. An eco-friendly concept. The pioneering efforts of the developed countries like Germany has proved to the world that the solar energy is certainly a feasible, economical and successful concept. Why can't the India too follow this concept to save the planet from the adverse effects of global radiation? It is high time that we all should apply our minds in this direction. All the Governments, quasi-Governments, Social Organisations, United Nations etc. should take initiative to follow the Nations like Germany and save the planet from radiation as also improve power generation for a sustained growth in productivity and economy.



# Entertainment



## Wamiqa Gabbi to share screen space with Varun Dhawan in Atlee's film

Actor Wamiqa Gabbi will be seen sharing screen space with Varun Dhawan in Atlee's new film. Expressing her excitement about the project, Wamiqa in a statement said, "I am thrilled and grateful to be a part of this project. The opportunity to work alongside Varun Dhawan and Keerthy Suresh is definitely something I'm looking forward to. I have been looking and waiting to do a full commercial Hindi project and this is just it. And I'm really excited to be working and collaborating with Murad sir and Atlee." However, Atlee and Varun have not officially revealed anything about their collaboration. **ANI**



## Every girl would want to imagine looking like 'Baang' heroine: Shanvi Srivastava

Kannada actor Shanvi Srivastava says she was never an "action film kind of girl" but could not say no to "Baang", which is slated for release on August 18.

"Before this film, I never used to watch action films... Every girl would want to imagine themselves looking like that. Having that power, having that kind of authority..." Shanvi told PTI.

Once she decided to take up the role, the actor says she went through a slew of films to get a grip on her character. "I play one of the gangsters in 'Baang', a glamorous one at that. It took one month time (to be convinced). I saw the footage of the film they had shot before meeting me. The kind of sequences they had, the way she handles the gun, the sword... I couldn't say no," said Shanvi. Born and brought up in Varanasi, the actor moved to Mumbai with her mom and sister to pursue a career in acting. Her debut Telugu film, "Lovely" happened "just like that", she said. "They wanted a college going, simple looking girl and I got the part without really any effort," she said. Kannada debut in "Chandralekha" too happened quite serendipitously. "Because the girl they originally chose looked similar to me. Her dates were not available so I got the part," she said. She may have lucked out in getting breaks, but the decision to venture into Kannada films, is a conscious one, the actor said. **PTI**

## Gal Gadot called my pregnancy great luck for 'Heart of Stone', had my back, says Alia Bhatt



When Alia Bhatt shared the news of her pregnancy with Gal Gadot, the actor says the "Heart of Stone" producer-star reacted with excitement and assured her "that she's got my back".

Bhatt, who is making her Hollywood with the film, said Gadot was "warm, excited and literally started cheering". "I remember when I had to call Gal and let her know that I was pregnant. I'm supposed to start shooting and I have all these action sequences but I wanted her to know because she's the producer on the film and also I would have some restrictions maybe.

"And she was so warm, excited and started cheering, talking about how it's great luck for the movie and that she's got my back. I think very rarely you meet somebody and in the first two minutes feel very well taken care of, extreme warmth and just safety," the actor told PTI in a virtual roundtable. **PTI**

## BTS member Suga initiates military enlistment process: management agency

BTS management agency BigHit Music on Monday said Suga has started the military enlistment process, making him the third member of the South Korean music septet to fulfil his mandatory duty. The agency shared the announcement on the global fan community forum Weverse, a day after the 30-year-old rapper -- whose real name is Min Yoon-gi -- concluded his 'D-Day' concert in Seoul. "We would like to inform our fans that SUGA has initiated the military enlistment process by applying for the termination of his enlistment postponement. **PTI**

