



Bombay HC dismissed a plea of UBT Sena MLA Ravindra Waikar for

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India reaches on 111th rank at Global Hunger Index, NGO's and Activist claimed "Inefficiency of system"



AV Team

There are many government schemes launched in the country to fight against hunger but still when it comes to the ranking of the country the report does not look good. It seems that we are going into grave situ-

ation despite of producing tonnes food grains in the country.

Recently Global Hunger Index report was released for the year 2023 in which India ranked at 111th position out of 125 countries. When it comes to the ranking in the year 2015 India was at 105th position.

The food Corporation of India came

into effect in the year 1965 for the purpose of procurement, storage and distribution of food grains in which according to Public Distribution Scheme wheat and rice was distributed for all.

Revamped Public Distribution System launched in the year 1992 support the backward people provides 20kg of

food grains.

Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) launched in the year 1997 supports the citizens falling into poor, non-poor, Absolute poverty line, below poverty line which provides 35 kg of food grains.

Antyodaya Anna Yojana launched in the year 2000 which covers poorest of the poor people and provides 35 kg of food grains.

Annapurna Scheme launched in the year 2000 this is given to Indigent senior citizens and provides 10kg of food grains for free.

National Food Security Act launched in the year 2013 which is given to households and it includes 5kg of food grains per person per month.

So How is Global Hunger Index calculated?

It is checks each and every country's issues and data of undernourishment, Child stunting, Child wasting, Child mortality after the hunger index is calculated.

We also tried to speak to some activist and NGO to understand the actual situation and need of opening these kind of help to support people.

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Blue tick craze on social media

Editoritis



Dr. Vaidehi

The temptation of the small blue tick next to the account name on 'X' formerly known as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram is something that users desire for. As soon as it reflects on your account, next to your name, it boosts you to celebrity status. The over-estimated blue tick is like a ritual, to get this blue tick people pay thousands and lakhs to various agencies those who claims to get it done.

I don't know why this blue tick trend in invented and how that change the stand of a person. Why is there such a madness involved to it? May be the blue tick beside name makes the account look special. That is, it adds more power and value to your brand name. Regrettably, social media is a place where entities and brands get cliched every day.

Having a verified account also helps contain brand identity theft.

If someone is impersonating a name or a brand, the blue tick helps the users separate one from the imposters. Trustworthiness is yet another bonus of having a verified account. The blue tick automatically builds confidence. Considering that only limited accounts are verified, users are more likely to trust your account if it has a blue tick. It also gives easy access to special features such as the swipe-up feature on Instagram stories. Brands need a minimum of 10,000 users to get access to the swipe-up tool. But verified accounts are an exception to this rule.

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Editoritis

Blue tick craze on social media

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If Instagram hasn't verified your account on its own, you can send a 'request for verification.' However, 95% of such requests aren't rewarded.

Your brand needs to be covered in independent national and/or international press publications. This doesn't include press releases, social media links, and mentions. I

It is for this reason that more and more individuals and brands are after the sought-after blue tick. In conclusion, it is safe to say that the blue tick craze is here to stay!

Getting your account verified on Instagram isn't as easy as getting it verified on Facebook or Twitter. Agencies with ties to Instagram can also put in requests for Instagram verification for your brand. If Instagram hasn't verified your account on its own, you can send a 'request for verification.' However, 95% of such requests aren't rewarded. It's important to show a high level of engagement with your community. This proves that you are relevant and important.

Your brand needs to be covered in independent national and/or international press publications. This doesn't include press releases, social media links, and mentions. It is critical for you or your brand needs to be perceived as notable and credible enough to be verified. A website and a Wikipedia page alone won't make the cut. Instagram looks for proof that your brand is genuine, popular, and influential enough to be considered for Instagram page verification. If your company isn't widely known, the chances of getting verification are slim.

Unlike what majority of the websites say, having a large number of followers isn't the major factor in how Instagram decides credibility. Having a verified account not only lends you a 'celebrity status', but it also sets you apart from the common crowd and imposters. It is for this reason that more and more individuals and brands are after the sought-after blue tick. In conclusion, it is safe to say that the blue tick craze is here to stay!

Twitter has recently said that the company would give users "more context" on why verification requests that bring the blue tick mark on the profile have been denied. In a series of tweets, Twitter highlights those users need to ensure all criteria before applying; however, if the application is denied, applicants would now be provided with more details via email. With this, Twitter has also resumed the verification process after launching it in batches this year. The company notes that some users may not be able to see the option to apply yet since it is getting a large volume of requests.

In the tweet, Twitter notes, "Decision emails will now give more context on why requests don't meet our criteria." Speaking over the "authenticity" criteria, applicants must note the website is verified with references to the user's name and Twitter handle. In terms of follower count, a company/brand/organisation those applying as an activist/influential individual, the count must be in the top .05 percent of active accounts located in the same geographic region. Journalists applying for Twitter Blue badge or tick on the profile must link to their specific about page and bio,



or to articles that carry their references. Independent or freelance journalists must provide links to three articles in verified publications in the six months before applying.

Twitter explains that the blue verified badge on the profile lets people know that an account of public interest is authentic. The company notes that governments, companies, news organizations, entertainment, sports stars, and activists can all apply to get the verified badge. If your account qualifies basis requirements, you should keep a lookout for the account verification option to appear in your account settings. Once it appears, you can tap on it to begin the process. Select the appropriate category that you fall under, supply a government-issued identity document, and hit submit.

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Navaratri Shubh Ratri



- C.K. Subramaniam

Navaratri is a festival of nine nights and ten days that celebrates the victory of Goddess Durga over the demon Mahishasura. It is a time to worship the different forms of the goddess and seek her blessings for happiness, health, and prosperity.

One of the ways to greet and honor the goddess during Navaratri puja is to recite shlokas or hymns that praise her attributes and deeds. Shlokas are sacred verses that are composed in Sanskrit and have a rhythmic and musical quality. They are believed to have spiritual and divine power that can invoke the grace of the goddess.

There are many shlokas that can be used for greeting Navaratri puja, depending on the day, the form of the goddess, and the intention of the devotee. On the first day of Navaratri, the goddess is worshipped as Shaila Putri, the daughter of the mountains. She rides a bull and carries a trident and a lotus in her hands. She represents strength, courage, and devotion. I bow to Shaila Putri, who fulfills the desires of her devotees, who has a crescent moon on her forehead, who rides a bull, who holds a trident, and who is glorious.

On the second day of Navaratri, the goddess is worshipped as Brahmacharini, the one who observes celibacy. She walks barefoot and carries a rosary and a water pot in her hands. She represents purity, wisdom, and penance. May the supreme Brahmacharini, who holds a rosary and a water pot in her lotus-like hands, be pleased with me.

On the third day of Navaratri, the goddess is worshipped as Chanda ghanta, the one who has a bell-shaped moon on her forehead. She rides a tiger and has ten arms with various weapons and gestures. She represents beauty, grace, and valor. May Chanda ghanta, who is mounted on a tawny lion, who is armed with fierce weapons, who is renowned by this name, bestow her grace on me.

On the fourth day of Navaratri, the goddess is worshipped as Kushmanda, the one who created the universe with her smile. She rides a lion and has eight arms with various objects and gestures. She represents creativity, joy, and generosity. May Kushmanda, who holds a pot full of

nectar and blood in her lotus-like hands, grant me auspiciousness.

On the fifth day of Navaratri, the goddess is worshipped as Skanda Mata, the mother of Skanda or Kartikeya. She rides a lion and has four arms with a baby Skanda in one of them. She represents motherhood, love, and protection. May the ever-glorious Skanda Mata, who is seated on a throne, who has lotus-like hands, who always grants auspiciousness, be favorable to me.

On the sixth day of Navaratri, the goddess is worshipped as Katyayani, the daughter of sage Katyayani. She rides a lion and has four arms with a sword, a lotus, and gestures of protection and blessing. She represents courage, victory, and devotion. May Katyayani, who has a radiant smile, who rides a magnificent tiger, who is the slayer of demons, bestow good fortune on me.

On the seventh day of Navaratri, the goddess is worshipped as Kaalaratri, the dark night of time. She rides a donkey and has four arms with a sword, a trident, and gestures of fearlessness and blessing. She represents power, destruction, and liberation. She is Kaalaratri, the supreme goddess, who has a dreadful appearance, who has disheveled hair, who has four arms, who is extremely terrifying.

On the eighth day of Navaratri, the goddess is worshipped as Mahagauri, the one who is extremely fair. She rides a bull and has four arms with a trident, a drum, and gestures of protection and blessing. She represents purity, beauty, and grace. I worship Mahagauri, who is as bright as the full moon, who is seated on a lotus in the lunar disc, who is the eighth form of Gauri, who has three eyes, who holds a trident and a drum in her hands.

She is the final form of Durga, celebrated on the final night of Navaratri. She bestows blessings upon all deities and devotees of the faith. She is also known as Shri Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. The color of the ninth day of Navaratri is blue, which shows admiration. May She Shower Her Blessings on all of us.

Letters to the Editor

India is against extremism

While addressing the inaugural ceremony of ninth G20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit -P20, PM Modi rightly said that this is a time for peace and brotherhood, a time to move together, a time to move forward together and denounced all forms of terrorism and said that it is "against humanity".

Just a few days ago after the brutal attack of Hamas on innocent Israelites the Prime Minister expressed the nation's solidarity with Israel, saying India stands with the nation in its hour of grief. The statement was misconstrued by many that includes the opposition, the left and some fanatical organisations which taking this as an opportunity for religious appeasement and casting eyes on the vote bank stormed onto the streets posing themselves as 'saviours'.

Infact, are not they tarnishing their own image as they are supporting terrorism and violence to achieve goals. India does support the Palestinian cause but not through radicalism and extremism. India has always rejected terrorism and advocated for peaceful negotiations to settle all sorts of crisis.

These so called " saviours and sympathisers " have forgotten how much our nation suffered due to cross-border terrorism for many years and now reduced to minimum as the Government started giving instant retaliation without any hesitation.

Let us not forget there is no good or bad terrorism and before it spreads like a pandemic the whole world should come together and put an end to this menace which is against humanity.

M Pradyu

International Nuisance

Ever since the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas launched a deadly attack on Israel on Saturday (7th October) leaving hundreds dead, several videos have

surfaced online from various countries wherein Palestinian supporters are seen celebrating Hamas's offensive. Such celebrations were seen across the globe, including the UK, Germany, Canada, Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Lebanon.

On social media, videos emerged of people in London cheering the attack on Israel while wielding Palestinian flags. Lebanon celebrates killings of Israeli civilians. In Lebanon's Beirut, several bikers were seen waving Hamas and Palestinian flags. In Iran, people gathered at the Felestin Square in Tehran and lit fireworks in celebration. Hamas attacked Israel and killed thousands of innocent citizens, abducted women and tortured them. There is never any justification for terrorism. Such attacks can happen anywhere else in the world tomorrow. Jihadi terrorism is an international nuisance. It should be opposed globally.

Aparna Jagtap

The current war and Russia's benefit

What impact will the Hamas-Israel

conflict have on Russia-Ukraine relations? The US has been providing full support to Ukraine in the Russia-Ukraine war, which has been ongoing for the last one and a half years. Whether it is intelligence sharing or arms and ammunition, the US has been actively involved.

However, due to the Hamas-Israel conflict, the US has already moved USS Gerald from the Northeast Mediterranean Sea to the Eastern Mediterranean Sea to assist Israel. At the same time, Hezbollah is also deployed on Israel's northern border, posing a threat to Israel. Iran has also justified Hamas' attacks. Hence, there is a high chance of this conflict escalating in the region. If this happens, the US and Europe will have to divert weapon supplies from Ukraine to help Israel, ultimately benefiting Russia as it gains ground in Ukrainian territory."

Md Mofidul Ali

Readers are requested to mail Letters to the Editor only at

afternoonvoicedesk@gmail.com

No postal letters will be entertained

(The views expressed are authors' own)

ED attaches over Rs 315 cr worth assets in money laundering probe against ex Maha NCP MP, his business groups

The Enforcement Directorate on Sunday said it has attached land, windmills, silver and diamond jewellery and billion worth more than Rs 315 crore as part of an alleged bank fraud linked money laundering probe against a former NCP MP from Maharashtra, his family and businesses.

Ishwarlal Shankarlal Jain Lalwani (77), the former Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament from the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), is the promoter of the Rajmal Lakhichand Jewellers Pvt Ltd, R L Gold Pvt Ltd and Manraj Jewellers among others.

The federal agency said in a statement that a provisional order



under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act was issued by it on Friday to attach 70 immovable assets located in Jalgaon, Mumbai, Thane, Sillod (in Aurangabad district of Maharashtra) and Kutch (Gujarat) apart from some windmills, silver and diamond jewellery, bullion and Indian currency

valued at a total Rs 315.60 crore in the bank fraud case of Rajmal Lakhichand Jewellers Pvt. Ltd., R L Gold Pvt. Ltd., and Manraj Jewellers Pvt. Ltd and others.

"The attached assets include the benami properties acquired by the promoters Ishwarlal Shankarlal Jain Lalwani, Manish Ish-

warlal Jain Lalwani and others," the ED alleged. The PMLA case stems from three FIRs registered by the CBI alleging that these companies and its directors/promoters caused wrongful loss of more than Rs 352.49 crore to the State Bank of India. The promoters submitted "fake" financials to

avail such loans, the ED alleged.

"The promoters also engaged in round tripping of transactions to inflate the financials and booking bogus sale purchase transactions in books of accounts of the accused companies to siphon off the loan proceeds for investments in real estate properties, in collusion with the auditors of the companies," it said. Raids were carried out by the ED in this case in August.

It had then claimed that various "discrepancies like bogus sale-purchase transactions being shown in the books of accounts with the main holding company, Rajmal Lakhichand Jalgaon partnership firm" were detected. **PTI**

Samruddhi Expressway accident killed 12 today. Now, lookback at 729 accidents in 9 months



A total of 729 accidents have taken place on the expressway between December 2022 and August this year of which 46 were fatal, resulting in the death of 101 people.

Samruddhi Mahamarg, officially known as Hindu Hruday-samrat Balasaheb Thackeray Maharashtra Samruddhi Mahamarg, is a 701-km stretch connecting Mumbai and Nagpur. It is the country's second longest expressway and, when fully operational, it is expected to reduce the travel time between Nagpur and Mumbai to eight hours from 16.

A total of 600 km of the stretch has been opened for public use in two phases. The first phase of 520 km, between Nagpur and Shirdi, was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in December last year, while the second phase, between Shirdi and Bharvir, was inaugurated in May by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. Now, only a

100-km stretch between Bharvir in Igatpuri and Mumbai remains to be completed.

Recent accidents

Here's a look at the major accidents that took place on the expressway over the past few months:

On July 1 this year, 26 people died after a private AC sleeper bus travelling from Nagpur to Pune caught fire after it rammed into a steel pole and road divider, damaging its diesel tank.

On June 11, four people died while four others were left seriously wounded after their Innova car met with an accident on the Ghoti-Shirdi stretch of Samruddhi Mahamarg at midnight. The driver allegedly lost control of the vehicle and rammed the SUV into a wall.

At Chandajhira near Jalna on the expressway, three members of a family, including two women, died and one person was injured on June 10 when the vehicle they were travelling in met with an ac-

cident. The family was returning to Nagpur from Ahmednagar when their car was hit by a speeding container truck.

Three people, including a child, were killed on June 3 and a few others injured after their car turned turtle on the Dushingpur Shivar stretch of the Samruddhi Expressway.

On May 29, three people were killed after a car rammed into a road divider on the stretch and caught fire in Buldhana. One person was flung out of the vehicle in the impact and died of serious injuries, while two others got trapped in the car and were charred to death.

Four members of two families from Surat died on May 24 while another member sustained injuries when the car they were travelling in met with an accident on the Jai-pur-Siwar patch of the Samruddhi Mahamarg between 5 am and 5.30 am in rural Aurangabad. Preliminary probe indicated that highway hypnosis was the chief cause of the accident.

On August 1 this year, 20 workers including engineers and supervisors were crushed to death and three others injured after a crane collapsed on a bridge slab during the construction of the third phase of the expressway in Thane district.

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India reaches on 111th rank at Global Hunger Index ...



Vikas Parchhanda working as CEO at Akshaya Chaitanya NGO

told Afternoon Voice, "The main cause of the 'Hunger' is that lot of inefficiency is seen in the system of the government. Also most of the citizens do not have ration cards to gain benefits of yojna launched by the government and even if someone has ration cards they are still struggling to get food grains due to system failure, grains are getting spolied in the warehouses and many other reason are also present due to which it does not reach the individual. Not only that around 90% of people are living on borrowed funds".



Gaurang Vora an activist said, "Government is borrowing lot

of funds and keeping huge entities happy but does not have any money for the poor people or citizens who are in need of it. Not only there are huge chunk of corporate firms who have taken loan from our banks have still not paid back to the bank which has caused a problem due

to which government does not have so much of funds to support people".

"here is no clarity of funds given by the tax payers of the country which can be utilised to support the food schemes launched by the government and these schemes are only mentioned on the paper but it does not reach the actual beneficiary" Vora further added.



Anurag Bhatnagar working as chief marketing officer at An-

namrita Foundation said, "The government is trying its best to provide meals to the school children and some states have also added breakfast in the government schools so that children are able to focus in their studies and other activities but when it comes to the hunger report it might be a possibility that government schemes were not able to reach everyone door to door and this is why there are lot of NGO's in the country which is trying to reach people on every door according to their capacity to help people also government should try to promote millets as a part of nutrition more than wheat and rice".

Nation

Kerala: Heavy rains, IMD issues orange alert in 4 districts



After heavy rainfall battered Kerala triggering waterlogging and floods in several areas, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Sunday issued an orange alert in four districts of the state including Thiruvananthapuram. Apart from the orange alert in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, and Alappuzha districts

for today, a Yellow alert has been issued for the remaining districts except Kannur and Kasaragod.

Due to the continuous rain in Thiruvananthapuram, the low-lying areas of the state's southernmost district have been waterlogged. Due to the rise of the water level in Karamana River, the water level of Vellayani Lake has increased. About 100 houses

were waterlogged in the adjoining area and crops on hundreds of acres of land were submerged.

Thiruvananthapuram district collector Geromic George said that necessary instructions have been given for the aid of people living in rain-affected areas and relief activities are underway. "Considering the emergency situation in the district, the district collector directed all the revenue officers to be in the office. The district collector instructed the tehsildars to give the necessary help to the rain-affected areas and coordinate the relief activities. The district collector informed that the taluk control rooms are fully equipped and working 24 hours and the public can contact the taluk control rooms in case of emergency," George posted on the social media platform, Facebook. ANI

Operation Ajay: Amid ongoing conflict between Israel and hamas, Fourth flight leaves from Israel



The special flight carrying 274 Indian nationals wanting to leave Israel amidst the Israel-Hamas conflict left for home on Saturday, the second in a day and fourth since the launch of 'Operation Ajay'. The special flights are part of the operation launched on October 12 to facilitate the return of those Indian nationals who wish to return home following the brazen attacks on Israeli towns by Hamas militants from Gaza on October 7.

The Indian Embassy in Tel Aviv earlier announced

that two special flights will operate from Ben Gurion airport on Saturday. The first flight left around 5.40 pm local time. The second flight with 274 Indian nationals took off at 11.45 pm local time. The third batch of 197 Indian nationals left for home around 5.40 pm local time (8.10 pm IST). "#OperationAjay moves forward. 197 more passengers are coming back to India," External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar posted on X. The Embassy of India in Israel posted on X, "As part of #OperationAjay, Indian nationals still in Israel and wishing to travel back

to India are urgently requested to complete the attached travel form." The Indian Embassy also issued guidelines that "travel slots will be allocated on a 'first come, first served' basis in the 'Operation Ajay' and "In the event of a no-show or refusal to travel after confirmation and slotting, your name will be moved to the back of the queue."

"The Embassy has been working round the clock to facilitate all our citizens in Israel who wish to leave. We have reached out to students, caregivers, and business people. Some of them are actually working with us as volunteers. We urge everyone to remain calm," Ambassador Sanjeev Singla told PTI. "The Embassy has emailed the next lot of registered Indian citizens for two special flights today. Messages to other registered people will follow for subsequent flights," the Indian Embassy in Israel posted the announcement on X earlier in the day. PTI

Haryana: Faridabad records 3.1 magnitude of earthquake

An earthquake of magnitude 3.1 struck Faridabad in Haryana at 4.08 pm on Sunday, the National Centre for Seismology said. It said the epicentre for the quake was nine kilometres east of Faridabad and 30 kilometres southeast of Delhi.

The quake triggered panic among people, with many in Delhi and the National Capital Region reporting vigorous shaking of furniture. Several social media users shared visuals of people rushing out of residential buildings. Previously on October 3, strong tremors reverberated through parts of north India, including the Delhi-NCR, after a series of earthquakes, the strongest being of magnitude 6.2, jolted Nepal in quick succession. India is located in a seismically active region. But with a lot of microearthquakes occurring every day, the stored-up energy gets released, according to Director O P Mishra of the National Centre for Seismology, Ministry of Earth Sciences. Experts say the impact of a large-scale earthquake can be reduced if people and institutions



strictly comply with the bylaws and codes to build resilient structures.

They say the resonant frequency of a building can play a critical role in determining the level of damage that it experiences during an earthquake. Buildings have natural frequencies of vibration, also known as resonant frequencies, which are determined by their mass, stiffness and size. The ground motion during an earthquake can excite these natural frequencies, causing the building to vibrate at its resonant frequency. If the frequency of the ground motion matches or is more than the resonant frequency of a building, the structure will experience significant amplifications of the ground motion, leading to more intense shaking and potentially causing significant damage. PTI

Manipur: After the outbreak of African Swine Fever, Imphal declares its controlled area

Following the confirmation of an outbreak of African Swine Fever (ASF) in a farm of the All India Co-ordinated Research Project (AICRP) at Central Agricultural University, Iroisemba, the state government has declared the whole Imphal West district as a controlled area for ASF with immediate effect. However, the notification did not mention anything about the Kakching district, which has also been reporting the death of pigs under similar circumstances.

However, speaking to ANI Dr NG Ibotombi Singh, Director, Directorate of Veterinary and Animal Husbandry explained that though African Swine Fever is a high morbidity disease for pigs it does not transmit to humans and the pub-

lic has no reason to worry about a health crisis. He said, "samples have been collected from the Kakching, Moirang, Lamlai and Ukhrul areas and sent to Assam for confirmation". Meanwhile, in an order issued on Friday, Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Services designated the Pig Farm at CAU as the epicentre of the ASF outbreak. Immediate measures are being initiated under the Prevention and Control of Infectious and Contagious Disease in Animals Act, 2009, and in accordance with the National Action Plan, 2020. These measures are aimed at preventing, controlling and eradicating the ASF disease in the affected zone, covering a 1 Km radius from the infected premises, the order stated. ANI

World

Israel- Hamas conflict: British PM Sunak condemns 'horror, barbarism' act of militant group



British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has condemned the "horror and barbarism" unleashed by the Palestinian militant group Hamas and pledged continued support to Israel in restoring security as he marked one week of the conflict in the Middle East.

In a statement issued by 10 Downing Street and also on social media on Saturday evening, the British Indian leader also reiterated his commitment to the Jewish community in the country that all protective measures would be deployed.

His warning to anyone stir-

ring up "shameful antisemitism" came as thousands of pro-Palestine protesters marched the streets of London chanting anti-Israel slogans and 15 arrests were made on suspicion of public order offences and criminal damage. "No words can begin to describe the horror and barbarism unleashed in Israel a week ago. Daughters, sons, mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, grandparents were taken from people in the cruellest and most horrific way possible," reads Sunak's statement.

"I know that the days and weeks ahead will continue to be very difficult. To the people of Is-

rael, I say Britain is with you. What took place was an act of pure evil and Israel has every right to defend itself. We will do everything we can to support Israel in restoring the security it deserves," he said. Noting that British citizens are among the victims of the clashes, the Prime Minister expressed solidarity with all families suffering in deep pain and torment.

"To our Jewish community in the UK: I know you are hurting and reeling from these vile terrorist acts... We've seen intimidating behaviour and shameful antisemitism online and on our streets with attempts to stir up tensions. I say: not here. Not in Britain. Not in our country. Not in this century," he said, promising to do everything he possibly can to protect Jewish people in the country. "I am unequivocal. We stand with Israel, not just today, not just tomorrow, but always. And I stand with you, the British Jewish community, not just today, not just tomorrow, but always," he added. **PTI**

Afghanistan: A powerful earthquake has been recorded, kills around 1,000



A powerful 6.3 magnitude earthquake struck western Afghanistan on Sunday, just over a week after strong quakes and aftershocks killed thousands of people and flattened entire villages in the same region. The US Geological Survey said the latest quake's epicentre was about 34 kilometres (21 miles) outside Herat, the provincial capital, and eight kilometres (five miles) below the surface. There were no immediate official reports of possible casualties or damage. The earthquakes on October 7 flattened whole villages in Herat, in one of the most destructive quakes in the country's recent history.

More than 90 per cent of the people killed a week ago were women and children, UN officials reported Thursday. Taliban officials said the earlier quakes killed

more than 2,000 people across the province. The epicentre was in Zenda Jan district, where 1,294 people died, 1,688 were injured and every home was destroyed, according to UN figures.

The initial quake, numerous aftershocks and a second 6.3-magnitude quake on Wednesday flattened villages, destroying hundreds of mud-brick homes that could not withstand such force. Schools, health clinics and other village facilities also collapsed. Besides rubble and funerals after that devastation, there was little left of the villages in the region's dusty hills. Survivors are struggling to come to terms with the loss of multiple family members and in many places, living residents are outnumbered by volunteers who came to search the debris and dig mass graves. **PTI**

US President Joe Biden spoke to families, assures support, says "We are not walking away..." amid ongoing conflict



United States President Joe Biden spoke with the families of American citizens who are stuck in Israel amid the ongoing war against the Hamas terror group and assured bringing them back is the top priority of the Govt and they are "not walking away" from their duty. He assured them there is no higher priority than this and the US is not walking away.

"The families of unaccount-

ed-for Americans following the terrorist attack on Israel are going through the unthinkable. I gave them my word: We are not walking away from them," President Biden posted on X (formerly Twitter).

Speaking with the families, Biden said, "Folks, there's no higher priority. And I know that people get on and talk to you and say they an idea of what it's like. But, I know from experience there's not a single thing more and more worrisome than someone you love, someone you adore, or adores you, and not knowing their fate". "We made it clear how important this is to you, to me, personally, and all the American people. It really is. And we are not walking away. I promise you," he added. **ANI**

Uyghur inmates forced to work for long hours for a chinese farmland: Report

Hundreds of Uyghur inmates at Keriye Prison in the far-western Chinese region of Xinjiang are forced to work 12 to 14 hours a day in the fields for the benefit of Han Chinese businessmen who rent the 1,650 acres of farmland that is owned by the prison, or to reform the inmates through labour, reported Radio Free Asia. These inmates of Keriye Prison have to work for more than half their day in the vast fields of red dates called jujubes, according to a prison employee and a guard.

Moreover, the farm is called Lao Gai Nong Chang in Chinese, which refers to "Re-education through Labor Farm." "They want to make the prisoners undergo ideological transformation through labor in these big fields," said the prison employee. Under the watch of armed guards, the



prisoners must walk to the fields while overseers wearing red vests and holding police dogs monitor them, the two people added. Moreover, these armed soldiers surround the work area, some on horseback to prevent the prisoners from escaping the site, Radio Free Asia reported. One of the prison employees, who is a Uyghur and has worked at the prison for nine years, said, "I witnessed prisoners being forcibly taken out to work dur-

ing the day and returned to their cells at night."

However, a prison guard said that many inmates also work in factories located inside and outside the prison walls that produces cement, shoes, gloves and tea. Adding to the information, the guard said that the prisoners serving sentences of over 10 years work in factories inside the prison, whereas, those serving sentences for less than 10 years work outside the prison. **ANI**

Expression

Navaratri (Golu) Festival



S. Krishna Kumar

Actor, Author & media
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NAVARATRI is a nine night (and ten days) Hindu festival, celebrated in the autumn every year. In the eastern and northeastern states of India, the Durga Puja is synonymous with Navratri. In the northern and western states, the festival is synonymous with "Rama Lila" and Dussehra. In southern states, the victory of different goddesses and of Rama is celebrated.

Navaratri is a time when many homes in the southern states of India—parts of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and even Kerala—feast on colors, light, music, and food. Visitors are greeted with gleaming dolls, colorful Kolam- (Rangoli-that is, floor decoration), lighted lamps, and traditionally dressed women and girls chanting slokas and singing. Traditionally, all family members participate in creating the darbar or assembly of Goddesses, which contains a multitude of idols of gods, goddesses, men, animals, and businessmen. This is presented in every house in the form of Golu. It is a festive occasion where everyone has a role to play, from the young children to the grandparents.

GOLU is the artistic display of dolls on numbered tiers or steps, usually made of wood. (Nowadays you get 'easy to make' readymade steps). The nine steps represent the nine days of Navaratri. Traditionally, a few top steps include idols of gods and a kalash (ceremonial jar) with fresh water, covered with a coconut and mango leaves. The next few steps have idols of saints and heroes of the country. Another step represents human activities, depicting functions such as marriage, temples, and an orchestra or music band. Business is usually represented by the Chettiar (a shopkeeper or a trader) set of dolls, with shop items and wooden dolls called Marapachi dressed in colorful clothes (say a man and a woman, God & Goddesses, boy & a girl). Today, Golu has the thematic representation of ancient stories, depicting scenes from



Ramayana and Bhagavad Gita, history, national events, among others. It is a custom to add a few new dolls every year. The steps on which 'GOLU' of dolls are kept, should be in odd numbers :3,5,7,9. Anything can be kept in GOLU like even vehicles, fancy dolls, fruits & vegetables and dry fruit items made in plastic or 'PoP', kitchen items made in plastic or wood, trees, and so on. This is to say that you say divinity in everything around us.

Children and ladies & elderly women and men too, recite slokas, sing songs and relish special dishes offered to the gods, especially the protein-rich dish called "Sundal" (which is made of legumes) with some sweets and fruits. Women folk exchange betel leaves, betel nuts, coconuts, fruits, flowers, bangles, turmeric, and kumkum. Nowadays, gifts of utility items are given along with the above. Like fancy bags, ladies' handbags, plastic boxes, fancy trays, and even pouches of tea, sugar etc.

The preparations for GOLU for Navaratri start before the Amavasya (full moon). The house and the GOLU area are decorated with beautiful thorans, attractive hanging items and illuminations done with colourful lights and light effects too. Every day, different types of "Prasad" items like kheer, coconut rice, lemon rice, jaggery rice, fruits and so on are made and offered. Every night the day's pooja is concluded with the Aarati.

Actually, setting up the steps and installing the "Dolls" and decorating the house etc. are not easy jobs. I remember when I was a school boy,

the GOLU used to be very large –both horizontally and vertically-occupying the full room and hundreds of dolls of different kinds adorning the steps. I used to help my parents and grandmother. My father would take lot of efforts to make those long and wide steps (as those days, no readymade kind of things were available.) My grandmother would conduct elaborate puja every morning and evening, chanting many slokas. Many ladies and visitors would visit us.

For further information on GOLU, the dolls need not be exclusively of GODS and GODDESSES. Animal sets, wedding sets, cricket sets, shopkeeper mama and lady with provisions and assorted fruits and vegetables, farmers and farming sets and so on are displayed neatly. In fact, I recollect my grandmother would sow some seeds for plants to grow to make a theme on farming or a village – keeping a temple in a corner, 'devotees' going up the hill, a marriage procession and so on. Make a 'mini concrete well' and store water. Or a road scene where cars are kept on the roads, a petrol pump house made in card board placed alongside the road, a traffic cop and a 'chowk' made with a signal, placards showing city names, even a railway station scene created and so on. A maidan with grass (or green coloured paper cut into small pieces), strewed on the ground will be made and a cricket set will be installed appropriately with fielders, batsmen, wicket keeper, bowler and umpires.

The preparations for making these "themes" will begin at least a month before the Navarathri. Those days, boys

and children would like the various kinds of "sundals" (which is made of legumes) made every day and would go to those houses which have GOLU. And gather them and enjoy eating them.

The ninth day is celebrated as "Saraswathi Puja". Books, musical instruments, weapons, vehicles are worshipped and decorated with thoran, chandan and flowers. Enrolment for new classes in music etc will begin on this auspicious day. The tenth day is the Vijayadashami Day (the day of victory). On the tenth day, at night, few of the Golu dolls are symbolically put to sleep. And from next day onwards repacking them all neatly starts, to be brought out of the boxes the following year.

Nowadays, as GOLU keeping is a hectic job, and that one has to spend more time on preparations, unpacking, repacking etc, very few people maintain the tradition. But we have been continuing the tradition for decades. After our marriage, my parents and grandmother handed over the "tradition" to us and for the last about three decades we have been keeping "GOLU" though in a small way, but with as many decorations, ideas & by inviting as many relations and guests.

Navarathri is a period when many (especially ladies) make it a point to visit as many houses of relations & friends, where GOLU is kept, to have a good get-together and enjoy. Needless to say, they take as many 'selfies' and post the pictures on the social media.

Entertainment

Navratri festival: Actress Kajol falunts in the ethnic dress, treats fans with new pictures



Each day of the Navratri festival has a dedicated colour and significance attached to it. As the first day is associated with the colour orange, Kajol took to Instagram and shared a few pictures of herself in a stunning orange saree.

"A splash of orange for a day of energy! #orangeisthenewblack #navratri #firstdayofnavratri," Kajol captioned the post. Kajol's festive look has garnered several likes and comments. "You look so beautiful," a social media user

commented. "Happy Navratri. Orange colour suits you," another one wrote. Shardiya Navratri is a nine-day festival dedicated to Maa Durga and her nine manifestations. The first day, dedicated to Goddess Shailputri, signifies prosperity and fulfilment of wishes. Wearing orange on this day is believed to bring good fortune into one's life. **ANI**

Actor Shahid Kapoor drops cool pictures of Sunday workout



Shahid Kapoor is quite a fitness freak. He rarely skips a day at the gym. On Sunday, he dished out major fitness goals as he shared a picture from the gym. In the snap, the 'Haider' star can be seen flaunting his biceps while standing in front of a dumbbell rack. "Happy Sunday," he captioned the post. **ANI**

Lakme Fashion Week 2023: Amid backlash of the trolls faced by Saba Azad, check what Hrithik Roshan mentioned on social media



Actor Hrithik Roshan's girlfriend Saba Azad recently found herself at the receiving end of trolls over her performance at Lakme Fashion Week 2023. On Day 2 of Lakme Fashion Week, Saba, who is a professional singer, gave a special performance at designers Paras and Shalini's show along with her pop band 'Madboy/Mink' collaborator Imaad Shah, who is the elder son of actors Naseeruddin Shah and Ratna Pathak Shah.

While several praised her, a section of social media users mocked her. Amid the backlash, Hrithik came out in support of his girlfriend. Taking to Instagram Story, the 'Krrish' star dropped a video of Saba's performance and wrote, "That surrender! That's why the shine!" He added sun and red heart emojis.

Saba also gave a befitting response to one of the netizens who sent her a demeaning text. A social media user sent her a message saying "You need therapy (sic)." She shared a screenshot of the message and replied, "Why yes, sir/madam spud!! I tend to agree and I get it on the regular as should everyone else for existing in a world as consumed by hate as ours, you should try it!! It helps you fill your own tanks and thus not get so deeply offended by the peaceful existence of others (smiley face emoticon) (sic)." **ANI**

BFI London Film Festival 2023: Kareena Kapoor Khan shares her excitement of her thriller project premiers



Actor Kareena Kapoor Khan on Sunday shared her excitement on social media as her thriller film 'The Buckingham Murders' premiered at the prestigious BFI London Film Festival 2023. Taking to Instagram, Kareena shared a new still from the film on her stories which she captioned with an "Excited" sticker and wrote, "The Buckingham Murders premiers today at the BFI London film festival."

The film marks the debut of Kareena as a producer. Helmed by Hansal Mehta, the film is co-produced by Ekta Kapoor. According to Variety, a US-based media house, the film follows Jasmeet Bhamra (portrayed by Kareena Kapoor Khan), a detective and mother who, after losing her own child, must investigate the murder of a 10-year-old in Buckinghamshire, going down a rabbit hole of secrets, where almost everyone in the small town becomes a suspect.

In an interview with Variety, Kareena revealed that her character in the film is inspired by Kate Winslet's role in 'Mare of Easttown.' She said, "I love 'Mare of Easttown' and when Hansal came to me, I said this is something that I've really been dying to do. So we've molded a little bit on those lines, she plays a detective cop in that." **ANI**