



# Afternoon VOICE

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## 50% of Maharashtra drought-hit, Rs 30 crore will be spent on fodder for cattle

**Vaidehi Taman**

Almost 50 percent of Maharashtra is drought-hit. Many farmers are in distress due to dried lands and no hopes. Cattles are suffering with various skin disease; the government has decided to home-deliver the fodder in particularly designed bags to around one lakh farmers for which Rs 30 crore will be spent. More than 50 per cent of Maharashtra is now officially under drought after the cabinet sub-committee on Relief and Rehabilitation on Thursday decided to include more 959 circles in the list of droughts affected regions. In 2018, drought was declared in 151 tehsils initially. Later 268 circles were included in the list. It was done after a number of elected representatives criticized about ignoring their respective areas. Similarly, in 2023, opposition MLAs had criticised the state government for including only the areas which are under the ruling MLAs and

ignoring opposition's constituencies.

Farmer's rights activist **Dattaram Gavit** said "Government makes big announcements and divert the attention of media and people fighting for the rights of famers. At the end the selective deliverance of fodder would be done and then the matter will go to cold storage. This is never ending topic. Whichever government came to rule state in the past and now in present forgot the fact that the farmers need to be given lot of attention and policies to come out of their miseries."

**Anna Shere** the farmer of Latur said "We are fighting with our plight; governments are not bothered because many fruits and vegetables are imported to India. Imports of many things fulfil the demands of supply chain. Farmers are ending their lives, famers have become barren lands, builders and developers are eyeing on such lands and frames are getting converted into concert jungles."

Maharashtra government had earlier announced drought in 40 tehsils which has 269 circles. With the decision from the sub-committee, a total of 1,228 circles out of 2,068 of total circles are now drought affected, covering more than 50 per cent of the state. While the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) will be used for the relief and rehabilitation related activities in 40 tehsils announced earlier, the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) will be used for the newly added drought affected region.

Agriculture minister **Dhananjay Munde** told Afternoon Voice "Our priority is to address the issues of drought-hit regions. Government has enough pocket to take care of the farmer's issues. We are committed to give as much as money required to help the drought affected regions. I am personally looking into various regions so that the farmers get some relief."

Under the present revenue adminis-

tration, each District is divided into Sub-divisions for administrative convenience. Each Division may consist of 4 to 5 talukas. These talukas are further subdivided into revenue circles and each circle has around six to eight villages. Due to stringent criteria such as scarcity of rainfall, paucity of available groundwater, Remote Sensing criteria, vegetation index, moisture of soil, area under sowing and condition of crops only 40 tehsils were declared in the list of droughts in the first phase.

Last year also cattle camps were not held due to the fear of spread of Lumpy skin disease among the cattle. This issue was also discussed in the cabinet sub-committee which is chaired by the Relief and Rehabilitation minister. The committee includes ministers from Food and Civil Supply, Agriculture, Rural Development, Employment Guarantee, Cooperation departments.

## Kamathipura of Mumbai to get new sheen

Editoritis



Dr. Vaidehi

Kamathipura Mumbai's famous red light area is known for the flesh trade business. It was established after 1795 with the construction of causeways that connected the erstwhile seven islands of Mumbai. Initially known as Lal Bazaar, it got its name from the Kamathi (workers) of other areas of the country, who were labourers on construction sites. Due to tough police crackdowns, in the late 1990s with the rise of AIDS and government's redevelopment policy that helped sex workers to move out of the profession and subsequently out of Kamathipura, the numbers of sex workers in the area declined.

Before the completion of the Hornby Vellard project in 1784, which built a causeway uniting all seven islands of Mumbai under William

Hornby, governor of Bombay (1771-1784), plugged the Great Breach in Mahalaxmi, while the subsequent Bellasis Road causeway joined Mazagaon and Malabar Hill in 1793. This resulted in several low-lying marshy areas of Mumbai Flats like Byculla, Tardeo, Mahalaxmi and Kamathipura opening up for habitation. Thereafter starting 1795, Kamathis (workers) of other areas of the country, working as labourers on construction sites began settling here, giving the area its present name. It was bounded by Bellasis Road on the north, by Gaodevi on the south and the main road across, Falkland Road. At one point during this period it was home to a Chinese community, which worked as dockhands and ran restaurants.

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# Editoritis

# Kamathipura of Mumbai to get new sheen

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*The lane is now known as Cursetji Shuklaji Street. The most well-known brothel in the area, Pila House, is the hybridisation of its original word: Playhouse.*

*The brothels in the area are crowded. Sex workers wait outside to pick up customers and then rent an available bed. The estimated 3,000 buildings in the area are largely dilapidated; safe drinking water and sanitation is threatened in this area.*

*In 2005, a local private developer expressed his interest in undertaking the redevelopment of a large part of Kamathipura according to a report prepared by Tata Institute of Social Sciences.*

By the late 19th century it all changed as previous 1864 Census figures for Mumbai indicate, other areas had a larger population of prostitutes, like Girgaon (1,044), Phanaswadi (1,323) and Oomburkharee (1,583) compared with Kamathipura (601), all which declined after 1864. This small region boasted the most exotic consorts. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, a large number of women from continental Europe and Japan and China were trafficked into Kamathipura, where they worked as prostitutes servicing soldiers and locals alike. Gradually, social stratification also took place: A busy road in Kamathipura was known as Safed Gully owing to the European prostitutes housed here during the British raj.

The lane is now known as Cursetji Shuklaji Street. The most well-known brothel in the area, Pila House, is the hybridisation of its original word: Playhouse. The first venereal disease clinic of Bombay was opened in 1916, being taken over by BMC in 1925. Nearby, Bachu Seth ki Wadi on Foras Road was famous for its kothewalis or tawaifs and mujras.

When India gained independence, Indian sex workers moved into the area. In recent decades, large numbers of Nepalese women and girls have also been trafficked into the district.[10] Over the years under Indian government rule, the sex industry in Kamathipura continued to flourish. Trafficking and economic circumstances also brought women from different parts of the country there. Eventually it became Asia's largest sex district.

The brothels in the area are crowded. Sex workers wait outside to pick up customers and then rent an available bed. The estimated 3,000 buildings in the area are largely dilapidated; safe drinking water and sanitation is threatened in this area. The movie Gangubai gave the exact politics of this area. There were a lot of wonder world activities in this area; in the 1970s and early '80s, Bachchu Wadi at Kamathipura was frequented by gang leaders from the Mumbai underworld, such as Haji Mastan, Karim Lala, and Dawood Ibrahim.

In 1992, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation recorded there were 45,000 sex workers here which were reduced to 1,600 in 2009 and 500 in 2018. Many sex workers have migrated to other areas in Maharashtra with real estate developers taking over the high-priced lands. In 2018 the Maharashtra government sought tenders to demolish and redevelop this area. Kamathipura is one of the prime locations of south Mumbai.

This is not the first time that a proposal has been put forth for the redevelopment of Kamathipura. In the 1980s, Mhada carried out a comprehensive survey as the first step towards transforming

the entire neighbourhood through an urban renewal proposal, but the project was stalled citing financial risks. In 2005, a local private developer expressed his interest in undertaking the redevelopment of a large part of Kamathipura according to a report prepared by Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

This time the state government has decided to constitute three different committees to ensure that the project is successfully executed and without delays. The first committee called the 'project feasibility committee' will consist of Mhada and BMC officials who will determine the actual area that will come under redevelopment, determine the eligibility of the tenants and help in getting approvals from at least 51 percent of tenants to take the project ahead.

Kamathipura is divided into roughly 14 lanes and divided according to the regional backgrounds of the workers. Most of the workers come from other Indian states. There is little interaction between areas, which makes it harder for social organizations to organize them into a movement or union. Further, lack of public opinion, political leadership or social activism which is empathetic towards them means a tough time forming unions. The area had 55,936 voters in 2007. From 2015 when BJP came to power in Mumbai they focused on the development of all these ignored and dilapidated areas.

For speedy implementation of the project a high-powered committee headed by the additional chief secretary of the housing department will clear all the proposals related to the project. The committee will also examine the DPR prepared by Mhada, approve the appointment of the developer, review the project at regular intervals and coordinate with various government departments. Present government is committed to the development and they have planned to give it a facelift. Mumbaikar are curious to know how the new Kamathipura would look like.

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Diary



## Festival of lights and crackers



- Jubel D'Cruz

**D**iwali is one of the most beautiful seasons of the year. It is a time filled with light and love; a time when Indians all over the world rejoice. It is the darkest night of the darkest period, yet it is a celebration of light.

The meaning of Diwali, its symbols and rituals, and the reasons for celebration are innumerable. Diwali celebrates Lord Rama's glorious and long-awaited return to his kingdom of Ayodhya after his 14 years of exile in the forest. It commemorates Lord Krishna's victory over the demon Narakasura who had kidnapped and terrorised the gopis of Vrindavan. It is also celebrated as the day when Lord Vishnu married Lakshmi. Diwali is also associated with the story of the fall of Bali – a demon king who was defeated by Lord Vishnu. In general, Diwali signifies the triumph of good over evil, of righteousness over treachery, of truth over falsehood, and of light over darkness.

However, Diwali is not just a festival of lights in order that we may burn diyas, fireworks and sparklers. Sure, these are wonderful ways of expressing our gaiety. But, it is not the only or true meaning of 'light'. Diwali is a festival of the light that dispels the darkness of our ignorance; it is a festival of the light which shows us the way on our journey through life. The purpose is not to glorify the light of the candle or the firecracker; the purpose is to glorify the light of God. It is God who bestows the real light, the everlasting light upon the darkness of this mundane world. A candle burns out, a firework is a momentary visual experience but the candle of a still mind and the

fireworks of a heart-filled with devotion are divine and eternal; these are what we should be celebrating.

We decorate our homes with lanterns; but what is the symbolism behind that? Those lanterns signify God's light, penetrating through the ignorance and sin of our daily lives. They signify the divine light, shining its way through this mundane world. A home bathed in light is a home in which anger, pain and ignorance are being dispelled; it is a home that is calling to God. However, too many people turn this into a domestic beauty contest, spending days and a great deal of money to purchase the newest diyas and the most beautiful candles. This is only the light of glamour; it is not the light of God.

The light of Diwali should be within us. It should symbolise our personal relationship between God and our families. Let the light penetrate inward, for only then it will have the lasting benefit. A piece of cotton soaked in ghee lit with a pure heart, a conscious mind and a desire to be free from ignorance is far brighter than a 100 expensive electric bulbs or earthen lamps.

On the other hand, we waste millions of rupees every year on bursting crackers during Diwali. Why can't the same money be utilised for the uplift of the poor? There are millions of people all over the world who can't even afford two square meals of food to eat a day. Instead of spending money on bursting crackers, people should donate the same money to a charitable institution where children who have no parents are taken care of.

## Letters to the Editor

### It is no trade secret that governors are a mere rubber stamp who toe the line of a political party in power!

It is no trade secret that governors of state are a mere rubber stamp appointed by the political party in power to honour an old political leader on verge of retirement to lead a happy life at 'Governors bungalow' which are not just posh & spacious but the term comes with a lot of perquisites as well as benefits. The political party in turn expects the governor to toe the party line & do what they are being told to do so which is nothing but a happy arrangement which sans logic & a stigma on democracy.

The process of appointing governors need to be changed & they should be elected rather than selected. Their activities must be monitored by courts so that they are neutral & their actions efficient & accountable. Minimum education qualifications must be mandatory so that they are capable enough to take appropriate actions independently on issues that come for their action. The powers of govt too needs to be raised so that the post is not just a decorative one but with certain responsibilities and accountability!

S.N.Kabra

### Delhi draws a gloomy picture

Delhi tops the list after toxic froth toxic fumes cause pollution in the air. Illegal dumping of debris near the river and sea side causes utmost pollution. Toxic fumes choke the city and dried weed puts Lake's edge on fire. Further, chemicals dumped into the lake from nearby Industrial Units cause more concern. Unauthorised urbanisation has flora and fauna of the area and a threat to human life as well.

Stubble burning during winter in the neighbouring states more than the combined vehicular population in the other 3 metros, unabated construction activities, mounting landfills plus massive deforestation in the name of redevelopment are the main causes. Water bodies like lakes are very few. Growing migratory population is a serious concern. Delhi is in the low lying area of Indo-Gangetic plains. Movement of pollutants is rather slow, stagnant during winter, paving way for smog formation.

C.K. Subramaniam

### Urgent Action Needed to Address Delhi-NCR Air Pollution Crisis

The alarming air pollution levels in Delhi-NCR, a matter that demands urgent attention and concerted efforts from all stakeholders. The recent light rain has provided a temporary respite, but the Air Quality Index (AQI) still stands at 376, categorizing it as 'very poor.' It is evident that sporadic relief

measures are insufficient to combat the severity of the situation. The health and well-being of millions of residents are at stake.

The Supreme Court's ongoing deliberations on the odd-even vehicle scheme underscore the gravity of the issue. While the Delhi government seeks to present scientific evaluations supporting the effectiveness of the policy, it is crucial to move beyond debates and implement robust, sustained measures to address the root causes of pollution. I urge authorities to consider comprehensive strategies, including stricter emissions controls, increased public transportation, and incentives for eco-friendly practices. Additionally, collaborative efforts at the regional and national levels are imperative to tackle the transboundary nature of air pollution.

The citizens of Delhi-NCR deserve a breathable and healthy environment, and it is the responsibility of our leaders to prioritize and implement sustainable solutions. Let us not wait for the next crisis to prompt action. The time for decisive and collective steps is now.

Maimul Safui

### Cricket Triumph

India's triumphant Cricket World Cup campaign marches on, showcasing its prowess against top global teams. Whether chasing modest or formidable targets, the Indian team's victories propel it towards the finals.

To secure a golden era for Indian cricket, this winning streak must persist. While hard work drives success, a touch of luck is equally vital. India's journey remains unforgettable, and as they approach the finals, the nation eagerly anticipates a historic achievement.

N. Mateeni

### HC Notice to BMC

The Bombay high court on Wednesday requested municipal corporations across Maharashtra to avoid under-taking demolitions during Diwali celebrations up to November 21. Last year, HC granted interim relief to slum dwellers in Chembur by restraining authorities from taking coercive action against them during the Ganesh festival. Few days ago Central govt extended the free food grains scheme for the next five years for vulnerable people but it also needs to step forward for providing them with shelter who are facing difficulties for a long time. Atleast, manage jobs for them so that they could be survived and participate also in festival celebration zealously.

TKR.Noori

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**No postal letters will be entertained**

(The views expressed are authors' own)

## Fighting Mumbai's bad air: Contractors of Metro, coastal road projects of L&T and J Kumar Infra were served notices

**F**ighting Mumbai's bad air: Contractors of Metro, coastal road projects of L&T and J Kumar Infra were served notices

In a major crackdown on violators for flouting air pollution norms, the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) and the Brihanmumbai Municipal Cor-

poration on Wednesday issued notices to various infrastructure developers involved with Coastal Road and Metro rail projects in the city. While the BMC issued


"stop work" notices to J Kumar Infra Projects Ltd, MPCB issued show cause notices to 14 Ready Mix Concrete (RMC) plants across the city, including four being operated by Larsen & Toubro Ltd.

The other RMC plants that received MPCB notices are units owned by Avighnaa Contractors, Century Estates, Swayam Realtors and Traders, Nagarjuna Construction Company, Ahluwalia Contracts, Apco infratech and ITD Cementation India Limited.





**Narendra Modi**  
Prime Minister





**Eknath Shinde**  
Chief Minister

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*Wish You all Bright & Joyful Diwali!*

**Devendra Fadnavis**  
Deputy Chief Minister

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Chief Minister

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Directorate General of Information and Public Relations, Government of Maharashtra

### Bombay HC hearing on AQI suo moto PIL: CJ thanks the rains!, Construction sites found non-compliant

**A**dvocate General Birendra Saraf for the Maharashtra government and MPCB said that it's not anyone's case at all that more couldn't have been done in terms of guidelines. HC order has surely made all agencies get into action and to comply with all guidelines in effective manner.

There has been more emergent action after cognisance was taken and the Chief minister also called for meeting of all officers and they are all answerable. After Saraf said yesterday's AQI has shown great improvement, CJ Upadhyaya remarked, 'Thanks to the rains!' AG Saraf responded, "Somewhere I can say there is a higher god."

### Bombay HC modified its Nov 6 order over bursting of firecrackers

**I**n view of past Supreme Court verdict, the Bombay High Court modified its Nov 6 order and gave a new two-hour window between 8 pm and 10 pm for bursting firecrackers in Mumbai and surrounding areas. The HC also asked the state government and other authorities to comply with SC directions on firecrackers in effective manner. The Bombay High Court revised the cracker-bursting window, while hearing the suo motu PIL and other pleas seeking urgent redressal of the issue of deteriorating air quality in Mumbai and surrounding areas by the authorities for 'welfare' of residents.

After several pockets of Mumbai received rain on Thursday, the air quality in Mumbai has improved significantly with the AQI standing at 85 on Friday morning. Of the 24 recording stations, all stations barring four have registered an AQI between 50 – 100, which falls in the category of moderate. The worst AQI has been recorded in Chembur where it touched 150. Meanwhile, the best air quality has been recorded in BKC (50), followed by Malad's Mindspace (55) and Navy Nagar in Colaba (57).

### Shun firecrackers, just light lamps on Diwali, urges Maharashtra minister Kesarkar

**M**aharashtra cabinet minister Deepak Kesarkar on Wednesday appealed to citizens not to burst firecrackers during Diwali and extend cooperation in improving Mumbai's poor air quality index. The minister said bursting of crackers remains a cause of "worry" for the state administration.

Addressing a press conference here, Kesarkar, who is also the guardian minister of Mumbai City, appealed to citizens not to burst firecrackers during Diwali and celebrate the festival by lighting lamps. "The civic corporation has started works like washing roads and footpaths, they will carry on their efforts for pollution control. It is a collective responsibility of all," he said

## Nation

### UP student slap case: SC slams state govt for not providing counselling to the student



The Supreme Court on Friday slammed the Uttar Pradesh government for not providing counselling to the Muslim student who was slapped by classmates on the instruction of a teacher in Muzaffarnagar. A bench of Justices AS Oka and Pankaj Mithal pulled up the government, saying the state "will not do anything" unless the court passes orders and termed the approach of the government "shocking".

"Unless we pass the order, they won't do anything. You have to decide whether you will do something or only face-saving.

We passed the order on September 25. If students are treated in your state like this, then what is the use of expert counselling now after three months?" the bench said. It asked the Principal Secretary of the Education Department to be virtually present before it on December 11. The bench noted that no counselling had been conducted for any of the children involved in the incident and asked Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai, to suggest the mode and manner of counselling.

The bench expressed disappointment with the delay in compliance with its previous order

dated September 25, where it asked the government to provide counselling to students. The apex court was hearing a plea filed by Tushar Gandhi, the great-grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, seeking a speedy investigation into the case. A case was registered against a teacher in Muzaffarnagar who allegedly encouraged her students to slap a classmate. The purported video of the incident created outrage on social media. The teacher, Tripta Tyagi, was booked after a video showed her asking her students to slap the Class 2 boy in Khubbapur village and also making a communal remark.

The teacher was accused of making communal comments and ordering her students to slap a Muslim classmate for not doing his homework. The state education department had also served a notice to the private school. The FIR was registered against the school teacher under Section 323 (punishment for causing voluntary hurt) and Section 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace) of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (IPC). ANI

### Hindustani Awam Morcha chief has alleged that CM Nitish Kumar's food is being spiked with "poisonous substances"



Hindustani Awam Morcha chief Jitan Ram Manjhi on Friday alleged that "poisonous substances" were being mixed into the food served to Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, by those "coveting his chair". Manjhi, a former chief minister made the allegation while speaking to journalists outside the Vidhan Sabha premises, a day after he was upbraided by Kumar, his former mentor, on the floor of the House. "Nitish Kumar used vulgar language a few days ago which caused him

to apologise in both Houses of the legislature. Yesterday he again lost control over himself and spoke to me in an insulting manner, forgetting that I am senior to him in age and political experience. This is a sign of deteriorating mental health", alleged Manjhi, who was flanked on both sides by members of the BJP, his current ally.

Manjhi, who heads Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM), also disclosed that he would meet Governor Rajendra Arlekar on Saturday to apprise him

of the "grim situation" prevailing in Bihar. "I also demand a high-level inquiry into the food served to Nitish Kumar which, I suspect, is being laced with substances which would make him go insane. There are some people around him who are coveting his chair", said Manjhi, who refused to elaborate further.

Notably, Kumar had given Manjhi a tongue-lashing on Thursday when the latter had raised doubts over the government's caste survey following which quotas in jobs and educational institutions for the deprived sections have been raised by 15 per cent in the state. Both Houses of the legislature were adjourned till 2 pm, on the last day of the winter session, following an uproar over Manjhi's issue. PTI

### Delhi Air Pollution: SC told Delhi govt, "Court will not issue any direction to odd-even scheme"



Don't try to non-perform and shift the burden onto the court, the Supreme Court told the Delhi government on Friday, making clear that the decision on introducing the odd-even car rationing scheme in the national capital has to be taken by the city government and the court will not issue any direction on it.

While hearing a matter on the worsening air quality in the Delhi-National Capital Region, a bench headed by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul said the court had nothing to do with the odd-even scheme and it had never said that it should also apply to taxis entering Delhi from the adjoining states. The Delhi government had earlier announced it will implement the odd-even scheme a day after Diwali from November 13 to 20, when air pollution is likely to peak.

During the hearing on debilitating air pollution in Delhi-NCR on November 7, the apex court

had questioned the effectiveness of the scheme following which the city's Environment Minister Gopal Rai said it will be implemented only after the apex court has heard the matter on Friday and issued an order.

The top court is seized of a plea filed in 1985 by environmentalist M C Mehta on air pollution. Several issues concerning pollution have arisen during the hearing of Mehta's petition.

On Friday, the apex court said it had flagged the odd-even issue at the last hearing after an advocate, assisting it as an amicus curiae, said the odd-even plan does not actually help reduce air pollution. The counsel representing the Delhi government said taxis from adjoining states were required to be allowed into Delhi as commuting will become a major problem otherwise. Lakhs of people working in Delhi live in cities like Noida and Gurugram in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. PTI

### Diwali Festival: Markets of Bhubaneswar faced a huge footfall

As the festival of lights is around the corner, markets in Bhubaneswar on Friday witnessed huge footfall to purchase puja items including earthen lamps to celebrate Diwali. "We are all set to welcome Goddess Laxmi and Lord Ganesha on this Diwali. I have purchased decorative earthen lamps and other puja items. When we use diya instead of fancy lights to celebrate Diwali, we get inner peace. And children are quite excited to burn crackers this Di-



wali," Joyti told ANI at the Unit-I market here.

Diwali is the festival of lights. It symbolises the spiritual "victory of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance". ANI

World

## Israel Defence Forces said, "It had launched an attack to unspecified area in response to UAV from Syria"



The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) on Friday said that it had launched an attack on an organization in response to the launch of an unmanned aerial vehicle towards Eilat. The IDF said that it holds the Syrian government fully responsible for all the terror activity emanating from its territory.

Taking to X, the IDF stated, "In response to a UAV from Syria that hit a school in Eilat, the IDF

struck the organization that carried out the attack a short while ago. The IDF holds the Syrian regime fully responsible for every terror activity emanating from its territory. We will respond to every aggression against Israel." The IDF said ground forces killed several Hamas operatives, including members of the terror group's elite Nukhba forces who were part of the attack on Israel on October 7, The Times of Israel

reported. The IDF said that the operations were conducted after the Shin Bet Security Agency provided intelligence information to the soldiers.

According to the IDF, the soldiers killed Ahmed Musa, a Nukhba company commander, and Amr Alhandi, a Nukhba platoon commander, who were holed up in Jabaliya. The IDF said Musa was one of the Hamas commanders who led the attack on the Zikim base, the nearby Kibbutz, and another army post in the area in October, according to The Times of Israel report.

In the statement, the IDF said, "In recent days Ahmed Musa led offensive activity against IDF forces in the west Jabaliya area." The IDF said that the soldiers also killed Muhammed Kahlout, the head of Hamas's so-called sniper array in Hamas's northern Gaza brigade. ANI

## Pakistan: Lahore is going through severe air pollution, schools shut



Pakistan's second-most populous city Lahore has shut down due to toxic air. CNN reported that schools were shut and public parks, malls and offices were closed after air quality index (AQI) in the city spiked to over 400, a number considered "hazardous" by the Swiss air tracking company IQAir.

Chief minister of Punjab province Mohsin Naqvi said that an "environmental and health emergency" has been imposed in three cities of Gujranwala, Hafiz-

abad and Lahore until the situation improved.

"There shall be a limited movement of people to and from these areas by public and private transport," a statement from Naqvi's office said Tuesday. Navqi's government has additionally restricted more than four people from gathering in a single place. Colder temperatures trapped pollution particles, creating a toxic haze that reached hazardous levels reported by CNN. ANI

## Afghanistan: Around 80 women were denied for employment opportunities in Taliban regime

After finishing a six-month handicraft training programme arranged by the "Shafaq" Institute in Kabul, at least eighty women who had been denied opportunities for employment and education have graduated, according to Khaama Press. On Wednesday, representatives from several Afghani government agencies attended the graduation ceremony for these women.

The founder of this centre, Yalda Shafaq Azimi, said she wants to use vocational training to empower women. She highlights that over 300 women and girls attend their programmes to learn about a variety of occupations, reported Khaama Press. Once again, the Taliban regime has placed severe limits on women's rights in Afghanistan, including a prohibition on employment

and education. Many have been compelled by these limitations to look for jobs that may be done from home and take up crafts like needlework and tailoring for livelihood.

In mid-2023, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) released a report stating that eighty per cent of women have lost their sources of income. According to the survey, 69 per cent of women experience emotions of shame, loneliness, and sadness. After completing their training at the "Shafaq" workshop, women and girls gained knowledge in weaving, graphics, tailoring, and embroidery, Khaama Press reported. The Taliban regime in Afghanistan has received strong criticism from across the world for the "gender apartheid" in the country. ANI

## Israel- Hamas war: US President Joe Biden says "no possibility, I will continue to advocate for civilian safety and focus on increasing aid"

US President Joe Biden has said that there is "no possibility" of a ceasefire in Gaza. Biden said that the US government will not stop until it gets the hostages out. Speaking to reporters about the chances of a Gaza ceasefire, Biden said, "None, No possibility."

Asked about an update on getting hostages out, he said, "We're still optimistic." In his message to the families of the hostages in Gaza, Biden said, "We're not going to stop until we get them out." Speaking to reporters before Air Force One departure at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland, Biden said that the retaliatory strikes in the Middle East are working "in the sense that we're hitting the targets strategically." Biden said he had asked Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanya-



hu for a more than three-day pause. Asked whether he had asked Netanyahu to pause for three days to get the hostages out for that length of time, Biden said, "Yes. I've asked for even a longer pause for some of them."

Asked if he was frustrated with Netanyahu, Biden admitted, "It's taking a little longer than I hoped." Meanwhile, Joe Biden welcomed the Israeli de-

cision to formalize humanitarian pauses to its fighting in Gaza and called it a "step in the right direction." Taking to X, Biden stated, "These pauses will help get civilians to safer areas away from active fighting. They are a step in the right direction. You have my word: I will continue to advocate for civilian safety and focus on increasing aid to alleviate the suffering of the people of Gaza." ANI

## Expression

# Diwali is the festival of lights. Then why do we install electric pylons?



Er. Jayesh Rane

Columnist

Diwali and electricity-powered lighting are equated. Every year new types of electric pylons, lights are coming in the market to attract the customers. Consumers also take it. This means they have access to a good market. That is why every year new products running on electricity appear in the market. Every state celebrates some big festival. Like Shree Ganeshotsav in Maharashtra. Navratri in Bengal and Gujarat. During the festive period, there is a lot of lightning. It can be said that all this starts from the period of Shree Ganeshotsav in Maharashtra. Lord Ganesha arrives at the village, city houses. At that time, the arrangement of electric pylons, as well as other electric colored bulbs are preferred. For that, they are purchased in large quantities from urban areas. Such a picture is seen everywhere in the state.

As Diwali approaches, where are the electrical pylons in the house, are they in good condition? It is verified and if any defects are found, a new pylon is purchased directly. With the excitement of Diwali, shopkeepers are looking at how they can get few more money through pylons and customers are insisting on reducing rates. But since the shopkeepers have a crowd of customers, they are firm on the price fixed by them. So, if the pylon can be purchased at the stated price, then it is stopped there, otherwise, where else do you get pylon at a low price? A few more shops are visited for this.

No warranty is given on any electrical pylon. There is a different fear in the mind that the pylon running in the shop should not be closed after going home. Because the shopkeeper has already warned 'This item is not guaranteed.' Still the pylon is purchased at the risk of financial loss. If it works, it works otherwise it doesn't. The money spent on it was considered wasted. This is the understanding given to the mind.

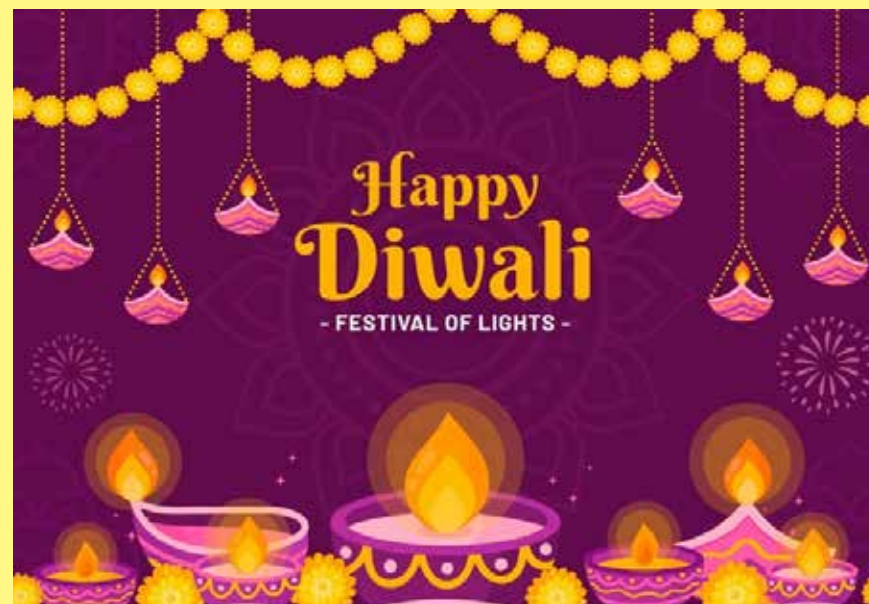
In some cases, these pylons last for 4 - 5 years. But all this is not reliable.

Now is the age of instant. It has a cute name called Modern Age. Everything should be controlled at the fingertips without waking up. E.g. AC turns on when the remote button is pressed. Also, pressing the button turns on any electrical device. But

it would be good if such devices are available that one does not have to move even to press the button. Such a mentality has happened. China outsmarted Indians in the early days with small electronic devices. Many people fell into this trap and eventually got used to it and could not live without these 'use and throw away' products made in China. Especially on Diwali, the impression of this is clearly visible. 365 days Chinese food is consumed with taste. Chinese dishes appeared in events like weddings, birthdays etc. China, with its expansionist stance, began to intrude into Indian border areas. Deadly attacks on soldiers. But the Indian soldiers gave them a tight fight and beat up those 'one and a half feet'. China has remained where it is and continues to make Indians dance to its own tune through the marketplace. He has had good success in that. The negative effect of the formula of boycott on Chinese goods had to be suffered by China in the form of economic loss. However, China's dominance in the Indian market has not completely disappeared.

Diwali is a festival celebrated in India on a grand scale. But China has got hold of it. Doesn't it hurt? Why are we so obsessed with China? Today, it has become such a situation that Chinese electric pylons are placed on the doors of houses during Diwali. They have electric lights on the threshold. Where has our pylon made of wool gone? where are the earthen lamps? the marigold flowers and the mango leaf garlands on the woolen pylons of the door disappeared. Instead of wool pylons, pylons with plastic marigold flowers became desirable. This is called giving 100% importance to the uses of artificial objects over natural ones. In Mumbai, marigold i.e. gende flowers in Hindi. It did not get good price on the occasion of Dussehra. The price was 80-100 rupees per kg in the retail market. Other time during festival it goes up to Rs 150 per kg. Some farmers had to throw away the flowers as the goods did not take off as expected, while some had to bear the loss considering the travel expenses of the tempo, food, toll charges. Tell me, does anyone care? On one side there were pylons of marigold flowers and on the other side there were plastic garlands of marigold flowers in the shop. The intrusion of China in the festival also killing the farmers here.

After a product is rejected, how to introduce another new product in the market and bring it down the throat of the customers? China has mastered the technique and is doing so. India is making progress. But the people here are failing to beat China back from the



market here. So we are not a hindrance in the progress of India? It should be looked seriously. My country should always be on the path of progress. This is the welfare of me and the country. Economic blockade of China is possible only if it is felt like this. Otherwise, the dragon named China will become stronger on the money of Indians. Which happened so far.

The use of earthen lamps on Diwali has remained a mere formality. More emphasis is on electrical flashing. Therefore, electric lamps are installed even though there are no earthen lamps. Let's honestly ask ourselves a question 'Do I really want to celebrate the festival traditionally? If the answer is no, then it is very serious. Because it needs to be answered. Diwali is the festival of lights. Why I am running behind artificial happiness instead of enjoying the festival of lights by bringing something artificial from the market? Artificial always lives up to its name and will never come close to natural satisfaction.

When there is no electricity, there is anxiety. During Diwali, the electricity consumption is more than usual due to the lighting of houses. As this load cannot be borne, when the electricity suddenly goes off, darkness spreads everywhere. In such a case, only those earthen lamps who shine on the oil are useful. They keep the darkness away and make the area free from darkness. Then it is entirely in our hands to follow the runner or to light up the Diwali by using the earthen lamps that give light in a steady and calm manner.

Leaders do not miss the opportunity to shine on the festive occasion. If not, how can they be political leaders? Some offer packets of ubton (Used during Diwali Abhyangasnaan) There are

photos of many leaders on it. Should we do the Diwali Abhyangasnaan with the same ubton? At other times, the faces seen on the hoardings in the areas also appear on the packets of the ubton. It is not required. Even if these packets are not received, people still take abhyangasnaan. It is not at all possible to take Abhyangasnaan using the ubtan given by them. The political gimmicks on the occasion of festivals are shocking.

Deepotsav is celebrated in many places during Diwali. Many earthen lamps are used. A lot of photographs are taken by attending the place to witness the Deepotsav. The mind feels extremely satisfied by looking at the lights, so the mind is attracted to such places. A boycott of Chinese goods is a must. Also, it is important that I celebrate Diwali according to Diwali. Points are mainly involved in this festival like procession of relatives, sweets, new clothes, lighting of the area with oil used earthen lamps, construction of forts etc. Let's keep this in mind and enjoy Diwali.

Diwali means the lighting of the lights. Lamps are made by placing a cotton wick in an earthen lamps and lighting it with oil. But to do this, one has to do simple work to turn the wick and who will do this simple work for a few seconds? Put oil in the lamp. Put a wick in it every day. wick is also available ready made in the market. But they feel unwanted. Wax lamps are applied. There is also artificiality. Why are we so lazy? When the button is pressed, the electric pylon turns on. It is considered satisfactory. The real Diwali is celebrated only with the help of earthen lamps. It is neglected out of laziness.

# Entertainment

## Actor Tara Sutaria talks about challenges, reveals did not use any body double for 'Apurva'

Actor Tara Sutaria is set to play a unique role in her upcoming movie 'Apurva,' which will be a refreshing contrast from her gorgeous performances. The actress revealed that she did not use any body doubles and that all the stunts were done by herself in the movie.

Sharing her experience doing all the stunts herself, she recalled, "I was barefoot throughout the shoot in Jaisalmer. I was jumping off trains, walking on hot sand, and doing all my stunts without body doubles. I lived on intermittent napping because we were shooting day and night."

She added, "There are so many hero-centric films but women-oriented films are rare. I'm glad the film chose me. Women possess an innate strength that comes out in the face of adversity. No woman should have to go through this, but as an actor, this role is a privilege." 'Apurva,' set in one of India's most dangerous regions, Chambal, is the story of an ordinary girl who faces enormous odds and would go to any length to survive and live. To fit the role, Tara underwent a radical makeover. The actor refused to take a shower in order to completely embody the aspects of her character in 'Apurva.' **ANI**



## Tollywood: Superstar Dhanush is all set for his upcoming biopic project of legendary music composer



Tamil superstar Dhanush is set to portray legendary music composer Ilaiyaraaja in an upcoming biographical drama, which will be the first film to come out from a cinematic partnership between Connekt Media and Mercuri Movies. The partnership between the two production houses, which was announced on Friday, will span multiple mega-budget films, a release said. The untitled film will chronicle the life and times of Ilaiyaraaja, who is regarded as one of India's greatest music composers. In a career spanning more than five decades, Ilaiyaraaja has composed over 7,000 songs for more than 1,000 films and performed in over 20,000 concerts across the globe. **PTI**

## Most awaited superhero titles 'Deadpool 3', 'Captain America 4' delays its release date



Disney has updated its release calendar, delaying a number of Marvel Studios' superhero titles, including Deadpool 3, Captain America 4 and Thunderbolts. Deadpool 3, which will bring back Ryan Reynolds as the titular Merc with a Mouth along with Hugh Jackman as Wolverine, will be the studio's sole release in 2024, according to American news outlet Variety. The Shawn Levy directorial will land in US theatres on July 26, 2024, as opposed to its earlier scheduled date of May 3, 2024. Anthony Mackie-starrer Captain America: Brave New World had earlier occupied the July 26, 2024, date but will open in cinemas on February 14, 2025. Another Marvel Studios movie that has been pushed is Thunderbolts, the antihero team-up starring Sebastian Stan, Florence Pugh, Wyatt Russell, Olga Kurylenko, David Harbour, Hannah John-Kamen and Julia Louis-Dreyfus. The movie was moved from December 20, 2024 to July 25, 2025. **PTI**



## "Tiger 3" goes "phenomenal" on its advance booking ahead of release

Superstar Salman Khan-starrer "Tiger 3" has "phenomenal" advance booking and is expected to earn close to Rs 40 crore on the first day of its release on Diwali, says Sanjeev Kumar Bijli, Executive Director of PVR INOX Ltd. The Yash Raj Films project, directed by Maneesh Sharma, is a sequel to the 2017 film "Tiger Zinda Hai" and releases on November 12. The advance booking for the film, also starring Katrina Kaif and Emraan Hashmi, opened on November 5. According to PVR INOX, the chain has sold about 1.80 lakh tickets of "Tiger 3" for the first weekend, which is from Sunday to Thursday. More than one lakh tickets have been sold for day one in over 1000 screens of PVR INOX across the country, he said. **PTI**