



Delhi's AQI continues to remain in 'very poor' category

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The Supreme Court extended by ten days to decide on Shiv Sena disqualification pleas



January 10th date is given by SC to decide on Shiv Sena disqualification pleas. Speaker Rahul Narwekar submitted that he needs to examine 34 petitions and documents – running into a total of over 2 lakh pages – as per which 56 MLAs are sought to be disqualified. A three-judge bench of Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra passed an interim application filed by Narwekar seeking ex-

tension of time to decide on the pleas by three weeks, till January 21.

On October 30, the apex court repudiated to grant time beyond December 31 to the speaker who had filed an affidavit seeking permission till February 29, 2024, to complete the hearings. It had also asked the speaker to decide on the disqualification pleas related to two factions of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) on or before January 31, 2024.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the speaker, submitted that there are documents of over 2 lakh pages to be examined by Narwekar and he is conducting proceedings even during the Winter Session of the Assembly held in Nagpur, which began on December 7 and will go until December 20.

Narwekar claimed that there are a total of 34 petitions and 133 respondents as per which 56 MLAs are sought to be dis-

qualified under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution. There are 34 petitions, each running into approximately 2,821 pages, to which 133 respondents have filed separate replies running into nearly 2.71 lakh pages. Narwekar also added that there are witnesses for and on behalf of some petitioners and respondents in the disqualification petitions and cross examinations, which run into several pages.

After NRC, CAA, triple talaq, Ayodhya etc. Waqf tangle needs urgent solution

Editoritis



Dr. Vaidehi

After addressing the crucial issues now, the legal battle has begun for Waqf lands. The hearing in the Supreme Court was supposed to begin in November. India's being a written and declared "secular" country since 1976, a communal law enacted in 1991 has no locus standee or legal recognition. Since all are equal in the eyes of the law, such a one-sided law is unconstitutional. Almost all states specially, UP, Bihar, Bengal, Assam had many Waqf scams that was bottled-up in media because local politicians were the beneficiary.

Waqf literally means 'detention' as when a waqf is created, the property is detained; neither the person who created the waqf nor its beneficiaries are entitled to ownership. A waqf becomes a Muslim public property

that cannot be given away, sold, mortgaged, inherited, or otherwise disposed of. It will forever remain in Muslim custody. The first Waqf Act was enacted in 1913, during the British era. Why it was continued after independence when India's home minister was 'iron man' Sardar Patel who integrated 500 plus princely states? Later, in 1955 it was slightly amended. In 1993, the Act was quietly passed into law by the outnumbered Congress government as part of appeasement policy as he was facing huge pressure from 'secular congress politicians' post Babri demolition. Later on in 2013, it was revised and passed by the then Congress led UPA government.

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Editoritis

After NRC, CAA, triple talaq, Ayodhya etc. Waqf tangle needs urgent solution

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The situation has reached such a point that now the Waqf Board is also claiming historical architecture and monuments like Taj Mahal, Qutub Minar, Red Fort and handing over to them from the Archaeological Society of India (ASI).

The four British judges who heard the case described the waqf as “a perpetuity of the worst kind” and declared it invalid. It is important to note that the decision of the four judges was not accepted in India, and the Mussalman Waqf Validating Act 1913 saved the institution from destruction.

The Central Waqf Council serves as an advisory body to the Centre on matters related to waqf properties. Any dispute is decided by a waqf property tribunal headed by a member of the state service and two other members (not necessarily Muslims). Some states like Bihar have separate Shia and Sunni waqf boards.

The situation has reached such a point that now the Waqf Board is also claiming historical architecture and monuments like Taj Mahal, Qutub Minar, Red Fort and handing over to them from the Archaeological Society of India (ASI). Mumbai and India's most luxurious house 'Antila' which we all know belongs to Mukesh Ambani - the Wakf Board has also sent a notice claiming it as theirs. the State Wakf Board of Tamil Nadu has laid full claim on three Hindu-dominated villages and a thousand-year-old temple. Not one or two houses - the whole village with its land, houses, ponds and ponds belongs to the Waqf.

However, during the British Raj, a dispute over a waqf property ended up in the Privy Council of London. The four British judges who heard the case described the waqf as “a perpetuity of the worst kind” and declared it invalid. It is important to note that the decision of the four judges was not accepted in India, and the Mussalman Waqf Validating Act 1913 saved the institution from destruction. Today, after the Armed Forces and the Railways, the waqf is the largest landowner in India.

In 1954, the Jawaharlal Nehru government passed the Waqf Act, which led to the centralization of waqfs. Under the Act, the government established the Central Waqf Council in 1964. In 1995, the law was amended to allow the formation of waqf boards in each state and union territory. The Central Waqf Council serves as an advisory body to the Centre on matters related to waqf properties. Any dispute is decided by a waqf property tribunal headed by a member of the state service and two other members (not necessarily Muslims). Some states like Bihar have separate Shia and Sunni waqf boards. The main purpose of the huge waqf board universe in India is to serve the Muslim community. But even as the waqf board has emerged as the third largest owner of land in the country, Indian Muslims are struggling for basic needs and fare worse than Dalits on several socio-economic indicators.

Waqf owners today are India's largest urban landlords. Waqf is a type of charitable endowment in Islamic law

where the ownership of a property is transferred to Allah and the property is permanently dedicated for religious or charitable purposes. The person making the waqf (known as waqif) may specify the purposes for which the income generated by the property should be used. This could include supporting the poor and needy, maintaining a mosque or other religious institution, providing education, or funding other charitable causes. In this way, waqf is considered a form of religious charity that allows individuals to contribute to the welfare of society and earn spiritual rewards. Waqf properties are managed by a waqf board, which is responsible for ensuring that the income generated by the property is used in accordance with the wishes of the waqif and Islamic principles.

The concept of waqf has its roots in early Islamic history, with the practice established during the time of Prophet Muhammad. During the Islamic Golden Age, waqf institutions played a critical role in the development of Islamic scholarship and education. Many of the world's oldest universities, such as Al-Azhar University in Cairo (Egypt) and the University of Al Quaraouiyine in Fez (Morocco), were founded as waqf institutions.



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VEWS & VISION OF CITY

Flat No. 2, J- Wing Ground floor, Sumer Nagar Building 3, S.V. Road,
Near Gandhi Motors, Borivali - West, Mumbai - 400 092.

Editor

Dr. Vaidehi

Vaidehi has received several Awards like Icongokarmavir chakra, Bedal Powell scout and guide awards 2021- best journalist, Newspaper Association of India award- best journalist. She received lot of awards for her contribution towards journalism.

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Email- afternoonvoicedesk@gmail.com • SMS -9820199881

For any queries regarding the editorial desk, contact - 7506760610

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Pen is Mightier than Sword



- C.K. Subramaniam

Pens don't win battles. And swords don't write poetry. Mightily is the hand that knows when to pick the pen and when to pick the sword. Using pen and paper for note-taking helps boost memory and the ability to understand, more so than laptops and your PCs. Note-taking is a practical way to acquire and retain information while saving time and effort. With content marketing shaping up as one of the most important marketing skills to have on your resume, getting a handle on writing could really benefit your career as well as the obvious benefit of increasing traffic to your company's site.

Writing is intimidating to a lot of people, particularly those who don't write for a living or on a regular basis. The good news is that writing doesn't have to be agonizing, and almost anybody can improve their writing skills with a little discipline and a willingness to learn.

The habit of writing regularly; the confidence to write like a master; tools and techniques; to help you write with impact; the ability to look at one's own writing critically and with the resolve to improve it; and an understanding of market conditions and what it takes to succeed commercially as a writer. It appears that we have no choice but to juggle the right words into place and hope that they are not in the wrong order.

Memory of a person, who is on a writing job for years plays a pivotal role in bringing out the best. For example, a writer covering cricket matches provides best statistics if he is able to give the number of old records connected to a particular game and catch the attention of the readers. Remembering old records for a writer is a bonus and having technical knowledge as well as law points make the analysis the lividest one and people like to go through your write ups as we used to go through SK Gurnathan in the pages of The Hindu those days.

In the days of cell phones, email, and text messages, letter writing can seem hopelessly outdated. But it's an art worth bringing

back, and not because of some misplaced sense of nostalgia either. The writing and reception of letters will always offer an experience that modern technology cannot touch. Twitter is effective for broadcasting what you're eating for lunch, and email is fantastic for quick exchanges on the most pertinent pieces of information. But when it comes to sharing one's true thoughts, sincere sympathies, ardent love, and deepest gratitude, words traveling along an invisible super-highway will never suffice.

Because sending a letter is the next best thing to showing up personally at someone's door. Ink from your pen touches the stationary, your fingers touch the paper, your saliva seals the envelope. Something tangible from your world travels through machines and hands, and deposits itself in another's mailbox. Your letter is then carried inside as an invited guest. The paper that was sitting on your desk, now sits on another's. The recipient handles the paper that you handled. Letters create a connection that modern, impersonal forms of communication will never approach.

Writing and delivering a eulogy or remembrance speech is truly an honor and an opportunity for you to help the audience remember the person—who they were, what they did, and what they enjoyed about life. If you write an obituary of a cricketer who died recently your words will paint a picture of the deceased through the memories, anecdotes, and stories you tell. By adding to that the vital statistics of the late player provides a plethora of perfect art of writing. If writing is an art then, the virtue of remembering the past is an addition to the repertoire of a writer.

A writer is perfecting the art of putting right words in his style of writing and thereby making out an excellent article. The reader will have to create a taste of word power, as the last word of Shashi Tharoor shapes and provide a platform for youngsters to use the best vocabulary and learn the art of putting out the best in a planned and prescribed way as we all consider that the pen is mightier than a sword.

Letters to the Editor

al warming because the economy of poor countries depend on weak agriculture. It is true that carbon dioxide remains in the environment for centuries after emission, while methane only 12 years.

But methane affects the ozone layer a lot and it has immense power to absorb energy, hence the danger from it is greater. Rice farming, food and biomass, as well as livestock release a lot of methane into the air. But India or many such countries can neither give up dependence on rice cultivation nor change the method of farming. In view of this problem of agricultural-based countries, industrialized countries will have to focus on reducing other reasons for increasing temperature. Ignoring this will make consensus difficult and once again the conference will appear to be merely intellectually ruminating on making a vague proposal.

N Mateeni

Caste card in CM picks

The surprise choices made by the

Bharatiya Janata Party high command for the chief ministerial posts in the three states where it recently won elections -Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan - make it clear that it is the writ of the prime minister, Narendra Modi, that now runs in the party. Our Constitution has declared India to be a secular state; it prohibits discrimination on the grounds of caste, colour, creed or religion. However, recent political moves appear to go against the spirit of a secular state. The decisions are aimed at garnering SC, ST and OBC votes, rather than focusing on the welfare of the people.

Karan Singh

A step towards Hindu Rashtra!

"Conversion, love jihad and brain washing will stop the day India becomes a Hindu rashtra," Dhirendra Shastri said at an event earlier in Mumbai, adding that the country will become a Hindu rashtra the day 2/3 of the country's population starts demanding it. Earlier in January, Dhirendra Krishna Shastri prom-

ised 'Hindu Rashtra' to his followers if they support him. Pandit Dhirendra Krishna Shastri said that if India is declared a Hindu Rashtra then there will be unity, social cordiality will prevail; castes will remain but there will be no casteism. This is right in a way because India has been a Hindu nation since time immemorial. The kingdoms of King Harishchandra and Prabhu Shriram of Treta Yuga, King Harshvardhan of Kali Yuga, King Dahir of Afghanistan, Maharana Pratap, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj etc. were never 'secular' but they were 'Hindu Rashtra'. For this, the 'All India Hindu Rashtra Convention' in Goa has to be called a step towards Hindu Rashtra!

Sagar Shirodkar

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)

COP-28 Program

COP-28, which was going on in Dubai since November 30, ended on December 12. In view of the impending crisis of global warming, it has become necessary for the world to limit the temperature rise to the target of 1.5 degrees. The like-minded developing countries (LMDCs) and least developed countries (LDCs) at the conference are unhappy with the attitude of the OPEC countries. Even if a draft is made, it will not be clear, universally accepted and will not achieve the goal. Rich countries need to understand some basic things.

It is true that according to the IEA, methane contributes 30% to the greenhouse gas problem. And farming is responsible for 25% of its emissions. But it would be wrong to give it priority among all the causes of glob-

Sonia, Rahul, Kharge to address rally in Nagpur on Congress foundation day on Dec 28



Former Congress presidents Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi along with incumbent party chief Mallikarjun Kharge will address a rally in Maharashtra's Nagpur city on December 28, on the occasion of the grand old party's founda-

tion day, a senior leader said on Friday.

A meeting of senior Congress leaders in Maharashtra is currently underway here in the presence of All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary (organisation) K C Venu-

gopal and senior leader Mukul Wasnik.

The meeting is being attended by Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole, former state minister Balasaheb Thorat, Leader of Opposition in the assembly Vijay Wadettiwar, former chief ministers Ashok Chavan and Prithviraj Chavan among others.

Talking to reporters, Venu-gopal said, "On the occasion of Congress's foundation day on December 28, party president Mallikarjun Kharge and its former chiefs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi will address a huge rally in Nagpur." The winter session of the Maharashtra legislature is currently underway in Nagpur. **PTI**

Minister Sudhir Mungantiwar said, "Report could be tabled in the assembly on the deaths of 14 people due to heatstroke"



Maharashtra Minister Sudhir Mungantiwar on Friday said a report could be tabled in the Maharashtra assembly on the deaths of 14 people due to heatstroke at a function attended by Union Minister Amit Shah in April this year. Speaking to reporters during an informal chat at Suyog residence, where journalists from outside Nagpur are given accommodation during legislature sessions, the cultural affairs minister said there was nothing controversial about the incident that occurred during the event organised to confer the Maharashtra Bhushan Award to social worker Appasaheb Dharmadhikari. At least 10 women and four men died after suffering sunstroke during the award ceremony, which was

held on an open ground in the Kharghar area of Raigad district in April.

"The report could be tabled in the house during the ongoing session. There is nothing controversial about the incident because the meteorological department had predicted a temperature of 34 degrees Celsius," Mungantiwar said. "It is true that the cultural affairs ministry had organised the event near Mumbai. However, the timing was decided as per their (Appasaheb Dharmadhikari) availability. They told us their followers can come early for the event," he said. Following the deaths, Opposition parties slammed the Eknath Shinde-led state government, accused it of mismanagement and demanded an inquiry. **PTI**

Drugs worth Rs 50,000 crore seized in Maharashtra in recent past: Fadnavis

The Maharashtra police have seized drugs worth about Rs 50,000 crore in the state in the recent past, said Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis in the legislative assembly on Friday.

He was replying to a question by Shiv Sena (UBT) legislator Ravindra Waikar, who represents the Jogeshwari East constituency in Mumbai.

In a major haul, the Mumbai police recently seized 151 kg of mephedrone worth Rs 300 crore and arrested more than a dozen persons from several cities in an operation that also included a raid in a factory in MIDC Shinde Gaon in Nashik district.

"The police have seized

drugs worth Rs 50,000 crore in the recent past. The police discretely tracked 2,200 small shops (selling drugs) in Mumbai and removed them to curb the menace of drugs," said Fadnavis. The deputy CM, however, did not specify the exact period during which the drugs were seized. "The state government is keeping a watch on chemicals being imported which could be used to make drugs. We have also found that closed factory sites are being used for drug production," Fadnavis added. Following the Rs 300-crore drug bust by the Mumbai police, the opposition and ruling dispensation have targeted each other over key accused Lalit Patil. **PTI**

Our today's meeting with Amit Shah postponed: Ajit Pawar

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Friday said he along with Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis were scheduled to meet Union Home Minister Amit Shah in the evening but the meeting got postponed.

Pawar was speaking with journalists on the Vidhan Bhavan premises in Nagpur, where the winter session of the state legislature is underway.

The deputy CM said they

have received a message from the Union home minister that he won't be able to meet them on Friday evening on account of some important work. Pawar said Shah has asked them to visit him on Monday or Tuesday. "We have sought his time on Monday," he said.

Pawar said CM Shinde and the deputy CMs discussed five key issues, including onion and ethanol, in the cabinet meeting on Thursday. "We were supposed to meet the Union home minister

in this context," he said.

Farmers in Maharashtra are upset after the Centre banned onion exports till March 31, 2024, to increase domestic availability and keep prices in check. It has also banned the use of 'sugarcane juice and sugar syrup' for ethanol production in the 2023-24 supply year to maintain sugar availability for domestic use and to keep prices under check. The deputy CM said 24-25 other important issues were also discussed in the cabinet meeting. **PTI**

Dy CM Devendra Fadnavis said, "Inspections will be conducted at highrise structures in cities every two years"

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Friday said inspections will be conducted at highrise structures in cities every two years to ensure compliance with safety regulations. Speaking in the legislative council, Fadnavis said highrise structures must incorporate refuge areas every two to three floors to provide residents shelter during fires as per the new building code.

These guidelines will enhance safety measures in densely populated areas, especially in Mumbai,

Pune, Thane, and other major cities, he said. "In some instances, it was found that the refuge areas were repurposed for offices or club facilities. Inspections of highrise buildings will be conducted every two years to ensure compliance with safety regulations," the deputy chief minister said.

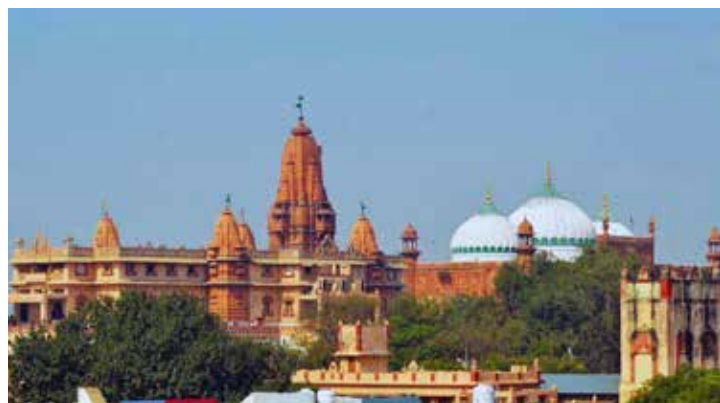
Fadnavis also emphasised the need for a comprehensive review of burn wards in hospitals in major cities and pledged to increase the bed capacity if necessary to improve emergency response ca-

pabilities.

BJP MLC Uma Khapre raised the issue of the recent fire at a candle factory in Talwade in Pimpri-Chinchawad, in which 11 lives people lost their lives. Fadnavis clarified that the factory was located in a red zone, established in 2008 due to its proximity to the Southern Command of the Indian Army. Taking note of public concerns regarding the extension of the red zone limits, the deputy chief minister said he would meet the defence minister and discuss potential reductions. **PTI**

Nation

Krishna Janmabhoomi Temple case: SC refuses to stay Allahabad High Court's order, Allows survey of Shahi Idgah complex



The Supreme Court on Friday refused to stay Allahabad High Court's December 14 order, which allowed the primary survey of the Shahi Idgah complex adjacent to the Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi Temple in Uttar Pradesh's Mathura by a court-monitored three-member team

of advocate commissioners. A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and SVN Bhatti hearing the Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Eidgah Mosque dispute observed that the High Court order had not been formally challenged before it.

Senior advocate Huzefa Ahmadi, for the Mosque Com-

mittee, told the bench that the High Court has passed certain interlocutory orders that have an impact on the outcome. He said yesterday the High Court allowed a survey of the premises. Justice Khanna expressed disinclination to interfere with the order which has not been challenged before it saying, "How can I stay the order without it being before me?" The bench said the mosque committee can approach the Supreme Court if it has any grievances. "The special leave petition is listed for January 9. Let it come up on the said date. All issues and contentions will be considered. In case the petitioner has any grievance, it will be open to the petitioner to file a challenge in accordance with the law," the bench added. ANI

203 homeless alleged death case: Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj says, "Documents submitted in the house shows data from beginning of November"



Several BJP MLAs marshalled out of Delhi Assembly on Friday stating around 203 homeless people have died during the winter season in Delhi during AAP regime and demanded CM Arvind Kejriwal to give a clarification on this statement as government is not working on this issue.

On BJP MLAs' protests over alleged government inaction on deaths due to cold, Delhi Min-

ister Saurabh Bharadwaj says, "The documents that they gave in the house show the data from the beginning of November. It is clearly visible in the photos that these people died either in road accidents or in a murder etc because of the injury marks visible... The cold in Delhi began a week ago. Delhi has no cold in November... This is not the data of the deaths due to cold. The BJP is spreading lies..." told ANI

Adjournment of houses: Oppositions are calling this as waste of time



On Friday as the winter session at the parliament began many members were seen protesting outside the parliament demanding the discussion of security of breach at Lok Sabha which happened on December 13.

Both the houses of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha has been adjourned till Monday 11:00 am. Member of Parliament were raising slogans outside parliament demanding discussion to be done over the security breach incident.

Over this issue Congress MP Karti P Chidambaram said, "It's a colossal waste of time and resources, Parliament should

have run today. All we want is a simple statement from the Home Minister, in the presence of the Prime Minister, about what happened in the intrusion in the Lok Sabha" told PTI.

While Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Arvind Sawant says, "If the MP (who arranged the visitors' passes) was of the opposition would BJP have shown the same level of harmony? They have a history of this. They have expertise in making a mountain of a molehill...The reality is that it is the responsibility of the Home Minister to come to the House and speak on it. Neither he will come nor the Prime Minister..." to ANI

Parliament security breach case: Delhi court sends accused Lalit Jha to 7-day police custody

The Patiala House Court here on Friday granted seven-day custody of Lalit Jha, the accused in the Parliament security breach case, to Police. Lalit Jha was brought to the concerned judge of Patiala House Court. He was also provided legal aide counsel, Advocate Umakant Kataria.

The Delhi Police while seeking 15-day custody of Jha told the court, "He is a mastermind. We need his custody to unearth the whole conspiracy and main motive behind the incident. We need to travel and take him to



different cities and places. We need custody to recover the mobile devices also." However, the court sent him to a seven-day police remand. The security breach happened on the anniversary of

the 2001 Parliament terror attack. Two people--Sagar Sharma and Manoranjan D--jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber from the public gallery during Zero Hour, released yellow gas from canisters and shouted anti-establishment slogans before being overpowered by the MPs. Outside it, in another incident, two protestors -- Neelam (42) and Amol (25) -- protested outside the Parliament with similar gas canisters. However, all four were sent to seven-day custody of Delhi Police Special Cell on Thursday. ANI

Singer Navjot Singh murder case: Mohali Police held killers after five years of the incident

Mohali police on Friday nabbed the killers of singer Navjot Singh alias Isapuria Virk more than five years after the murder. "Today, after 6 years, the killers of Singer Navjot Singh @ Isapuria Virk have been arrested. Justice has been served. Acting professionally & scientifically on an

untraced sensational murder case of the singer in 2018, CIA @sas-nagarpolice has solved the investigation adeptly," Punjab Director General of Police said in a post on Friday.

"@PunjabPoliceIndis committed to make #Punjab crime-free as per the vision of CM@BhagwantMann2/2," DGP add-

ed in his post. The 22-year-old singer Navjot Singh was found dead in Dera Bassi town of Mohali district on May 27, 2018. He had been shot from close range and had suffered five gunshot wounds. Navjot Singh's car was found parked nearby. He had been living in a rented apartment in Mohali. ANI

World

Pakistan: FIA arrested three individuals in connection with human smuggling and visa fraud



Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) arrested three individuals in connection with human smuggling and visa fraud in different areas of Lahore city, as reported by ARY News. The FIA spokesperson emphasised that the Anti-Human Trafficking Circle launched a crackdown on human smugglers.

Three suspects, including an absconder Umar Shahbaz, Mehak Babar and Ahsan Elahi were arrested, according to ARY News. Reportedly, the accused used to attract people with promises of overseas employment and extract substantial amounts from

them. Absconder Umar Shahbaz extracted Pakistani Rupee (PKR) Rs 272,000 from a citizen and promised to send him to Dubai. Meanwhile, the female suspect also received lakhs of rupees from various people in different cities by falsely promising to send them to Canada. Moreover, she had already been booked in three cases, according to ARY News. Ahsan Elahi, another suspect, fabricated bank statements to obtain a visa at the Turkish embassy. He was then arrested on a complaint from the embassy, as reported by ARY News.

Deputy Director Anti-Human Trafficking Circle Lahore Riaz

Khan has now formed a specialised squad to arrest human smugglers. Crisis-hit Pakistan has a population of 240 million and an average salary of USD 1,500 a year. Moreover, its inflation has reached 33 per cent, which is the highest in decades, with the rupee depreciating rapidly and a sovereign default looming, as per Nikkei Asia. In 2022, over 800,000 Pakistanis officially left the country in search of work, which marks the biggest outflow in the past five years. Some desperate residents turn to illegal smugglers to move them to Australia, Europe and other top destinations, despite the risks, according to Nikkei Asia.

Adding to that, more than 20,000 people have died or gone missing who were trying to cross the Mediterranean since 2014, according to the International Organization for Migration. "The dearth of economic opportunities available in the country compels more and more people to take their chances on such routes without being aware of the risk," the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan noted. ANI

European Council opens membership negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova



The European Council has opened membership negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova, the President of the EU Council, Charles Michel informed on Thursday, CNN reported. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy hailed the development calling it a "victory of Ukraine".

"This is a victory for Ukraine. A victory for all of Europe. A victory that motivates, inspires, and strengthens," Zelenskyy posted on X (formerly Twitter). "History is made by those who don't get tired of fighting for freedom," he added. Notably, Ukraine has held ambitions to join the European Union for more than a decade. The announcement by the European Council comes nearly two years after the bloc accepted Ukraine as a candidate state. However, a few fundamen-

tal obstacles stand in the way of Ukraine joining the bloc and it could still be a decade until Kyiv joins the EU enjoying the benefits of full membership, according to CNN. Ukraine still needs to meet the conditions of the Copenhagen Criteria - an opaque trio of requirements that the EU must be satisfied are met - before moving to the next stage of negotiations.

The criteria focus on whether or not a candidate country has a functioning free-market economy if the country's institutions are fit to uphold European values such as human rights and the EU's interpretation of the rule of law, and whether the country has a functioning, inclusive democracy, CNN reported. Notably, these things are hard to prove for any country let alone Ukraine which is reeling under a state of war with Russia. ANI

Maldives says, "It wont renew the Hydrographic Survey agreement made with India"

Maldives has said that it will not renew the Hydrographic Survey agreement made with India, The Press reported. The Press is a Maldives-based news website.

Maldives' Under Secretary for Public Policy Mohamed Firuzul said that part of the 'Hafthaa-14' roadmap was to revoke bilateral and diplomatic agreements with other countries that would put the country's sovereignty in danger. Firuzul was speaking at a conference held at the Maldives President's Office after the Cabinet meeting on Thursday.

He said the Maldives President and his cabinet have decided not to renew the Hydrography agreement between the India-Maldives and that as per agreement dictates one party can decide not to renew the current agreement six months before it expires in June 2024, The

Press reported. The hydrographic survey agreement was signed on June 8, 2019, during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the Maldives. Under the agreement, India was allowed to conduct a comprehensive study of the island nation's territorial waters, which includes reefs, lagoons, coastlines, ocean currents, and tide levels. The third Joint Hydrographic survey by the Indian Navy and the Maldives National Defense Force (MNDF) was carried out by Indian Naval Ship Investigator (INS Investigator) from January 19 to February 26, 2023.

The Indian Navy ship surveyed Northern Maldives covering Ihavandhippolhu and Thiladhanmatee atolls and Gallandhu Kandu. Since 2018, Indian navy ships have made several trips across the Maldives for the survey, according to The Press. ANI

Four alleged Hamas members were suspicious of plotting terror attacks on Jewish institutions, Report

Four alleged Hamas members suspected of plotting terror attacks on Jewish institutions in Europe were arrested by German and Dutch authorities on Thursday (local time), CNN reported citing Germany's federal prosecutor. The prosecutor said that three arrests were made in Germany and one in the Netherlands.

Hamas is classified as a 'terrorist organisation' by the United States, the European Union and several other nations. Of the three arrested in Germany, two were Lebanese nationals and one was an Egyptian national, said the prosecutor. The person arrested in the Netherlands was described as a Dutch national. While the first names of the individuals were outlined, the sur-



name of the suspects were not disclosed in line with the German privacy law, according to CNN. Reacting to the arrests, German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser thanked the German and Dutch police authorities, stating that it "shows that our security authorities are extremely vigilant and act consistently." "The protection of Jews is our top priority. We use all constitutional means against

those who threaten the lives of Jews and the existence of the state of Israel," Faeser said.

The German Justice Minister, Marco Buschmann, also thanked authorities for the "successful investigation," which has "contributed to ensuring that Jews in Europe can continue to live in safety and peace." "Following the terrible attacks by Hamas on the Israeli population, attacks on Jews and Jewish institutions have also increased in our country in recent weeks. This is shameful and shocking. We must therefore do everything we can to ensure that Jews in our country do not have to fear for their safety again. And our security and law enforcement authorities are working flat out to achieve this," Buschmann stated. ANI

Expression

Broken Dreams: Honesty in Kashmir's Story



Aubaid Ahmad Akhoun

Columnist

In the complex and nuanced tapestry of Kashmir's historical narrative, a stark revelation surfaces — the relentless pursuit of personal gain has too frequently eclipsed the collective well-being of the community. The ascension of an elite class, propelled by conscienceless motives, adeptly orchestrated the narrative through diverse channels, including mass media broadcast platforms and various tools within the state machinery.

This historical deception, orchestrated by those who would later form the elite, celebrated plunderers and blunderers, perpetuating a distorted legacy. The underlying issue lies in the acknowledgment that glorifying such figures betrays society and deviates its trajectory. What unfolded was not merely a breach of trust but a deliberate manipulation of narratives to serve vested interests.

Central to this narrative is the imperative for conscientious reflection before action. In a society where personal gains frequently overshadow collective welfare, the Kashmiri elite's fixation on personal reputation misled the populace, perpetuating self-serving motives and hindering genuine societal progress.

The downward filtration theory becomes apparent — the elite's actions influencing the broader population. As the elite prioritized reputation over authentic conscience, the common people



were led astray, perpetuating a cycle of self-serving motives at the expense of societal advancement.

Navigating this historical landscape requires individuals, particularly Kashmiris, to liberate themselves from the shackles of personal gain. Both past and present elites must be held accountable for choices that have shaped Kashmir's narrative.

In the broader context, the Kashmiri tale serves as a cautionary reminder of the dangers when personal gain overshadows collective well-being. The call to question one's conscience isn't merely philosophical; it's a practical imperative for a society prioritizing humanity over individual interests. Only through conscientious introspection can a community break free from the chains of historical fraud, paving the way for an authentic and just future.

This reflection extends beyond Kashmir, resonating with the timeless wisdom of Mark Twain, the American writer, humorist, and lecturer: "Whenever you find yourself

on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect." In a world fixated on external judgments, this insight urges individuals to prioritize the inner compass over fleeting perceptions.

Mark Twain's wisdom centers on the idea that conscience is an unwavering guide to our actions, reflecting our moral and ethical principles. Unlike reputation, influenced by external factors, our conscience serves as a steadfast compass, pointing toward authenticity and moral integrity.

Reputation, often shaped by public opinion, is a fickle entity. Subject to change and influenced by external circumstances, it may not always align with our true character. While it can open doors, the cost of compromising principles for external validation should be carefully considered.

A delicate balance exists between maintaining a positive reputation and staying true to our authentic selves. Mark Twain's counsel encourages us to evaluate the cost of compromising principles

for external validation, recognizing the inherent paradox in societal expectations.

A robust conscience is built on self-awareness and a commitment to moral principles. Reflecting on our values allows us to align our actions with convictions, cultivating a reputation grounded in authenticity.

Prioritizing conscience over reputation provides resilience against external judgment. Recognizing that we cannot control others' perceptions liberates us from self-imposed expectations, shifting focus from seeking approval to staying true to our principles.

Tailpiece: The Kashmiri parable and Mark Twain's wisdom converge, offering a profound lesson for navigating societal narratives. The essence lies in conscientious reflection, prioritizing authenticity over fleeting reputations. Whether in the historical context of Kashmir or the broader spectrum of human experience, embracing the call to question one's conscience becomes paramount for a society aspiring to forge an authentic and just future.

Entertainment



Wife Deepti shares health update of her husband Shreyas Talpade

On Friday Deepti Talpade wife of Shreyas Talpade shared a post on social media about the health update where she mentioned that "He is stable now and will be discharged soon".

Earlier Actor Shreyas Talpade was admitted to the hospital when he was at the sets for shooting "Welcome to the Jungle" after completing the work for the day actor suddenly collapsed and he was rushed to Bellevue Hospital in Andheri. On Thursday 47 year- old actor had also undergone through angioplasty procedure due to heart attack.

The note shared by her stated, "I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for the overwhelming concern and well-wishes following the recent health scare my husband experienced, I'm relieved to update everyone that he is now in stable condition and will be discharged in a few days.

She further added, the medical team's exceptional case and timely reponse have been instrumental during this time, and we are grateful for their expertise. We kindly request respect for our privacy as he continues his recovery. Your unwavering support has been a tremendous source of strength for both of us.

Deepika Padukone had gone to Tirupati Balaji Temple with family to seek blessings of Lord Balaji



Actor Deepika Padukone was spotted at the Tirupati Balaji Temple on Friday morning. In the visuals obtained by ANI, Deepika could be seen seeking the blessings of Lord Balaji with her father Prakash Padukone, mother Ujjala Padukone, and sister Anisha Padukone.

The whole family was dressed in ethnic attire. Deepika looked ethereal in a beige suit. She was also given a red stole in the temple which he wrapped around him. Deepika's sacred visit comes at a time when she is gearing up for the release of her film 'Fighter', which also stars Hrithik Roshan and Anil Kapoor in the lead roles. Deepika plays the role of Squadron Leader Minal Rathore. Earlier this month, she shared her look from the film and wrote, "Squadron Leader Minal Rathore. Call Sign: Minni. Designation: Squadron Pilot. Unit: Air Dragons. Fighter Forever." **ANI**

Raveena Tandon talks about her upcoming project, says "I haven't essayed such a character.."



Actor Raveena Tandon will be seen in an interesting avatar in a web series titled 'Karmma Calling'. As per a statement, 'Karmma Calling' is the Indian adaptation of ABC series 'Revenge'. In the series, Raveena plays the role of Indrani Kothari, the reigning queen of society in Alibaug, a rich world of glitz, glamor, deceit and betrayal. Ruchi Narain has directed it.

Excited about the project, Raveena said, "Indrani Kothari believes the world is her stage and I haven't essayed such a character in a very long time. Karmma Calling is definitely more than what meets the eye and explores different facets of the world of the rich. Collaborating with Disney+ Hotstar was a great experience and playing Indrani helped me explore more for myself as an actor. It is a never-seen-before and never done before role and I am looking forward to audience reactions. Collaborating with R.A.T Films and Ruchi Narain has been exceptional."

Ruchi Narain also expressed her excitement about the series. "Karmma Calling is set against the backdrop of the ultra-rich and affluent Kothari family and all that conspires around them in their world. The series has massive grandeur, scale and a glamorous outlook with a story that weaves in revenge, deceit, betrayals and also navigates experiences of the Kothari family. The series is definitely going to be your 'guilty pleasure' watch and leave you craving for more. Collaborating with Raveena Tandon and Disney+ Hotstar has been an incredible experience," she shared. **ANI**

Actor Dwayne Johnson is all set for his new project with a new role as martial arts fighter



Actor and film producer Dwayne Johnson is all set to take up a new role as mixed martial arts fighter Mark Kerr. The wrestler-turned-actor, 51, will play the MMA and UFC champion in director Benny Safdie's upcoming film 'The Smashing Machine', according to an announcement made by the independent entertainment company A24, reported People. "Dwayne and Benny are singular talents, and their shared vision for Mark's inspiring story is electrifying. We are deeply honoured to have their trust as collaborators in bringing this incredibly special project to life," A24's Noah Sacco said in a statement to The Hollywood Reporter and Variety.

Safdie, 37, previously co-directed the films 'Uncut Gems', starring Adam Sandler, and 'Good Time', starring Robert Pattinson, alongside his brother Josh Safdie. Safdie is going to work alone on 'The Smashing Machine' as a writer and director for the first time. Producing the movie are David Koplan, Eli Bush, Dany Garcia, Safdie, and Johnson.