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ON NEW YEAR'S DAY

ISRO LAUNCHES X-RAY POLARIMETER SATELLITE TO STUDY BLACK HOLES

TBG NETWORK
SRIHARIKOTA

In a groundbreaking achievement, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully launched its inaugural X-Ray Polarimeter Satellite, XPoSat, using the reliable Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) in its C58 mission. The primary satellite, XPoSat, was deployed into a 650 km Low Earth Orbit, followed by a strategic manoeuvre that lowered its altitude to 350 km for the PSLV Orbital Experimental Module-3 (POEM-3) experiment. This milestone marks ISRO's entry into scientific research dedicated to X-ray polarization, with XPoSat geared to investigate intense X-ray sources in space, providing unprecedented insights into celestial phenomena such as

black holes.

The launch took place from the first launch pad at 9:10 am, and the 44.4-meter-tall PSLV rocket accomplished its primary objective by precisely placing XPoSat into the intended orbit after a 21-minute flight. Subsequently, scientists at ISRO initiated a manoeuvre by firing the fourth stage of the PSLV rocket twice. This manoeuvre aimed to reduce the satellite's altitude from 650 km to 350 km, setting the stage for the scientific experiments under the PSLV Orbital Experimental Module-3 (POEM-3) initiative. The successful execution of this complex manoeuvre highlights ISRO's technical prowess and strategic capabilities.

The PSLV variant utilized for this mission was the PSLV-DL, boasting a lift-off

mass of 260 tonnes. Notably, the fourth stage of the rocket is configured as a 3-axis stabilized orbital platform designed for conducting experiments. This particular mission is part of ISRO's ongoing efforts to enhance scientific research capabilities and explore new frontiers in space exploration.

This venture is not the first of its kind for ISRO. A similar scientific experiment was conducted using POEM-2 during the PSLV-C55 mission in April 2023, setting the stage for continuous innovation and advancements in the space agency's pursuits. The experiments conducted as part of POEM-3 involve 10 payloads from various ISRO centers, each contributing to the broader scientific objectives of the mission.

The electrical power re-

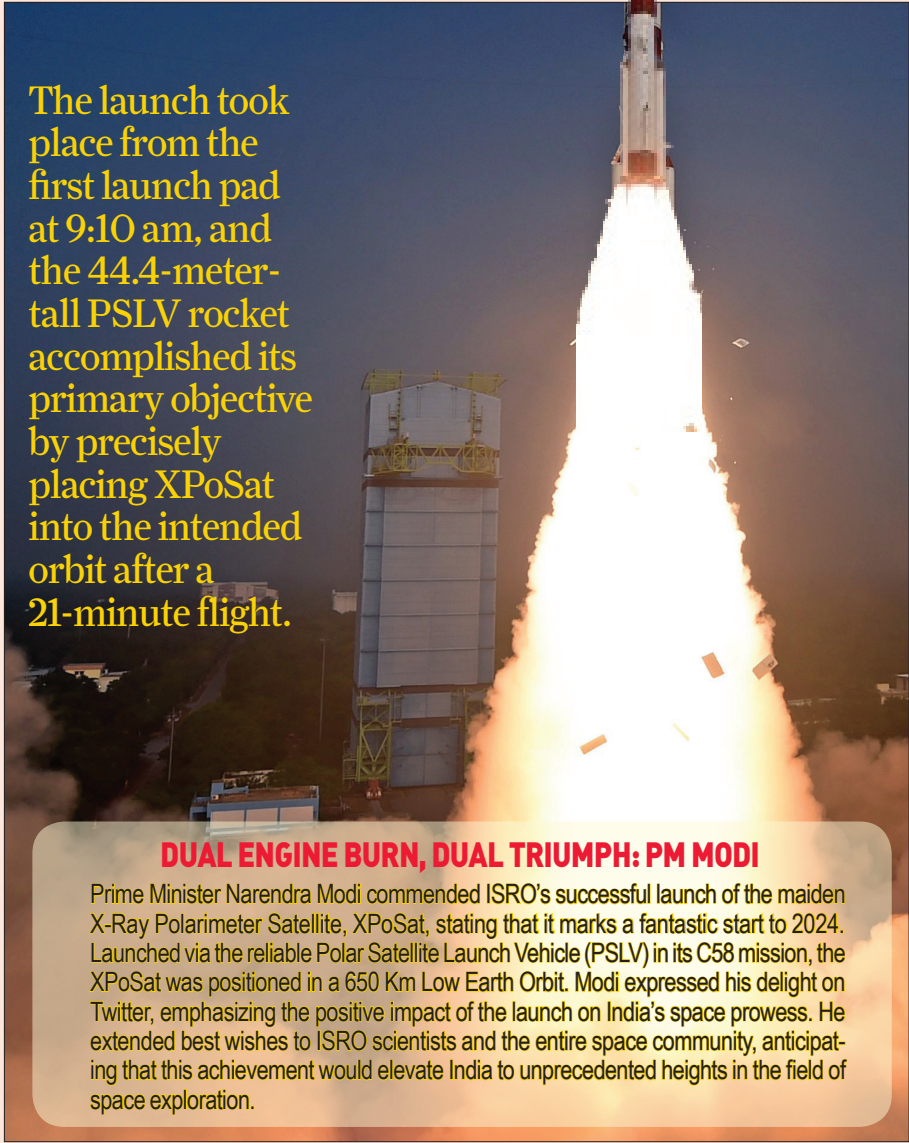
quirements for the fourth stage orbital platform are met through a Flexible Solar Panel in conjunction with a 50 Ah Li-ion battery. The platform, known as PS4, encompasses avionic systems responsible for navigation, guidance, control, and telecommands. Additionally, it features orbital platform altitude control systems essential for conducting experiments and testing the payloads effectively.

Among the 10 payloads involved in the POEM-3 experiment, there are several noteworthy contributions. The Radiation Shielding Experiment Module by TakeMe2Space, the Women Engineered Satellite by LBS Institute of Technology for Women, BeliefSat (an amateur radio satellite) built by K J Somaiya Institute of Technology, and the Green

Impulse Transmitter by Inspecity Space Labs Pvt Ltd are some of the key components. Additionally, the LEATTD (Launching Expeditions for Aspiring Technologies Technology Demonstrator) by Dhruva Space Pvt Ltd, RUDRA 0.3HPGP, and ARKA 200 developed by Bellatrix Aerospace Pvt Ltd, the Dust Experiment (DEX) built by PRL, ISRO, and the Fuel Cell Power System and Si based High Energy cell built by Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre contribute to the comprehensive payload ensemble.

Furthermore, the successful launch of XPoSat carries significant implications for India's space endeavours. XPoSat is designed to investigate the polarization of intense X-ray sources in space, a critical diagnostic tool for

■ P2



DUAL ENGINE BURN, DUAL TRIUMPH: PM MODI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi commended ISRO's successful launch of the maiden X-Ray Polarimeter Satellite, XPoSat, stating that it marks a fantastic start to 2024. Launched via the reliable Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) in its C58 mission, the XPoSat was positioned in a 650 Km Low Earth Orbit. Modi expressed his delight on Twitter, emphasizing the positive impact of the launch on India's space prowess. He extended best wishes to ISRO scientists and the entire space community, anticipating that this achievement would elevate India to unprecedented heights in the field of space exploration.

TOP OF THE DAY

FUEL DEMAND COOLS WITH WINTER BREEZE

New Delhi: Petrol and diesel sales in India slumped in December as the setting in of winter tapered demand, preliminary data from state-owned firms showed on Monday. Petrol sales of the three state-owned firms, which control 90 percent of the fuel market, fell 1.4 percent to 2.72 million metric tonnes in December 2023 when compared to the year-ago period, while diesel demand dropped 7.8 percent to 6.73 million metric tonnes. The onset of the winter season in northern India led to a tapering of air-conditioning demand. Month-on-month petrol sales dropped 4.9 percent when compared to 2.86 million metric tonnes of consumption in November. Diesel demand, too, was down 0.8 percent month-on-month when compared to 6.79 million metric tonnes in November. Diesel is India's most consumed fuel, accounting for almost 40 percent of all petroleum product consumption. The transport sector accounts for 70 percent of all diesel sales in the country. Fuel consumption has been on the rise over the last couple of months. Demand for both petrol and diesel had risen in October, but diesel consumption fell 7.5 percent in the following month.

ATF PRICE CUT BY 4%, COMM LPG RATE REDUCED MARGINALLY

New Delhi: Jet fuel, or ATF, prices on Monday were cut by 4 percent, the third straight monthly reduction, and commercial cooking gas (LPG) rates were marginally lowered by Rs 1.50 per 19-kg cylinder in line with international benchmarks. However, the price of domestic LPG, used in household kitchens for cooking purposes, remained unchanged at Rs 903 per 14.2-kg cylinder. The price of aviation turbine fuel (ATF) was cut by Rs 4,162.5, or 3.9 percent, in the national capital to Rs 101,993.17 per kl, according to price notifications from state-owned fuel retailers. This is the third straight monthly reduction in jet fuel prices. The ATF price was cut by almost 6 percent (Rs 6,854.25 per kl) in November and by Rs 5,189.25, or 4.6 percent, in December.

● Agencies

INDIA'S FUEL STOCKPILE PLAN

Coal mountain by 2030, pause by 2040

TBG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Central government has outlined plans to create a domestic thermal coal stock ranging from 1.8 to 2.5 billion tonnes by 2030-32, with a subsequent pause on production for the next decade. Despite India not participating in global agreements to phase down coal production and usage, the Ministry of Coal projects a coal demand of 1.5-1.8 billion tonnes by 2030. The government aims to establish a buffer stock of over 0.5-1 billion tonnes to manage potential demand fluctuations, considering factors such as renewable energy's ability to meet electricity demand and variations in power demand.

Ministry officials emphasize the importance of maintaining a base energy source, even if renewable energy achieves its targeted 500 gigawatts by 2030. The initial estimate suggested that 1.5 billion tonnes of coal would meet the projected electricity demand of 350 gigawatts by the end of this decade.



However, with this year's demand surpassing projections, officials advocate building surplus capacity to address unforeseen contingencies.

This year, peak power demand reached 240 gigawatts, and the Ministry anticipates that nearly 30% of coal production contributions will come from privately owned captive and commercial mines. While the Ministry initially outlined plans to build 1.4 billion tonnes of coal stock by 2027 and 1.5 billion tonnes by 2030, it now hints at planning a readily available coal stock from 2030 to 2040. The revised strategy accommodates various states

returning to build new or expand existing thermal power units to meet rising power demand unexpectedly.

Several states are reportedly planning new thermal power units totalling around 15 gigawatts. The coal ministry's proposed plan aligns with the streamlined budget approval process implemented by the government, aiming for efficient fund utilization. The interim Budget 2024-25 is likely to be presented on February 1, and the government intends to secure expenditure approvals through a vote on account for the next four months until July 2024.

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PARLIAMENT EXPENDITURE

FinMin calls for budget boost proposals

TBG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The finance ministry has called for expenditure proposals for the second and final batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants from various ministries and departments ahead of the upcoming Budget session, expected to begin in the last week of January. This session is anticipated to be the final one for the 17th Lok Sabha before the general elections. The government is likely to seek expenditure approvals from Parliament for the four months leading up to July 2024 through a vote on account. The second batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants for 2023-24 is set to be presented during the forthcoming Budget session, according to an office memorandum from the finance ministry.

This session assumes significance as it marks

the last one before the general elections, and the government is expected to secure expenditure approvals for the period up to July 2024 through a vote on account. The finance ministry has requested expenditure proposals for the second and final batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants from various ministries and departments, with a view to presenting them during the upcoming Budget session, which is likely to commence in the last week of January.

The government is gearing up for the upcoming Budget session, which is anticipated to be the final one for

the 17th Lok Sabha before the general elections. In preparation for this crucial session, the finance ministry has sought expenditure proposals for the second and final batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants from various ministries and departments. This move is in line with the government's strategy to secure expenditure approvals for the four-month period leading up to July 2024 through a vote

on account. The second batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants for the fis-

cal year 2023-24 is expected to be presented during the Budget session. The finance ministry has initiated the process of seeking

■ P2



FEAST FRENZY

Food floods homes as delivery takes New Year's eve by storm

TBG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

On the eve of New Year's Day 2024, food and quick delivery platforms witnessed an unprecedented surge in orders, marking their highest-ever single-day records. Senior executives from various platforms celebrated the milestone by sharing the achievement on social media. Deepinder Goyal, the CEO of Zomato, expressed his gratitude on social media platform X, stating, "Hit our all-time high orders in a day on @zom-

ato. Immense gratitude to all." Albinder Dhindsa, founder and CEO of Blinkit, Zomato's quick commerce arm, also announced that the platform experienced its highest-ever single-day orders and orders per minute on December 31. "We have already hit the highest: ever order in a day, order per minute, soft drinks & tonic water sold in a day, chips sold in a day, tips given to riders in a day. And it's not slowing down," Dhindsa said in a post. Swiggy Instamart, another prominent quick delivery platform,

also achieved its highest-ever single-day orders on New Year's Eve.



Rohit Kapoor, CEO of Food

Marketplace at Swiggy, shared that the orders per minute on the platform

were 1.6 times higher than the previous peak recorded during the World Cup 2023 finals. "The orders per minute on

Swiggy Instamart is the highest we have seen so far. It's surpassed our previous high during the WC Finals by 1.6x," Kapoor mentioned on X. In addition to the surge in orders, Deepinder Goyal shared that Zomato recorded total tips of over Rs 97 lakh given to delivery partners on December 31. Across Zomato and Blinkit, more than 320,000 delivery partners were actively serving customers on New Year's Eve. "Love you, India! You've tipped over Rs 97 lakh till now to the delivery partners serving you tonight," Goyal ex-

pressed on X. In another post, he highlighted the remarkable achievement, stating, "We've delivered almost as many orders on NYE 23 as we did on NYE 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 combined." As of the press time, data from other platforms like Zepto and Bigbasket was not accessible. The surge in orders on New Year's Eve reflects the growing reliance on quick delivery services, especially during festive occasions and celebrations, showcasing the significant impact of these platforms on the food delivery landscape.

MINISTRY OF FINANCE

GST COLLECTION GROWS 12% YOY TO ₹14.97 LAKH CR IN APRIL-DEC 2023

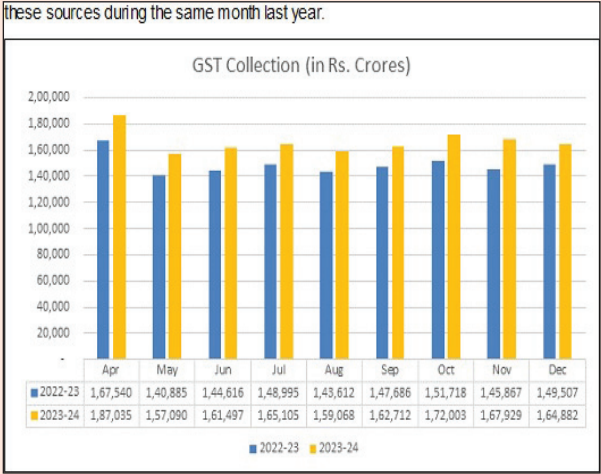
The gross GST revenue collected in the month of December, 2023, is ₹1,64,882 crore out of which Central GST is ₹30,443 crore and State GST is ₹37,935 crore

TBG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Signalling a continuity in robust goods and services revenue collection, India's gross GST collection surged 12 per cent y-o-y during the April-December 2023 period, reaching ₹14.97 lakh crore, as against ₹13.40 lakh crore collected in the same period of the previous year (April-December 2022).

The average monthly gross GST collection of ₹1.66 lakh crore in the first 9-month period this year represents a 12 per cent increase compared to the ₹1.49 lakh crore average recorded in the corresponding period of FY23. This marks the seventh month so far this year with collections exceeding ₹1.60 lakh crore.

The gross GST revenue collected in the



month of December, 2023, is ₹1,64,882 crore out of which Central GST is ₹30,443 crore and State GST is ₹37,935 crore. The share of Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) which applies to taxes levied on interstate purchases IGST is ₹84,255 crore (including ₹41,534 crore collected on import of goods) and cess is ₹12,249 crore (including ₹1,079 crore collect-

ed on import of goods).

The Finance Ministry's half yearly economic review published recently notes that amongst the indirect taxes, GST collections have continued to reflect the momentum in economic activity. The monthly gross GST collection for all the months of FY24 has been much higher than that recorded in the corresponding months of

the last fiscal year. For November 2023, the gross GST collection at ₹1.68 lakh crore was 12 per cent higher on a yoy basis

From the December 2023 mop up, the Government has settled ₹40,057 crore to CGST and ₹33,652 crore to SGST from IGST. The total revenue of Centre and the States in the month of December, 2023 after regular settlement is ₹70,501 crore for CGST and ₹71,587 crore for the SGST. The revenues for the month of December, 2023 are 10.3 per cent higher than the GST revenues in the same month last year. During the month, the revenues from domestic transactions (including import of services) are 13 per cent higher than the revenues from these sources during the same month last year.

MASSIVE GROWTH

India records 9 % yoy increase in ITR filing at over 8.18 cr upto 31 Dec '23

TBG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

India has registered an increase of 9 per cent, y-o-y, in income tax returns (ITRs) filed for assessment ear (AY) 2023-2024 which stands at over 8.18 crore upto 31 December 2023. The Income Tax Department had recorded 7.51 crore ITRs filed upto 31 December 2022. The total number of audit reports and other forms filed during the period is 1.60 crore, as against 1.43 crore audit reports and forms filed in the corresponding period of preceding year.

It is also observed that a large number of taxpayers did their due diligence by comparing data of their financial transactions by viewing their annual information statement and taxpayer information summary. A substantial portion of the data for all ITRs was pre-filled with data pertaining to salary, interest, dividend, personal information, tax payment including TDS related information, brought forward losses, MAT credit, etc to further



ease compliance by taxpayers. The facility was used extensively, resulting in smoother and faster filing of ITRs. To encourage taxpayers to file their ITRs and forms early, during FY24, a digital e-pay tax payment platform - TIN 2.0 was made fully functional on the e-filing portal, replacing the OLTAS payment system. This enabled user-friendly options for e-payment of taxes such as internet banking, NEFT/RTGS, OTC, Debit Card, payment gateway and UPI. TIN 2.0 platform has enabled real time credit of taxes to tax-

payers which made ITR filing easier and faster.

Besides, over 103.5 crore outreaches were made through targeted e-mail, SMS and other creative campaigns. Such concerted efforts led to fruitful results with 9 per cent more ITRs being filed for AY 2023-24 till 31 December, 2023. The e-filing helpdesk team handled approximately 27.37 lakh queries from taxpayers during the year upto 31 December 2023, supporting the taxpayers proactively during the peak filing periods. Support from the helpdesk was pro-

vided to taxpayers through inbound calls, outbound calls, live chats, WebEx and co-browsing sessions.

Helpdesk team also supported resolution of queries received on the X(Twitter) handle of the department through online response management, by proactively reaching out to the taxpayers/ stakeholders and assisting them for different issues on near real-time basis. The IT Department further requests to the taxpayers to verify their unverified ITRs if any, within 30 days of filing the ITR to avoid any consequences.

POWER DIP

India's Dec power usage slips 2.3% to 119.07 billion units

TBG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The country witnessed a 2.3 per cent decline in power consumption to 119.07 Billion Units (BU) in December, marking its initial monthly reduction in eight months. This decrease was attributed to diminished demand for heating equipment, especially in the northern regions, owing to a mild winter, according to official data.

In April 2023, power consumption had decreased by nearly 1.5 per cent to 130.08 BU, compared to 132.02 BU in the corresponding period the previous year. In Decem-

ber 2022, power consumption was at 121.91 BU, surpassing the 109.17 BU recorded in the same month the previous year. The peak power demand met the highest supply in a day and rose to 213.62 GW in December. In December 2022, the peak power supply was at 205.10 GW, while in December 2021, it stood at 189.24 GW.

Experts noted that lower power consumption and demand persisted due to the mild early December winters. However, both consumption and demand increased as temperatures sharply dropped in the latter part of the month, particularly in North India.



GUJARAT DAIRY INDUSTRY

GCMMF distributes Rs 200 crore daily to 36 lakh farmers

TBG NETWORK
GUJARAT

Gujarat's emphasis on animal husbandry significantly contributes to the prosperity of its people, with 36 lakh milk producers collectively receiving Rs 200 crore daily from the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), officials noted.

The state's dairy sector has now reached Rs 1 lakh crore.

The 10th edition of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit, scheduled for January 10 to 12 in Gandhinagar, offers a platform for the government to exhibit the state's remarkable growth in agriculture, horticulture, and animal husbandry, stated Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel.

According to a government statement, the agriculture, horticulture, and animal husbandry sectors are witnessing significant growth through a blend of natural farming and advanced tech-



nologies. This combination contributes to Gujarat's circular economy and enhances its global reputation in the dairy sector.

"The upcoming Vibrant Gujarat Summit 2024 will showcase the state's exponential growth in agriculture, horticulture, and animal husbandry, thanks to a combination of natural farming practices and cutting-edge technology. This holistic approach is not only boosting the circular economy but also elevating the

state's global standing in the dairy sector," remarked CM Patel at a recent function.

The dairy industry in Gujarat has surpassed Rs 1 lakh crore, with Rs 200 crore paid daily to 36 lakh milk producers through the GCMMF, as per a government release.

"The globally recognized Amul brand, under which the GCMMF markets milk and dairy products, stands as a testament to the hard work of millions of dairy farmers," it stated.

FOREIGN INVESTMENTS

Maharashtra emerges as top choice for global investments

TBG NETWORK
THANE

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde stated that Maharashtra is now a favoured destination for investments from various countries, indicating the state's favourable business environment. Participating in a midnight blood donation camp to welcome the New Year, Shinde also discussed the increasing impact of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Swachh Bharat Mission and the positive outcomes of an extensive cleaning initiative in Mumbai and its extension throughout the state.

Shinde emphasized the successful execution of 85 per cent of the Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) established during the Davos meeting in 2023. He reiterated, "Maharashtra has become a preferred destination for



investments from various countries."

Underscoring the commitment to people's welfare, Shinde mentioned that the Chief Minister's Relief Fund has extended assistance exceeding Rs 165 crore to over 20,000 individuals since assuming office, a significant rise from the earlier disbursement of Rs 2 to 3 crore.

He also highlighted the effectiveness of the deep cleaning drive, a crucial component of the Swachh Bharat campaign, in Mum-

bai. This success led to its expansion to other regions of the state, with more than one lakh people actively participating in the cleanliness drive across 10 different locations in Mumbai on Sunday, according to Shinde. The CM expressed his government's dedication to ensuring a clean, green, and healthy Mumbai.

Recognizing blood donation as a noble act, Shinde commended the individuals who joined forces for this cause.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Isro launches X-Ray

Understanding the radiation mechanism and geometry of celestial objects. The primary payload of XPoSat, POLIX (Polarimeter Instrument in X-Rays), designed to measure polarimetry parameters by the Raman Research Institute, and XSPECT (X-ray Spectroscopy and Timing) built by the U R Rao Satellite Centre, Bengaluru, will play pivotal roles in achieving the mission objectives.

ISRO Chairman S Somanath, addressing the success of the mission, expressed his delight, stating, "Happy new year to all of you. So on 1 January 2024, yet another successful mission of PSLV has been accomplished. PSLV-C58 has placed the primary satellite XPoSat in the desired orbit." He further announced the successful deployment of the solar panel of the satellite, emphasizing the excellent orbital conditions achieved during the mission.

The mission's significance extends beyond scientific exploration, encompassing technological demonstrations and initiatives aimed at fostering inclusivity. Mission Director Jayakumar M highlighted the new technologies demonstrated in the POEM-3 experiment, including fuel cells, silicon-based high-energy batteries, and amateur radio satellite services. Notably, one of the payloads is a satellite entirely engineered by women, showcasing empowerment in the field of science and technology. This aligns with broader reforms within the Indian space sector and emphasizes the collaborative efforts of various teams across ISRO's different centers.

The successful launch of XPoSat marks a stellar beginning for ISRO in 2024 and positions India as only the second country to conduct experiments into the celestial objects through X-ray polarimetry, following NASA's Imaging X-Ray Polarimetry Explorer mission in December 2021. The mission's longevity is estimated at about five years, during which XPoSat is expected to deliver substantial benefits to the global astronomy community, contributing valuable insights into the physics of celestial objects such as black holes, neutron stars, and active galactic nuclei.

As ISRO continues to advance its capabilities and expand its scientific endeavours, the XPoSat mission serves as a testament to India's growing prominence in space exploration and research. The successful deployment of advanced technologies, the inclusion of diverse payloads, and the mission's scientific objectives collectively underscore ISRO's commitment to pushing the boundaries of space exploration and contributing to our understanding of the cosmos.

Coal mountain by 2030

The Ministry of Coal has called for expenditure proposals for the second and final batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants from various ministries and departments, reflecting a crucial step in the budgetary process. This move is part of the government's streamlined budget approval process to avoid delays in project implementation that occurred under the previous three-stage Parliament approval process, concluding in mid-May. The current approach seeks to expedite spending on proj-

ects, allowing government departments to commence expenditures sooner after the monsoon season ends in August or September. The last session of the 17th Lok Sabha before the general elections is expected to take place in January, and the government aims to secure expenditure approvals for the next four months through a vote on account. The call for expenditure proposals signifies the government's proactive approach to budget planning and allocation.

In terms of the coal sector, the government's strategy to build a substantial domestic thermal coal stock aligns with India's focus on energy security and self-sufficiency. By creating a buffer stock and anticipating potential demand fluctuations, the government aims to ensure a stable and secure energy supply, especially considering the uncertainties associated with renewable energy's ability to meet the entire electricity demand. The phased approach to coal production and the proposed pause from 2030 to 2040 reflect a nuanced strategy, considering the evolving energy landscape and the need for reliable power sources.

The government's stance on coal production and usage aligns with India's emphasis on energy security and its commitment to meeting growing power demand. While global climate platforms may advocate for reducing fossil fuel dependence, India remains focused on its domestic energy requirements and the pragmatic utilization of available resources. The country's coal production projections and buffer stock plans underscore the government's efforts to balance environmental considerations with the imperative of meeting its citizens' energy needs.

FinMin calls for budget

expenditure proposals for the second and final batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants. This comes ahead of the Budget session, which is likely to commence in the last week of January. The government, aware that this will be the last session of the 17th Lok Sabha before the general elections, is gearing up to secure expenditure approvals for the four months until July 2024 through a vote on account. The second batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants for the fiscal year 2023-24 is slated to be presented during this Budget session.

The finance ministry has taken steps to gather expenditure proposals for the second and final batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants from various ministries and departments. This move comes ahead of the Budget session, which is expected to start in the last week of January. With an eye on the forthcoming general elections, this session is crucial for the government, as it aims to secure expenditure approvals for the period up to July 2024 through a vote on account. The second batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants for the financial year 2023-24 is set to be presented during this Budget session. The second and final batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants for the fiscal year 2023-24 is in the spotlight as the finance ministry calls for expenditure proposals ahead of the Budget session, expected to commence in the last week of January. This session is significant as it marks the last one for the 17th Lok Sabha before the general elections. The government is gearing up to secure expenditure approvals for the four months leading up to July 2024 through a vote on account.

RECORD SALES

HYUNDAI TOPS 2023 DOMESTIC SALES CHARTS

Hyundai Motor India achieved the highest-ever domestic sales in the calendar year 2023, surpassing the six lakh sales milestone

ANI
NEW DELHI

Hyundai Motor India achieved its highest-ever domestic sales in the calendar year 2023, surpassing the six lakh sales milestone. The automaker recorded sales of 6,02,111 units, marking a 9 per cent increase over the previous year's 5,52,511 units. Additionally, Hyundai Motor India enhanced its export performance by 10 per cent, shipping 1,63,675 units in 2023 compared to 1,48,300 units in the previous year.

In December 2023, Hyundai Motor India achieved



total sales of 56,450 units, comprising 42,750 units in domestic sales and 13,700 units in exports. "HMIL has not just kept pace but surpassed industry growth (estimated at around 8.2%),

a testament to customers choosing brand Hyundai as their preferred mobility brand," said Tarun Garg, Chief Operating Officer, Hyundai Motor India. "Also, in 2023, we

proactively expanded our annual production capacity by 50,000 units to meet the increasing customer demand."

The automaker presently operates from 1,366 sales points and 1,548 service points across India. The model line-up includes 13 car models across segments: Grand i10 NIOS, i20, i20 N-Line, AURA, EXTER, VENUE, VENUE N-Line, VERNA, CRETA, ALCAZAR, TUCSON, KONA Electric, and the all-electric SUV IONIQ 5.

Its fully integrated, state-of-the-art manufacturing plant near Chennai boasts advanced production, qual-

ity, and testing capabilities. Exports span across 88 countries, encompassing Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, Australia, and the Asia Pacific.

Meanwhile, cars manufactured by Hyundai Motor India will cost more starting today. The automaker announced in early December that the price increase was necessary due to rising input costs, an adverse exchange rate, and an increase in commodity prices, among other reasons. However, the automaker maintained that it will continue to make consistent internal efforts to minimize future price impacts on customers.

SALES DIP

Maruti Suzuki records 1.28% drop in December 2023 sales

TBG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Maruti Suzuki India reported a 1.28 per cent decrease in total sales, amounting to 137,551 units in December 2023, down from 139,347 units sold in the same

month the previous year. The company detailed that domestic sales, including passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles, and third-party supplies, totalled 110,667 units last month, a 5.86 per cent drop from the 117,551 units recorded in the year-ago period.

In a statement, Maruti Suzuki India highlighted achieving an annual sales milestone of 2 million units in the calendar year 2023, encompassing the highest-ever calendar year exports of 269,046 units. Specifically addressing

domestic passenger vehicle sales, they noted a decline to 104,778 units in December 2023 compared to 112,010 units in the same month of the previous year, marking a 6.46 per cent fall. The sales of entry-level mini cars, which include Alto and S-Presso,

decreased to 2,557 units from 9,765 units a year ago.

Likewise, sales of compact cars, comprising models like Baleno, Celerio, Dzire, Ignis, Swift, Tour S, and WagonR, dropped to 45,741 units in December 2023 from 57,502 units in the year-ago month.

TELECOM BOOM

Vodafone Idea surges 39% in 2-day rally

TBG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Vodafone Idea's shares reached a more than four-year peak of Rs 18.42, surging 15 per cent on the BSE during Monday's intraday trading with substantial volumes. The telecom services provider's stock exceeded its previous high of Rs 18.30 on 1 April 2019.

In the last two trading days, the stock soared by 39 per cent amid speculation that the company would soon conclude its long-pending fundraising. As per a Business World report, Elon Musk might collaborate with Vodafone Idea for his debut in India's telecom sector.

Market speculation included expectations that the government might sell its 33.1 per cent stake in Vodafone Idea to Musk, facilitating Starlink's entry into the Indian market. Musk, attending the Vibrant Gujarat Business Summit between 10-12 January, is reportedly eyeing a significant land deal in the state for a mega factory for his auto company, as reported by Business World.

However, on 18 September 2023, Vodafone Idea clarified that it was not in dis-



cussions with any parties, including Verizon, Amazon, or Starlink. The company dismissed the news item titled "Vodafone Idea to be acquired by a US telecom giant soon? Verizon, Amazon, or Starlink, in the race" as incorrect.

During a post-result analyst call after announcing second-quarter results, Vodafone Idea's Chief Executive Akshaya Moondra stated that the equity funding of about Rs 2,000 crore should close by the end of the third quarter (October-December) of FY24. Analysts attribute the recent share price increase to anticipation of this development.

At 11:31 AM, Vodafone Idea was trading nearly 9 per cent higher at Rs 17.42, compared to a 0.01 per cent decline in the S&P BSE Sensex. The counter experienced nearly

CAR SALES

M&M sees robust 24 per cent growth in domestic SUV sales

TBG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

In December, Mahindra & Mahindra Limited (M&M Ltd) reported domestic sales of 35,171 SUVs, marking a 24 per cent year-on-year (YoY) growth, as per the company's filing on Monday. Car and van sales experienced a substantial 97 per cent YoY decline, with only three units sold in the final month of the calendar year.

In the three-wheeler category, M&M Ltd observed a marginal YoY increase of five per cent, selling 5,307 units compared to the 5,052 units sold in December 2022.

Total company exports witnessed a 41 per cent YoY decrease, with 1,819 units sold in December compared to 3,100 units sold the previous year.

The automaker reported that its overall auto sales for December 2023 reached 60,188 vehicles, reflecting a 6 per cent growth, including exports. Domestic sales for commercial vehicles totalled 17,888.

Veejay Nakra, President of the Automotive Division at M&M Ltd, attributed the slowdown in exports and car sales to ongoing supply challenges on select parts. He stated, "We are working closely with our suppliers to mitigate these challenges going forward."

The overall sales trend indicates an increasing preference for SUVs in the domestic market. In November, the company reported a 31 per cent YoY increase in SUV sales.

Year-to-date (YTD) figures for December 2023 show a 29 per cent increase in domestic sales of passenger vehicles, totalling 333,777 units compared to 259,858 units in December 2022. YTD domestic sales of commercial vehicles also rose by 48 per cent to 60,503 units compared to 40,911 in December 2022. YTD exports decreased by 20 per cent to 19,805 units compared to the 24,733 units recorded during the same period last year.



INVESTMENTS

Indian Real Estate sees record investments in 2023

TBG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

In 2023, the Indian real estate sector experienced the highest investment inflows since 2020, as reported by real estate consultancy Colliers. The inflows during 2023 amounted to \$5.4 billion, representing a 10 per cent increase compared to 2022. The office sector maintained its prominence, contributing 56 per cent to the total inflows for 2023.

Foreign capital sources in Indian real estate predominantly came from Canada and Singapore, constituting 78 per cent

of the global real estate inflows into India in 2023. Additionally, inflows from Asia-Pacific countries saw a 3.6-fold increase in 2023 compared to 2020.

Investor sentiment toward India remained positive due to robust economic performance, an improved regulatory framework, and sustained demand across various real estate segments. However, 2023 saw a decrease in inflows from the United States compared to 2020.

Office space witnessed the highest allocation in 2023, accounting for \$3 billion out of the total



\$5.4 billion invested in the sector. Vimal Nadar, senior director and head of research at Colliers In-

dia, noted that with the record-breaking leasing activity in 2023, office-led investments held a commanding 56 per cent share in total real estate inflows.

The second-highest inflows were observed in the industrial and warehousing asset class, rising by 108 per cent from \$421.8 million in 2022 to \$877.6 million in 2023. This growth is attributed to the expansion of the industrial sector, driven by increased consumption levels and the integration of micro-fulfilment centres, dark stores, and AI-driven supply chains. The residential asset

class secured the third-highest allocations, with inflows reaching \$788.9 million in 2023, marking a 20 per cent increase from \$655.6 million in 2022. Looking ahead to 2024, investment activity is expected to remain robust, supported by strong domestic economic fundamentals. Additionally, strategic integration of technology and Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance (ESG) considerations will influence investment decisions, according to Piyush Gupta, Managing Director (Capital Markets & Investment Services) at Colliers India.

SALES SURGE

Bajaj Auto's Dec sales surge 16% on strong domestic demand

TBG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Bajaj Auto marked its entry into 2024 with a 16 per cent increase in year-on-year (YoY) sales in December 2023, reaching 326,806 units, as per a BSE filing on Monday.

The automaker reported a 26 per cent surge in domestic two-wheeler (2Ws) sales (YoY) for December, totalling 158,370 units compared to 125,553 in December 2022. Additionally, two-wheeler exports saw a modest rise of 3 per cent to 124,631 units, up from 121,499 units in December 2022. The company achieved an overall 15 per cent increase in YoY two-wheeler domestic sales, reaching 283,001 units, up from 247,052 in the same month in 2022.

In the domestic commercial vehicle sales, the company experienced a significant YoY increase of about 41 per cent in December 2023, totalling 32,549 units, while exports declined by 2 per cent to 11,256 units. Despite the export decrease, the overall commercial sales rose by 27 per cent for the period, driven by increased



domestic demand, according to the company.

The Pune-based firm also disclosed its overall sales for the current financial year, showing a 7 per cent increase between April and December in 2023 compared to the same period in 2022. Domestic two-wheeler sales saw a 22 per cent increase at 1,703,704 units, while exports experienced a notable decline of 17 per cent compared to 2022. As a result, the overall two-wheeler

sales for FY24 increased by 3 per cent, reaching 2,811,106 units compared to the same period in the previous fiscal year.

A similar trend was observed in the commercial vehicle sales segment for FY24, with domestic commercial sales witnessing a significant YoY increase of 76 per cent, reaching 353,689 units by December 2023. However, exports declined by 22 per cent to 117,562 units.

SUSTAINABLE

Adani Energy wins Global Sustainability Award 2023

ANI
NEW DELHI

Adani Energy Solutions received the 'Global Sustainability Leadership Award 2023' in the 'Best Overall Sustainable Performance' category from the World Sustainability Congress in Mauritius. The accolade acknowledged the company, India's largest private transmission and distribution entity within the globally diversified Adani portfolio, for its dedication to sustainable practices and substantial contributions to a greener future as a leading innovator in the power sector.

The Global Sustainability Leadership Award, presented annually to organizations demonstrating exceptional leadership in sustainability, acknowledged the Adani company for its innovative solutions, commitment to reducing environmental impact, and dedication to promoting sustainable practices. World Sustainability, a not-for-profit organization advocating for sustainable leadership, conferred the



award.

Anil Sardana, Managing Director of Adani Energy Solutions, expressed gratitude, stating, "We are honoured to receive this prestigious award. This recognition validates our efforts in driving sustainability and motivates us to continue our work towards a greener and more sustainable future."

Adani Energy Solutions Limited recently announced the receipt of the letter of intent (LoI) for acquiring Halvad Transmission Ltd from PFC Consulting Limited (PFCCCL). Halvad Transmission Ltd, a special-purpose vehicle established by PF-

CCL to evacuate 7 gigawatts of renewable energy from the Khavda renewable energy park, was acquired through a tariff-based competitive bidding process. AESL will commission it within 24 months on a BOOM (Build, Own, Operate, and Maintain) basis.

The world's largest renewable energy park, with a generation capacity of 30,000 megawatts of green energy, is underway at Khavda, Gujarat. The Halvad transmission line, integrated into the national grid, will facilitate the evacuation of 7 gigawatts of renewable energy by connecting Khavda to Halvad in Gujarat.

MODI SOARS

UK PAPER PREDICTS BJP VICTORY IN 2024

BJP's victories in key state assemblies, especially the saffron sweep, set the stage for Prime Minister Modi's potential third consecutive term, as noted by columnist Hannah Ellis-Peterson.

TBG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

In a recent analysis of India's political landscape, a prominent international columnist highlighted the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) triumphant performance in three key state assemblies, positioning Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his party on a trajectory towards a third consecutive term at the helm of the nation. The columnist, Hannah Ellis-Peterson, underscores the significant factors contributing to this potential victory and examines the prevailing dynamics that could shape the outcome of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

The saffron sweep in the heartland states of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Rajasthan has propelled the BJP forward, providing it with added strength and momentum as the country approaches the crucial 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Prime Minister Modi himself, buoyed by the hat-trick of victories, confidently predicted a triumphant outcome for the BJP in the upcoming national polls.

Ellis-Peterson's analysis emphasizes the enduring popularity of Prime Minister Modi, portraying him as a political strongman whose appeal extends across the diverse and populous landscape of India. The BJP's Hindu nationalist agenda, coupled with Modi's charismatic leadership, contin-

ues to resonate particularly within the Hindi belt of the north, where the majority of the country's Hindu population resides. Since Modi assumed office in 2014, the column contends that the political apparatus at both the state and national levels has tilted heavily in favour of the BJP.

While acknowledging pockets of robust regional opposition in south and east India, the analysis characterizes the national opposition as fragmented and weak. The Indian National Congress, the primary opposition party, is portrayed as struggling with internal conflicts and a perceived hierarchical structure. The recently formed coalition of major opposition parties, operating under the acronym INDIA, is noted for its lack of unity on critical issues despite its collective pledge to challenge the BJP.

The column underscores the widespread anticipation of a BJP victory in the upcoming elections, with political analysts deeming it the "most plausible outcome" in the current political landscape. Neelanjan Sircar, a fellow at the Centre for Policy Research, is cited as expressing the prevailing sentiment that a BJP win is almost inevitable at this stage, leaving the focus on what factors will shape the scale of this anticipated victory.

The BJP's proactive approach to shaping public opinion in the lead-up to



the elections is highlighted, particularly through the nationwide pre-election campaign titled 'Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra.' This campaign involves deploying thousands of government officers to towns and villages across the country, tasked with highlighting the BJP's achievements over the past nine years. Additionally, the Ministry of Defence's initiative to set up 822 'selfie points' at various locations, where people can take pictures with a cutout of PM Modi, is noted as part of the broader strategy to bolster the party's image.

The analysis delves into the historical context of Modi's rise to power, attributing his initial victory in 2014 to an

anti-incumbency wave and his re-election in 2019 to a surge in national security sentiment following India's airstrikes on Pakistan. However, the columnist raises uncertainty regarding the BJP's ability to replicate its landslide mandate from 2019.

Crucial states like Bihar and Maharashtra are identified as potential areas of uncertainty for the BJP, with issues such as jobs and inflation looming as factors that could influence voting patterns. Despite the state elections being designed to elect local assembly members, the BJP strategically placed Modi at the forefront of their campaigns in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and

Chhattisgarh, presenting him as the embodiment of the party.

The analysis commends PM Modi for his role in elevating India as a global power, citing achievements in international politics and the country's successful moon landing in August. The impending grand opening of the Ram Temple on January 22 is identified as a significant issue that is expected to dominate the BJP's agenda in the lead-up to the general elections.

Quoting Baijayant Panda, the national vice president of the BJP, the column reflects the party's confidence in its prospects for the Lok Sabha polls. Panda attributes this confidence, in part, to the

"Modi premium," asserting that the BJP tends to perform better in national elections due to the stratospheric popularity of Prime Minister Modi.

Addressing concerns about a third term for PM Modi, Panda asserts that it will be defined by economic success and India's ascent as the world's third-largest major economy. Pushing back against allegations of communalism, Panda challenges critics to identify instances of discrimination against minorities in the governance of India.

In conclusion, the analysis paints a comprehensive picture of the current political landscape in India, emphasizing the BJP's advanta-

geous position and Prime Minister Modi's enduring popularity. While acknowledging challenges and uncertainties, the prevailing sentiment is one of confidence within the BJP camp, as the party gears up for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections with a carefully orchestrated campaign and a focus on key issues that resonate with the electorate.

As the BJP charts its course towards the 2024 elections, the analysis recognizes the party's adept utilization of Prime Minister Modi's messaging during campaign speeches. These messages skillfully blend emphasis on the BJP's paternalistic welfare schemes with a nationalistic agenda, tapping into sentiments that have resonated with a significant portion of the electorate. The strategic alignment of Modi as a charismatic leader and the embodiment of the party has proven to be a winning formula in state elections, as witnessed in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh. The column notes that this approach is not without controversy, as critics argue it places undue focus on personality rather than policy.

The BJP's nationwide pre-election push, the 'Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra,' not only highlights the party's achievements but also underscores its commitment to grassroots engagement. By deploying thousands of government officers to towns and villages across

the country, the BJP aims to directly connect with voters and consolidate its support base. However, this strategy is not without challenges, as issues such as jobs and inflation may significantly impact the electorate's mood. The uncertainty in crucial states like Bihar and Maharashtra, coupled with potential economic concerns, introduces an element of unpredictability into the upcoming electoral landscape.

In the midst of these developments, the grand opening of the Ram Temple on January 22 emerges as a pivotal event that could shape the political discourse in the coming months. The column observes that the inauguration of the temple is anticipated to be a national spectacle, underscoring its importance as one of the BJP's central agenda items leading up to the general elections. The cultural and religious significance of the Ram Temple has the potential to galvanize support among specific voter demographics, contributing to the BJP's broader narrative of cultural preservation and national pride. As the political stage is set for the forthcoming elections, the analysis suggests that while a BJP victory appears likely, the scale of this triumph will hinge on various factors, including economic performance, regional dynamics, and the resonance of key issues with the diverse Indian electorate.

REPORT SAYS

Violence claims more lives in Pakistan in 2023

TBG NETWORK
ISLAMABAD

In a stark revelation, Pakistan experienced a distressing surge in violence throughout the year 2023, with a total of 1,524 fatalities and 1,463 injuries resulting from 789 terror attacks and counter-terror operations, according to a comprehensive annual security report by the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS). This alarming figure included nearly 1,000 civilian and security forces personnel fatalities, marking a record six-year high and surpassing the levels recorded in 2018. The report highlighted that the country witnessed a persistent escalation in violence for the third consecutive year, with an increasing trend noted each year since 2021.

The provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan emerged as the epicenters of this surge in violence, accounting for over 90 percent of all fatalities and 84 percent of attacks. Punjab and Sindh, on the other hand, remained relatively peaceful, collectively experiencing only 8 percent of all fatalities in 2023. These findings underscore the localized nature of the violence, with certain regions bearing the brunt of the escalating unrest.

The annual security report noted a stagger-



ing 56 percent increase in violence compared to the previous year, marking an unprecedented escalation in the last decade. Balochistan and KP recorded particularly alarming upticks of 57 percent and 55 percent, respectively, contributing significantly to the overall surge. Punjab experienced a 96 percent rise in violence, though

the number of fatalities remained comparatively low, while Sindh witnessed a 26 percent increase.

A critical insight from the report highlighted that nearly 65 percent of all violence-related fatalities in 2023 were attributed to terrorism, while the remaining 35 percent resulted from security forces opera-

tions against outlaws. Of the 586 recorded terror attacks, only 17 percent were claimed by banned outfits such as the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), and Islamic State Khorasan (Daish). Security forces conducted 197 operations, resulting in the deaths of 545 outlaws.

Notably, an alarming surge in sectarian vio-

lence was documented in 2023, with acts of terrorism targeting religious communities and their places of worship leading to the tragic loss of 203 lives, including 88 security officials. This disturbing trend poses significant challenges to the country's efforts to maintain communal harmony and underscores the multifaceted nature of

the security threats faced by Pakistan.

In a parallel assessment, a report released by the Islamabad-based think tank Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS) corroborated the alarming surge in terrorist attacks. The year 2023 witnessed a 69 percent rise in attacks, an 81 percent increase in resultant deaths, and

a 60 percent surge in the number of wounded compared to the previous year. The PICSS database revealed a monthly average of 53 terrorist attacks in 2023, the highest since 2015.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa bore the brunt of terrorist attacks, with 419 incidents resulting in 620 deaths, including 306 security forces personnel, 222 civilians, and 92 terrorists. The newly merged districts (erstwhile FATA) experienced a 59 percent rise in terrorist attacks, while mainland KP witnessed an 84 percent increase, underscoring the challenges faced by these regions. Balochistan, with 170 terrorist attacks, saw a 65 percent surge in incidents, highlighting the province's vulnerability to escalating violence.

Sindh experienced a 40 percent rise in terrorist attacks, with 35 incidents resulting in 39 deaths and 35 injuries. Punjab, traditionally considered more secure, witnessed an unprecedented 200 percent increase in terrorist attacks, with 14 incidents leading to 20 deaths and 14 injuries. These statistics reveal a concerning spread of violence across provinces, dispelling the notion of certain regions being immune to security threats.

The findings of these reports collectively paint a grim picture of Pakistan's security landscape

in 2023, with escalating violence, increased terror attacks, and a surge in sectarian violence posing formidable challenges. The localized nature of the unrest, concentrated in specific provinces, calls for targeted interventions and a nuanced understanding of the underlying factors fuelling these security threats. As the country navigates these challenges, a comprehensive and coordinated approach is essential to address the root causes and work towards lasting stability and peace.

Furthermore, the unprecedented surge in violence poses a significant challenge to Pakistan's internal security and raises concerns about the effectiveness of counter-terrorism measures. The escalation in sectarian violence adds another layer of complexity, necessitating a multifaceted strategy to address not only the immediate security threats but also the underlying factors contributing to religious tensions. As the nation grapples with these pressing issues, there is a critical need for a comprehensive and collaborative approach involving regional cooperation, intelligence-sharing, and community engagement. The coming years will undoubtedly require a concerted effort to quell the rising tide of violence and build a more stable and secure future for Pakistan.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Navigating the web of mosquito-borne diseases, depression and stigma

Combating these diseases requires a holistic approach that addresses the mental health challenges intertwined with them

OPINION

PRASAD PHADKE AND
SUSANTA KUMAR GHOSH



As more than 80% of the world population grapples with vector-borne diseases with mosquito-transmitted diseases being the major contributors, there's a hidden battle taking place in the minds of those constantly under the threat of mosquito-borne illnesses. The link between physical health and mental well-being is a complex web, and in the context of diseases like malaria, dengue, lymphatic filariasis (LF), Japanese Encephalitis (JE) chikungunya, Zika virus, and others, it unveils a multifaceted relationship.

DISEASES AND DEPRESSION

Research has unraveled a complex interplay between mosquito-borne diseases and mental health. On one hand, diseases like malaria, dengue, lymphatic filariasis, JE, chikungunya, Zika virus, as physically debilitating illnesses, can predispose individuals to depression. On the other hand, depression may act as a catalyst for these diseases by compromising immunity and altering behavior. This creates a vicious cycle where depression impedes the treatment

and recovery from mosquito-borne diseases, and in turn, these diseases may exacerbate the symptoms of depression. The misdiagnosis of fatigue and malaise as mosquito-borne diseases, that research shows has taken place in African clinical settings, further complicates matters. Erroneous prescriptions of antimalarials may clear low-grade parasitaemia while leaving the underlying depression undiagnosed and untreated, potentially heightening the risk of recurring mosquito-borne diseases.

STIGMA: A SILENT AGGRESSOR

Beyond the physical toll of mosquito-borne diseases, individuals also face the silent aggression of stigma, especially in the case of neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). Researchers have found a disturbingly high prevalence of depression and anxiety among those with NTDs compared to the general population. Stigma emerges as a key contributor to this mental health burden, perpetuating a cycle of suffering. The fear of judgment and societal misconceptions surrounding NTDs can lead

to feelings of inferiority and isolation among affected individuals. This social stigma not only intensifies the psychological impact of the diseases but also hampers efforts to seek help and treatment.

LYMPHATIC FILARIASIS & DENGUE

The specific example of lymphatic filariasis highlights the gravity of the mental health challenges intertwined with mosquito-borne diseases. The main vectors for *Wuchereria bancrofti*, which is the most common cause of LF, are primarily mosquitoes belonging to the genera *Culex*, in India. The other species *Brugia malayiana* another LF parasite transmitted by *Mansonia* prevalent in Kerala causes severe deformities than *W. bancrofti*.

It's important to note that the transmission of lymphatic filariasis is complex, involving the development of the filarial worms in the mosquito and their subsequent transmission to humans through mosquito bites. The type of mosquito species involved can vary depending on the geographic location and local ecology. In India, it is largely a rural disease, also called as elephantiasis. Two key strategies are employed in the pursuit of lymphatic filariasis (LF) elimination. The first involves mass drug administration, a comprehensive approach utilizing a combination of diethylcarbamazine, Albendazole, and Ivermectin. This targeted medication administration aims to reduce LF transmission by treating entire at-risk populations. The second strategy focuses on home-based morbidity management, addressing the aftermath of LF infection by providing effective and accessible care within the affected individuals' resi-



dences. Together, these strategies form a dual-pronged approach aimed at not only interrupting LF transmission but also managing the morbidity associated with the disease.

Studies have revealed that between 8.5% and a staggering 97% of individuals with LF experience depression or related problems. Feelings of inferiority, a common consequence of the associated stigma, further contribute to the mental health burden. This underscores the urgency of recognizing the psychological toll of these diseases and integrating mental health considerations into comprehensive healthcare strategies.

On the other hand, JE affects mostly children with a high case fatality rate. But those who survive become a burden to the family with severe disabilities, which then further exacerbates mental health concerns.

Dengue is another case in point. Acute dengue fever not only inflicts physical suffering but also casts a shadow over mental well-being, creating a profound impact on the individual's mental health and overall quality of life. Beyond the debilitating symptoms of fever, pain, and weakness, the emotional toll of dengue is often overlooked. Picture a scenario

where an individual, serving as the sole provider for their family, is suddenly incapacitated for a month due to the illness. The stress and anxiety stemming from the financial strain, coupled with the inability to fulfill familial and economic responsibilities during this period, create a unique and severe mental health challenge. The individual grapples not only with the physical pain but also with the psychological distress of being unable to meet the basic needs of their family. This narrative underscores the critical need for comprehensive support systems and increased awareness not only about the physical severity of dengue but also the significant mental health consequences it imposes, urging society to address this dual dimension of the disease with empathy and understanding.

BEYOND TREATING PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

The intricate interplay between mosquito-borne diseases and the mental well-being of affected individuals highlights the urgent need for a comprehensive approach that addresses both the physical and psychological aspects of health.

Combating these diseases goes beyond administering antimalarials; it requires a

holistic approach that addresses the mental health challenges intertwined with them. Tackling stigma associated with NTDs is paramount, as it serves as a significant driving force behind elevated rates of depression and anxiety. By recognizing and addressing the intricate links between physical health, mental well-being, and societal perceptions, we can pave the way for a healthier and more resilient global community in the face of the persistent mosquito menace.

Viruses have been implicated in various mental health challenges, as exemplified by the far-reaching consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Beyond concerns of increased suicidal behavior, the pandemic has contributed to a spectrum of mental health issues, including heightened stress, anxiety, depression, and social isolation. The multifaceted impact underscores the need for comprehensive strategies to address the broader mental health repercussions associated with viral outbreaks.

Prasad Phadke, Founder & CEO at Eco BioTraps and Susanta Kumar Ghosh, Scientific Advisor at Eco BioTraps and Former ICMR-National Institute of Malaria Research, Bangalore.

PERSPECTIVE SECURITY ISSUES

SRI LANKA'S 'BAN' ON CHINA'S VESSELS IN EEZ IS A WELCOME STEP

Sri Lanka has reportedly decided not to allow any Chinese research vessel to dock at its port or operate within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) for one year. Colombo has reportedly shared the information about this decision with New Delhi recently. So, the Sri Lankan government's decision banning Chinese research ships from entering its ports for a year should be seen as a welcome move. The decision is also being interpreted as a diplomatic victory for India, as the move has come close on heels of Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging President Ranil Wickremesinghe to "respect India's strategic and security concerns" during a meeting on 21 July 2023. After Modi's talks with the Sri Lankan President in July last year, Indian officials worked hard carrying out follow-up actions. They were holding meetings and talks with the diplomats in Colombo consistently mounting pressure on the island nation to address the security concerns of New Delhi amidst China's efforts to send its "research" ships to Sri Lankan ports. Evidence was shared with the Sri Lankan authorities from time to time on how China is sending its ships for strategic purposes and spy job. India has been raising concerns about the Chinese vessels with Sri Lanka for some time now, amid reports that they are used to track Indian military tests and survey strategically important waters. The US has also been raising similar security concerns with Sri Lanka about the Chinese research vessels docking in the Indian Ocean.

According to reports, around 25 Chinese ships, including warships and submarines, operated in the Indian Ocean in 2023, raising security concerns in India and the US.

In other words, Colombo's move to impose the moratorium has come in response to the security concerns raised jointly by India and the US. The moratorium is for one year. Now, both India and the US need to exert more pressure on Sri Lanka for extending the ban on entry of Chinese vessels into its EEZ beyond the period of one-year. Now all eyes should be on the immediate future effect of this decision of Sri Lanka.

It will be interesting to see whether the Chinese research vessel Xiang Yang Hong 3 is granted clearance or not to conduct deep water exploration in the south Indian Ocean from January 5 to late May. It will also be interesting to see whether Sri Lanka's decision to ban Chinese vessels from entering its EEZ will help India's larger efforts to stall Beijing's maritime expansion in the Indian Ocean. What also remains to be seen is whether China will arm-twist Sri Lanka to comply with its demand for continuing its maritime exploration operation in the Indian Ocean near the island nation by its ships. Experts are of the view that the Chinese government must be exploring some options so as to be able to put pressure on the Sri Lankan regime for relaxation in rules and orders. An important fact that needs to be taken note of is that China holds the position of being Sri Lanka's largest lender. Two months ago, after more than a year since Sri Lanka found itself in an economic crisis an agreement was reached with the Export-Import (EXIM) Bank of China to cover approximately \$4.2 billion of Sri Lanka's outstanding debt. Sri Lanka's finance ministry had confirmed it on October 11. This gives China enough strength and strong ground when it comes to exerting pressure on Sri Lanka seeking relaxation. China's history of surveillance has not been without ambiguities. It has been involved in dual purposes associated with Chinese instruments and research initiatives. The government in Sri Lanka notified the one-year moratorium last week after India and the US objected to Colombo entertaining Chinese scientific research vessels and ballistic missile trackers in the Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka provided ships with logistical support as well. India had raised objections to Chinese research vessel Shi Yan 6 conducting a joint maritime survey with the Sri Lankan maritime agency in October-November.

Despite objections by India and the US, Colombo had allowed the vessel to dock at its seaport. China has always pursued aggressive strategies to expand political, diplomatic, economic and strategic influence in the countries and islands in the Indian Ocean and the other regional seas. Sending ships to Sri Lanka has been part of China's strategy to give further push to its strategy and aggressive agenda in the backyard of India. It is in this background, India needs to be more cautious about China's future negotiations with Sri Lanka. New Delhi should also consistently be in touch with Colombo to ensure that the moratorium on ships is strictly followed. There should not be any relaxation under pressure from China.

T. BRAJESH

NEW APPROACH

More than targets & long hours: Transforming work culture by embracing autonomy and purpose



RHEEMA MUKHERJEE

In India, a culture deeply rooted in hierarchy and deference to authority is hindering true success and individual fulfillment in the workplace. Despite the country's youthful workforce, there are significant barriers such as limited opportunities, a wide gender gap, and outdated notions of leadership.

Rohit Sen, CEO of NIRA in Bangalore, emphasizes that true leadership involves understanding priorities and fostering conditions for employees to excel. Contrary to the prevailing belief that long hours equate to hard work and success, Sen argues for a shift away from this mindset. The

current system not only exploits individuals but also hampers creative freedom and purpose.

The education system perpetuates the harmful idea that success is directly proportional to working long hours. This not only exploits individuals but also restricts creative freedom and purpose. The fear of genuine autonomy prevails in India, hindering the ability to ideate, contribute, and succeed independently.

To bring about a positive change, there needs to be a cultural shift in how we perceive productivity and success. Leaders must value autonomy, fostering an environment that encourages healthy discourse, purpose, and individual growth. The emphasis should be on creating a workplace where people find value in their skills and are motivated by a sense of purpose rather than just completing tasks.

Addressing India's broader issues demands a holistic approach that

extends beyond the immediate concerns of the workplace. Accountability and a genuine commitment to employee well-being are paramount, transcending the confines of consumerist ideals that often dominate the corporate landscape. In this context, it becomes imperative to recognize and uphold the fundamental principles of dignity and equal opportunity as constitutional rights that should be at the forefront of any organizational ethos.

The concept of dignity in the workplace encompasses more than just fair wages and reasonable working hours. It involves fostering an environment where individuals are treated with respect, their voices are heard, and their contributions are valued. This acknowledgment of dignity goes hand in hand with recognizing the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives that employees bring to the table.

Equal opportunity, as a constitutional right, necessitates dismantling barriers that impede individuals from realizing their full potential. Discrimination based on gender, caste, or any other form of bias should be actively addressed and eradicated. By providing an inclusive and equitable playing field, organizations can harness the collective talent and creativity of their workforce, contributing to a more vibrant and innovative work culture.

The call for a shift in mindsets goes beyond a mere suggestion; it represents a moral and ethical duty to the human story. Organizations wield significant influence in shaping societal narratives, and a commitment to changing mindsets signifies a conscious effort to contribute positively to the larger fabric of society. This duty extends to challenging prevailing norms that perpetuate inequality, bias, and a lack of opportunities for cer-

tain groups.

In embracing this duty, organizations can become catalysts for societal change, fostering a workplace culture that not only respects individual rights but actively promotes them. This involves not only implementing policies that ensure equal opportunity and dignity but also instilling a culture that celebrates diversity and encourages open dialogue.

Furthermore, the emphasis on shifting mindsets underscores the need for continuous learning and unlearning within organizations. It requires a commitment to reevaluating ingrained beliefs and practices that may perpetuate inequality or stifle innovation. This ongoing process of reflection and adaptation is essential for creating workplaces that are not only responsive to the needs of their employees but also proactive in addressing societal challenges.

Prashant Kumar Nair, Creative Head & Partner

at People Design & Communications in Bangalore, points out that mere rejection of the traditional "Sir/Mam" culture is insufficient without addressing the systemic power dynamics. True autonomy means more than using first names; it involves the freedom to challenge perspectives. Embracing autonomy at work empowers individuals to bring their whole selves, ideas, challenges, and flaws, fostering a generation more concerned with the quality of work life than mere job titles.

In conclusion, the future of leadership in India must prioritize autonomy and purpose, nurturing ideas from every individual to create a more fulfilling and innovative work culture.

Rheema is the author of 'The Body Myth'. Her latest book 'The Girl who Kept Falling in Love' (Sep tember, 2023) is published by Penguin Books.

IN COURT

COME, LET'S LIVE IN THE NEW YEAR!

Do ask yourself whether something new is born within you every day?



VIJAY DARDA

This time, I was in two minds -- whether to write about the Congress rally in Nagpur last week or about our personal life, where we are constantly sacrificing a lot in our quest to gain! The ones we want to get close to are slipping away and the ones already close to us are moving away despite being around! Since it's the New Year, I figured why not

talk about life, about living life and the present time.

I was thinking about myself, and obviously you all must be thinking about yourself. Some of you may be in politics, some in social life, some in the field of science or arts, some in education, some in industry and business or some other field, but there is a serious question: Are we able to concentrate on our health? Some people are able to pay attention to their health but the reality is that most people are not. I also think that I should pay attention to my health but the reality is that I am not able to do so. I have many wishes but I am unable to fulfil them. In everyday life, I am flooded with thoughts and I want to write songs

May the New Year infuse you with such a willpower that you overcome all odds!

and ghazals, but I am unable to do it. I adore colours and know how to play with them. I adore brush but am unable to paint though I want to! I want to spend some lovely time with my friends but I can't!

I believe I should spend some time with my near and dear ones. Even when we do get together, I keep thinking about those who are not there. I am missing out on the fun of being with them because I am worried about someone who is not around. I recently reached another country for business, but

my mind was elsewhere! I was in a dilemma. I was thinking about simplifying this complicated life because time is slipping away every moment. Time slips away like sand does from our fist. So why not do something that will make you feel like you did something which you like? I wish, as you do, to live life the way we want to. There should be no needless pressure from anyone and no dense shadow of advice. There is nothing wrong in it but living according to your choice should not imply living with lethargy!

The actual meaning of life is to live with purpose, with new thinking, and to introspect every day whether we are being creative within? What is the reward for what we are doing? People who really think like this stand out. Such people know how to behave better and more appropriately with time. They know the value of time, they are self-restrained and they are bound by discipline. Would we have attained freedom today if Mahatma Gandhi would have thought of living in luxury like a common man? He was a barrister at that time! If he wanted, he could have lived a wonderful life! But a voice came from within... the chain of slavery has to be broken. He touched

upon so many subjects! If new ideas had not sprouted within Rabindranath Tagore, would he have become the Rabindranath Tagore who lives in our hearts? Just look at the sportspersons! What a disciplined life they lead! How much effort they put in to keep themselves physically, mentally balanced and healthy. It is not just about sports. People who attain greater heights in every field do not just have a wealth of thoughts, goals, focus or skills, but they also have the discipline that makes all these things fruitful.

Normally, the difficulty with ordinary people is that they are less busy and more disorganised. I believe the fundamental reason behind this is that they are unable

to effectively manage their time. This condition will endure unless you learn to respect time. When you are stressed for time, how can you expect fresh ideas to evolve? Only when you keep your mind calm in the midst of the chaos can new ideas sprout. Hence, it is critical to maintain the calmness of mind during our daily routine and focus on what we can do better, and what new we can develop. Waking up in the morning, striving to go to work, working all day and returning home in the evening to sleep is not living. If we plan our activities according to time and stick to it, we will see that we can do more work than before and still have time for personal hobbies. It is very important

to find some time for yourself. Walk, do yoga, exercise! Only by staying healthy will you be able to paint new colours of hope and fulfil your dreams. Another thing I would like to say is that happiness in your personal life will multiply only when everyone around you will be happy. So, resolve this year to not only create happiness for yourself but also fill your surroundings with it. I have some feelings about the New Year:

Aao nav varsh mein jee lein,
Pyar ka pyala pee lein,
Jo mere hain, jo tere hain,
Unke saath zindagi jee lein!

The author is the chairman, Editorial Board of Lokmat Media and former member of Rajya Sabha.

IN COURT

Right To Become A Mother Is Fundamental/Human Right Of Women; Maternity Benefits Act Provisions Must Be Strictly Enforced: HP HC

SANJEEV SIROHI
NEW DELHI

It is really in the fitness of things that while ruling fully, firmly and finally in favour of the right of woman to become a mother as a fundamental/human right of women, we see that the Himachal Pradesh High Court has in a most learned, laudable, landmark, latest and logical judgment titled The Secretary, Managing Committee of Loreto Convent Tara Hall School vs Sharu Gupta and Others in CWP No. 4122 of 2020 and cited in Neutral Citation No.: 2023:HHC:14597 that was pronounced as recently as on December 28, 2023 has minced just no words to hold clearly that the right to become a mother is a fundamental/human right of a woman and the provisions of Maternity Benefits Act must be strictly enforced wherever applicable. The Court observed thus in a writ petition that was filed against the order passed by the Labour Commissioner-cum-Chief Inspector of Factories-cum-Appellate Authority under the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961. In the ultimate analysis, we thus see finally that the Himachal Pradesh High Court dismissed the petition and refused to interfere in the impugned orders passed by the concerned authorities.

At the very outset, this brief, brilliant, bold and balanced judgment authored by the Single Judge Bench comprising of Hon'ble Mr Justice Vivek Singh Thakur sets the ball rolling by first and foremost putting forth in para 1 that, "Petitioners have approached this Court, invoking provisions of Article 226 of Constitution of India, for setting aside the order dated 14th September, 2020 (Annexure P-6) passed by the Labour Commissioner-cum-Chief Inspector of Factories-cum-Appellate Authority, under Maternity Benefit Act 1961, in appeal No. L-L&E (MB) Appeal-2019 titled Secretary Managing Committee of Loreto Convent Tara Hall School and another vs. Sharu Gupta and another, whereby order dated 16.10.2019 (Annex-

ure P-3) passed by Labour Inspector Circle-1 Shimla (Authorized Inspector under Maternity Benefits Act), in case No. L1/SML/C-1/Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (Sharu Gupta)/19 titled Sharu Gupta vs. the Secretary Managing Committee of Loreto Convent School, has been affirmed with modification by granting additional payment of three months salary to the respondent/claimant as per provisions contained in Section 17(2) (a)(b) of the Act, over and above the relief granted by the Authorized Inspector directing the petitioner to pay Rs.2,45,592/- as maternity benefit and salary for the month of September 2019 to the complainant and also to take joining of Sharu Gupta (complainant) on the same post as Assistant Teacher which she was holding before her proceeding on maternity leave."

Needless to say, the Bench states in para 2 that, "I have heard learned counsel for parties and have also perused the original record summoned from the petitioners as well as of Authorities."

To put things in perspective, the Bench envisages in para 3 that, "Admitted facts in present case are that respondent was appointed in Petitioner No.2 School, managed by Petitioner No.1, as Assistant Teacher on contract basis from 1.4.2016 to 31.07.2017. Subsequently, she was appointed on probation w.e.f. 1.7.2017 till 30.06.2018. Probation of respondent No.1 was extended from 1.7.2018 to 30.06.2019."

As it turned out, the Bench discloses in para 4 that, "Petitioner remained on medical/earned/without pay leave twice w.e.f. 20th September 2018 to 30th September, 2018 and from 12th November 2018 to 24th November 2018. On 21st December, 2018, services of respondent No.1 were terminated vide letter dated 20th December, 2018 w.e.f. 21st December 2018 by paying one month's salary in lieu of notice and termination letter was served upon respondent No.1 on 21st December, 2018."

Do note, the Bench notes in para 13 that, "As per the



record of petitioners, appointment letter of complainant (on probation) dated 1st July, 2017 was accepted and received by complainant on 28th July, 2017. Whereas extension of appointment on probation in the year 2018 was ordered on 20th July, 2018 wherein it was stated that her appointment shall be subject to written acceptance of terms and conditions mentioned therein and areas of improvement attached to the said letter. There are acceptance signatures of complainant on this extension order. Though there is a document available on record containing 13 observations with respect to petitioners and 6 areas of improvement need to be adhered by complainant but there is nothing on record that this communication was the same which was referred in extension of appointment of probation. It does not indicate any signatures of receiving by complainant. Termination letter dated 20th December 2018 speaks that services of complainant were no longer required by school and as per condition of her appointment dated 1st July, 2017 she was informed about that her services will not be required by school on and

from 21.12.2018. There is nothing on record to indicate that after appointment on probation or extension of appointment on probation, complainant was ever informed about her failure to meet the requirement of petitioners/employer as claimed to have been communicated to her along with extension letter dated 20th July, 2018. Rather it has come on record that she was continued uptill the end of session i.e. December 2018. During intervening period, she was permitted to avail leave on account of complicity in the initial stage of pregnancy and when she informed about her plan to proceed on maternity leave after winter vacation, then, to avoid extension of maternity benefits to her, her services were terminated under the garb of conditions contained in her appointment order."

As we see, the Bench then points out succinctly in para 14 that, "Petitioners are relying upon the provisions of Section 6(1) of the Act and Service Rules, which provide that before proceeding on maternity leave, a written information by beneficiary is necessary. There is no dispute with respect to aforesaid provisions. However this provision is to be read with

other provisions of the Act including Section 6(2) which provides that pregnant employee can remain absent from the work on pregnancy but not being a date earlier than six weeks from the date of her expected delivery. In present case, expected date of delivery was 26.04.2019 and, therefore, six weeks earlier to expected delivery were to start after first week of March, 2019 and prior to that, there were winter vacation and thus, there was no occasion for complainant to give any written information in December 2018 for grant of maternity leave w.e.f. March, 2019. The complainant intended to submit application and thereafter she verbally informed about it but before submission of application, complainant was terminated."

Simply put, the Bench mentions in para 15 that, "It is also apt to record here that it is normal phenomena in service that an employee apprises his employer or Boss before filing an application for availing any kind of leave by informing about his/her plan to proceed on leave as an etiquette and courtesy and, therefore, there is nothing unnatural on the part of complainant to inform the employer

verbally about her plan to proceed on maternity leave before filing written application."

It cannot be lost sight of that the Bench then notes in para 16 that, "Conduct of petitioners is not above board as there is a complete denial on the part of petitioners about knowledge of pregnancy of complainant despite the fact that in the months of September and November 2018 complainant was granted leave by petitioners on account of initial stage of pregnancy as advised by doctor."

It is worth noting that the Bench notes in para 23 that, "Motherhood is an important and essential duty to be performed by a woman for existence of the human race on this earth. To conceive, to give birth and take care of a child is not only the fundamental right of the woman but also a pious role to be performed by her for existence of Society. Keeping in view arduous nature of this duty, she must be provided facilities to which she is entitled."

While citing the most relevant case law, the Bench hastens to add in para 24 stating that, "It has been observed by the Supreme Court in Municipal Corporation of Delhi vs. Fe-

male Workers (Muster Roll) reported in (2000) 3 SCC 224, that to become a mother is a most natural phenomena in the life of a woman and for it, the beneficial piece of legislation i.e. Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 has been enacted with object to provide security to the working woman with respect to her service as well as extension of benefits. Working woman, on account of biological duty assigned to her by the nature, has to inevitably face the physical difficulties for performing her duty for conceiving, carrying a baby in the womb and rearing up the child after birth. Maternity Benefit Act has been enacted to provide all facilities to the working woman in dignified manner so that she may overcome the state of motherhood honourably, peacefully and undeterred by the fear of being victimized for forced absence during pre or post-natal period."

Most significantly and most remarkably, the Bench mandates in para 25 holding that, "Article 42 of the Constitution of India categorically directs that State shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief. India is signatory to

various international covenants and treaties including The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations on 10th December, 1948 declaring that human right are supreme and ought to be preserved at all costs. In my opinion, the right to become a mother is also one of the most important human right and this right must be protected at all costs and therefore, provisions of Maternity Benefit Act must be enforced strictly wherever applicable."

Most forthrightly, the Bench directs in para 26 that, "Relationship of an employer and an employee requires mutual trust between them, particularly in an education institution, where congenial atmosphere for teaching and learning is required. Therefore, in case petitioners do not intend to accept joining of the respondent, as directed by the Authorities below, then they shall, in addition to the maternity benefits already granted by the Authorities below, shall pay compensation to the respondent amounting to Rs.15.00 lakhs (fifteen lakhs) in lieu of her reinstatement because any intent to thwart the grant of maternity benefits should be dealt with seriously in order to ensure implementation of the Act in letter and spirit."

Finally and as a corollary, the Bench then concludes by holding in para 27 that, "In view of aforesaid discussion, I do not find any illegality, irregularity, judiciary impropriety to interfere in impugned orders passed by Authorities under the Maternity Benefits Act by invoking discretionary jurisdiction under Article 226 of Constitution of India. Accordingly, petition is dismissed including all pending miscellaneous application(s), if any, in aforesaid terms."

In sum, we thus see that the Himachal Pradesh High Court has made it indubitably clear that right to become a mother is fundamental/human right of women. It was also made clear that the Maternity Benefit Act provisions must be strictly enforced. No denying it!

IN COURT

BOMBAY HIGH COURT QUASHED PROCLAMATION ORDER AGAINST POLICE NAIK ACCUSED OF RAPING LADY POLICE NAIK, SAYS AT LEAST 30 DAYS’ NOTICE NEEDED FOR COURT APPEARANCE

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Bombay High Court in the case Deepak Sitaram Modhe v. State of Maharashtra observed and has quashed a proclamation order against a Police Naik for allegedly absconding after raping and threatening a female Police Naik who used to work with him.

The bench headed by Justice Sarang V Kotwal in the case observed and has stated that the accused has to be given at least 30 days to appear from the date of publication of the proclamation, as per section 82 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, CrPC.

The court in the case observed that all the above three orders have taken this provision into consideration and in all these orders it is mentioned that the period cannot be less than 30.

The court passed the order on November 29, 2023 and the court directed by the appellant to appear on December 04, 2023.

Therefore, the court stated



that the said court is inclined to take a similar view which is taken in all the aforesaid orders.

In the present case, the applicant Deepak Sitaram Modhe, challenged the order dated November 29, 2023 issued by JMFC, Pune.

The court issued the order of proclamation under Section 82 of the CrPC against the applicant, who is the original accused in a case registered at Khadak police station, Pune.

However, the complainant, the Female Police Naik, filed a

case against Deepak Modhe, a Police Naik at Khadak Police Station. Thus, they worked together from the year 2016 to 2022 and despite the complainant’s refusal, Modhe allegedly persisted with marriage proposals.

The court observed that during the 2020 Covid-19 lockdown, he allegedly drugged and sexually assaulted the complainant, blackmailing her with explicit photos and videos.

Therefore, Modhe allegedly continued unnatural

relations, used derogatory language, and threatened to expose her. Thus, it has been alleged by the complainant that he coerced her into divorcing her husband, made thefts from her house on October 20, 2023, and threatened her with physical harm and death.

The counsel, Additional Public Prosecutor Sangita Shinde acknowledged the validity of the cited orders and suggested that if the current order was set aside, the investigating agency could be

given the opportunity to pursue this remedy afresh.

The court stated that the impugned order mentioned the issuance of an arrest warrant against the applicant on November 24, 2023, with the subsequent proclamation issued on November 29, 2023 wherein directing him to appear 4 days later on December 04, 2023.

It has also been pointed out by judge that Section 82(1) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, CrPC mandates a specific time not less than 30 days from the date of publishing the proclamation.

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case observed and has set aside the impugned order, emphasizing that the court could initiate a fresh process for issuing a proclamation in accordance with the statutory requirements.

Accordingly, the court granted the investigating agency the liberty to take appropriate steps to secure the presence of the applicant in accordance with the law.

IN COURT

Telangana High Court Suspended Release Of ‘Vyuham’ By 3 Weeks: Must Examine Whether Cinematograph (Certification) Rules’ Procedure Was Followed

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Telangana High Court in the case observed and has suspended the release of the Political thriller -Vyuham for three weeks holding that the Revising Committee failed to state reasons for granting a Certificate of Exhibition when initially the application had been rejected noting a series of irregularities yet, no major deletions or the changes were made.

The General Secretary of the Telugu Desam Party, TDP approached the High Court wherein it prayed that the certificate for exhibition be cancelled on the ground that it was highly defamatory towards the Party President Chandra Babu Naidu.

The respondent in the case contended that the Revising committee considered all aspects of the movie and granted the certificate only after making a thorough analysis.

The court stated that the disclaimer of ‘based on true events’ had been removed presenting the movie as a work of fiction.

The bench headed by Justice Surepalli Nanda after

referring to the initial rejection report submitted by the examining committee noted that the Committee had rejected the application for exhibition and has observed that the movie was derogatory towards certain people and their political parties, as the same names and party symbols had been used throughout the movie.

It has been held by the committee that violative of guideline 2(xviii) of the S, O.No.836-(E), issued in 1991, notified by the Government of India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Section 5B(2) of the Cinematography Act, 1952.

The court found that despite only two minutes’ worth of recordings being deleted, the Committee issued the certificate the second time around, without as much as assigning reasons which is violative of subrules 9,10,11&12 of Rules 24 of the Cinematography (Certification) Rules, 1983.

The bench of Justice Nanda held that Article 21 is a fundamental right with no restrictions, whereas the fundamental right to expression can only be exercised within

limitations.

The court noted that the mere delay in approaching a Court for infringement of fundamental rights will not dilute the rights of an individual.

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case observed and finds that this being the prima facie case is made out and balance of convenience at this stage lies in favour of the petitioner and therefore, the validity of the certificate dated December 13, 2023 which is issued by 3rd respondent in favour of the 6th respondent for theatrical release of the movie ‘VYUHAM’ is suspended for a period of three weeks from today and the respondents 5 and 6 are accordingly restrained from releasing the movie ‘VYUHAM’ based on the said certificate.

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case directed the Central Board of Film Certification, Revising Committee, and Producer of the movie to place all records which pertain to the movie before the Court on the next date of hearing.

IN COURT

Bombay High Court Ordered Inquiry Upon Noting That Excise Officials Illegally Seized Chemical Company’s Ethanol At Behest Of Competitors

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Bombay High Court in the case K. Raj & Company & Anr. v. State of Maharashtra and Ors observed and has ordered the Additional Chief Secretary, Maharashtra Excise Department, for conducting an inquiry into excise officials who seized a company’s ethanol despite it not being a contraband as per Bombay Prohibition Act.

The Division bench comprising of Justice GS Kulkarni and Justice Jitendra Jain in the case observed wherein the writ plea is moved that the excise officials appeared to have acted on the behest of the petitioner company’s competitors and has harmed the reputation of petitioner’s and business interest.

The court in the case held that from what has been urged before us on behalf of the intervenors, as also seen from the contents of the newspaper reports and

the wide publicity which has been given to the seizure in question, labelling the petitioners to have indulged in illegal activities in dealing with ethanol, that this is clearly at the behest of the petitioners’ competitors and such kind of situation as brought about by the illegal seizure at the hands of the Excise officers would amount to not only a gross illegality but bring about a situation of absolute lawlessness in exercise of solemn public duties by such officials.

The court in the case observed and has deprecated the officers’ high-handedness by publishing photos of the boxes of ethanol with excise officers in the newspapers, while making it look like illegal materials which were seized from the petitioner company.

The court observed that it was certainly most objectionable for the officers to pose themselves in photo-

graphs in projecting that the petitioners in the case were dealing in prohibited goods and this is certainly neither a part of their duties, nor permissible under the Bombay Prohibition Act or under the Rules under which they were supposed to act.

In the present case, the court was dealing with the writ petition moved by chemical importer K Raj & Company wherein it challenged the seizure of goods by state excise authorities.

The counsel, Advocate Shah appearing for the petitioner contended before the court that the seizure, which took place in December 2023, was in direct violation of the court’s prior order dated November 4, 2023 and the coordinate benches of 2021 ruling in another writ petition.

On the other hand, the counsel, Advocate Shruti Vyas for the State Excise Department stated that the State Excise Department did

not intend to persist with the seizure. Thus, she assured the court that the seized goods and the vehicle would be released immediately.

The court observed that the officials had prima facie not acted bona fide and had abused their powers under the Bombay Prohibition Act.

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case observed and has directed the inquiry to be completed within three weeks and sought the report on January 9, 2024.

The said court emphasized that if the inquiry reveals the involvement of the concerned officials, the appropriate civil and criminal actions should be initiated against them.

Further, the court allowed the Additional Chief Secretary to move the State Government to pass appropriate orders which includes suspending officials pending inquiry if there was prima facie material against them.

IN COURT

BOMBAY HIGH COURT: GRIEVANCE BODY OF SLUM REHABILITATION AUTHORITY CANNOT REVIEW ITS EARLIER ORDER UNDER THE GUISE OF SPEAKING TO ITS MINUTES

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Bombay High Court in the case Sitara Anil Sharma v. Apex Grievance Redressal Committee, Slum Rehabilitation Authority, Bandra, Mumbai & Ors observed and has held that the Apex Grievance Redressal Committee, AGRC of the Slum Rehabilitation Authority, SRA cannot review its own order in the guise of speaking to the minutes of the order.

The bench headed by Justice Madhav J Jamdar in the case observed and has quashed an order passed by the AGRC while speaking to the minutes of it earlier order, wherein the court directed the parties to register a different agreement than the one mentioned in the original order.

The court held that it being the settled legal proposition that unless the Statute or Rules so permit, a Review Application is not maintainable in case of judicial or quasi-judicial Orders. Thus, what has been done by the AGRC is that under the guise of styling the Order as speaking to the minutes of Order passed on June 28, 2023.

Therefore, One Sitara Anil Sharma challenged an Order passed by the AGRC and the order dated June 28, 2023, was subsequently modified by the AGRC through an Order dated September 15, 2023.

It has been directed by the AGRC on June 28 that the slum developer to pay applicable Transit Rent to the petitioner and to register an Agreement executed on April 20, 2022 for Permanent Alternate Accommodation, PAA within ten working days.

However, an application is filed by the developer for speaking to the minutes stating that the agreement executed on April 20, 2022 is not according to the Slum Redevelopment Scheme. Thus, the new agreement is being required for the Permanent Alternate Accom-



modation is required to be executed and registered.

The AGRC in the case noted that the agreement dated 20.04.2022 which pertains to the area from Sale Component of the builder and has nothing to do with SRA and the AGRC cannot force the developer to register that agreement as it is a matter of between the developer and the applicant.

The court in the case observed that the AGRC, while purporting to deal with an application for speaking to the minutes of the June 28, 2023 Order which being contrary to the provisions under the Maharashtra Slum Areas (Improvement, Clearance, and Redevelopment) Act, 1971.

Further, it has been clarified by the court that its decision to quash the Order was solely based on the absence of statutory jurisdiction for review. Thus, all the contentions raised were merely based on merits were expressly kept open, wherein allowing the parties to pursue their claims and defences through proper legal channels.

The counsel, Advocates Aniesh S Jadhav, Shyam K Singh and Pradeep Gaikwad appeared for the Petitioner. The counsel, Advocate PH Kantharia represented AGRC.

The counsel, Advocate Sneha Dedhia represented the slum developer.

BOMBAY HIGH COURT:

Grievance Body Of Slum Rehabilitation Authority Cannot Review Its Earlier Order Under The Guise Of Speaking To Its Minutes

The Bombay High Court in the case Sitara Anil Sharma v. Apex Grievance Redressal Committee, Slum Rehabilitation Authority, Bandra, Mumbai & Ors observed and has held that the Apex Grievance Redressal Committee, AGRC of the Slum Rehabilitation Authority, SRA cannot review its own order in the guise of speaking to the minutes of the order.

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The counsel, Advocate Sneha Dedhia represented the slum developer.

IN COURT

PUNJAB AND HARYANA HIGH COURT BAR ASSOCIATION URGED SSP CHANDIGARH NOT TO STOP ADVOCATES FOR ALLEGED TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS BEFORE AND AFTER COURT TIMINGS

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Punjab and Haryana High Court Bar Association has written to the SSP, Chandigarh wherein it requested that appropriate directions be issued to police officials not to harass the advocates, practising in the Punjab and Haryana High Court, ‘in the name of violations of traffic rules’ before and after the timings of court.

The request made is specifically directed towards avoiding unnecessary checks or violations between 8:00 AM to 11 AM and 4:00 PM to 6 PM in order to ensure that no inconvenience is caused to the Bar Members.

The letter was addressed to the SSP wherein it is stated



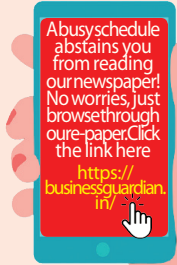
that the requests from the Members of the Bar have been received repeatedly in the office of the Bar Association about harassment of lawyers in the name of unnecessarily checking and in the name of violation of traffic rules.

The Punjab and Haryana

High Court Bar Association stated while adding that there is a lot of mental pressure on the Advocates that the official deputed for the traffic duty stop the Advocates unnecessarily in the name of traffic rules violations as the same causes hindrance and hurdles to reach

the High Court in time.

The Punjab and Haryana High Court Bar Association made the request while considering that the advocates need to reach their respective offices after 4 PM to prepare for the next day and they provide essential services to society.



THE BUSINESS GUARDIAN

TUESDAY | 2 JANUARY 2024 | NEW DELHI



WARNER RETIRES FROM ODI
Batting stalwart David Warner on Monday announced his retirement from ODI cricket alongside the end of his Test career here this week but he will continue to play T20 cricket for Australia.

NEW TRAIN

MUMBAI-JALNA VANDE BHARAT LAUNCH TODAY: KNOW THE ROUTE, STOPS AND TIMINGS

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

In a significant move towards railway modernization, Indian Railways is set to introduce a new Vande Bharat route, connecting Mumbai to Jalna in Maharashtra. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually flag off the Mumbai-Jalna Vande Bharat Express on December 30, as confirmed by a statement from the South Central Railway. Minister of State for Railways Raosaheb Danve will be present at the ceremony in Jalna.



The new Vande Bharat Express aims to link the Marathwada region, providing a swift travel option for passengers.

STOPS & TIMINGS
The train will make a total of six stops during its journey from Jalna to Mumbai. The first stop will be

Sambhajinagar (formerly Aurangabad), followed by Manmad, Nashik Road, Kalyan, Thane, and Dadar. The final stop will be Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) after departing from Dadar.

Operating every day except Wednesday, the semi-high-speed train will depart from Jalna at 05:05 hrs, reaching CSMT, Mumbai, at 11:55 hrs. For the return journey, the Vande Bharat Express will leave CSMT at 13:10 hrs, arriving in Jalna by 20:30 hrs.

FEATURES

Similar to other Vande Bharat trains, this express service will offer enhanced passenger amenities.

Notable features include onboard Wi-Fi infotainment, a GPS-based passenger information system, luxurious interiors, bio-vacuum toilets with touch-free functionality, diffused LED lighting, charging points for each seat, individual touch-based reading lights, and concealed roller blinds.

The train will also feature improved heat ventilation, air-conditioning systems, and UV lamps for germ-free air supply.

SMUGGLING

KENYAN NATIONAL HELD WITH COCAINE WORTH RS 14.90 CR AT MUMBAI AIRPORT

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence apprehended a woman passenger of Kenyan nationality at Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport for allegedly smuggling cocaine worth Rs 14.90 crore, a DRI release said on Friday. Acting on intelligence, the Kenyan national, who came via flight no KQ 204 from Nairobi to Mumbai on December 28, Thursday, was apprehended by DRI officers, the release said.

As per the release, the officers recovered 1490 grams of "white powdery substance purported to be cocaine" valued at approximately Rs 14.90 crore.

"The ingenious concealment of the drugs involved two black polythene packets cleverly placed within a hair conditioner bottle and a body wash bottle," it stated. The passenger has been arrested under the provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act of 1985 and subsequently remanded to judicial custody.

TRAGIC

Businessman jumps into Bhayandar Creek from newly-built Versova bridge

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

A 53-year-old tour and travel businessman, Atul Dhandhia, tragically took his life by jumping into the Bhayandar Creek from the recently constructed Versova bridge. Earlier, he had attempted suicide at the Bandra Worli Sea Link, where a vigilant security guard prevented his entry. The body of Dhandhia remains missing and untraceable.

Dhandhia, a resident of Mira Road with a 30-year history in the tour and travel business, informed his daughter and wife of his suicidal intentions, initially planning to jump from the Bandra Worli Sea Link. Subsequently, the family witnessed his leap into the creek from the Versova bridge and promptly filed a missing complaint with the Bhayandar police.

Living with his wife and two children, Dhandhia's emotional state prompted him to leave home with-

out informing anyone. His distressed family, informed by his call, sought him out in an autorickshaw after he altered his plans due to restrictions at the Sea Link.

As the family traveled, the police traced Dhandhia to the newly constructed Versova bridge. Urgently informed, his wife and daughter rushed to the location but couldn't prevent his tragic act. Despite police efforts, including divers and fishermen, the businessman's body re-

mains undiscovered as of Thursday.

While financially well-off, the motive behind Dhandhia's distressing actions remains mysterious. The Bhayandar police have filed a missing complaint, and the Kashimira police are conducting an investigation, given that the incident occurred within their jurisdiction. The heart-breaking incident underscores the complexities of mental health challenges and the devastating impact on individuals and their families.

RAILWAY SECURITY

CRPF RETRIEVES STOLEN PROPERTY WORTH RS. 1.38 CRORE IN APRIL-NOVEMBER PERIOD

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

The Central Railway Protection Force retrieved stolen property worth Rs. 1.38 crore during the period from April to November 2023, said a release.

"The Railway Protection Force is on a relentless mission to secure passengers and their belongings. Operation Yatri Suraksha was launched to address security-related grievances of passengers in real-time by improving emergency response and also to work together with GRP for the prevention and detection of passenger-related offences," stated the release. The Railway Protection Force (RPF) wing of the Central Railway has retrieved stolen property worth Rs 1.38 crore in the last eight months (from April to November 2023).



Solapur Division led with the highest no of stolen property retrievals worth Rs 99.29 lakh with 33 cases registered and 102 persons prosecuted.

Mumbai Division registered the maximum 169 cases with 287 persons prosecuted with retrieval of Rs. 8.88 lakh. Bhusawal Division registered 77 cases with 159 persons persecuted and stolen property worth Rs. 23.80 lakh retrieval. Nagpur Division registered 56 cases of stolen property with the

prosecution of 170 persons and retrieved Stolen property worth Rs 4.09 lakh. Pune Division registered 37 cases of stolen property with the prosecution of 78 cases and retrieved Stolen Property worth Rs. 2.10 lakh.

RPF personnel of Central Railway have been rendering yeomen service in retrieving abandoned passenger belongings containing cash, jewellery, vital documents and others and returning them to the lawful owners on many occasions during this period.

IMPRESSIVE FEAT

18-YEAR-OLD SWIMS 36 KM IN 7 HOURS TO RAISE AWARENESS ON OCEAN POLLUTION

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

In a remarkable initiative to combat ocean pollution, 18-year-old MBBS student Hazel undertook a challenging swim from Bandra Worli Sealink to the Gateway of India on the night of December 29, covering a distance of 36 km in 7 hours and 4 minutes.

Expressing her motivation, Hazel highlighted the critical issue of massive garbage dumping in the seas, causing widespread difficulties and environmental damage. She emphasized the need for collective action to clean the seas and urged people to refrain from littering.

Beginning her swim at around 2 AM, Hazel navigated cautiously through the sea's debris. Throughout the endeavor, she was accompanied

by pilot boats, comprising observers, timekeepers, her coach, and family members.

Reflecting on her journey, Hazel expressed gratitude for her parents' unwavering support, noting their encouragement from training sessions to various competitions.

Notably, in 2021, Hazel swam 14 kilometers from Elephanta Caves to the Gateway of India in just 2 hours and 45 minutes. Her impactful initiative garnered attention, leading local MLA Mihir Kotecha to issue an order mandating dustbins on all ferry boats to discourage passengers from littering the sea. Hazel concluded by urging collective action for a cause that transcends individual efforts, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding the seas for present and future generations.

PUBLIC SAFETY

SYNAGOGUE IN THANE, NEARBY BUILDINGS EVACUATED AFTER BOMB THREAT, SECURITY BEEFED UP

TDG NETWORK
THANE



Security has been up in the Naupada police station area in Thane after a synagogue, Jew worship place, received a bomb threat, police said.

A senior police official said that a Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad (BDDS) was sent to the spot, and the premises of the synagogue, along with nearby buildings and shops, were evacuated. However, nothing suspicious was found at the spot. "Naupada police got information that the synagogue has received a threat email.

Police officials and staff reached the spot. The synagogue was evacuated, and the nearby buildings and shops were also evacuated, and traffic was diverted. The BDDS also came and inquired. The BDDS squad has cleared that there are no explosives here," said Thane DCP Ganesh Gawde.

He further mentioned that extra security arrangements are being maintained in the area to ensure the safety of the synagogue.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Jaipur airport authority received an email threatening to blow up the airport.

SECURITY

OVER 13,000 COPS TO KEEP VIGIL ON MUMBAI STREETS ON NEW YEAR



TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Over 13,000 police personnel will be deployed on the streets of Mumbai to maintain law and order during New Year's celebrations, with additional measures in place to prevent drunken driving. The Mumbai police have organized various programs in important public places, hotels, and shopping malls for New Year's festivities, and the deployment includes 2,051 officers, 11,500 police constables, 22 Deputy Commissioners of Police, and 45 Assistant Commissioners of Police.

Special forces such as Quick Response Teams, State Reserve Police Force (SRPF)

platoons, Riot Control Police, and Home Guards will be stationed at vital locations to assist the Mumbai police. A specific campaign will target traffic rule violations and "drinking and driving." Stringent legal action will be taken against individuals engaging in activities such as driving under the influence of alcohol, creating public disturbances, harassing women, operating illegal liquor establishments, and selling or consuming drugs.

A senior officer emphasized the importance of citizens adhering to rules and celebrating the New Year with enthusiasm and gaiety. They urged citizens to report any law and order issues to the Mumbai police control room.

TRAFFIC CHAOS

3 HRS TO CROSS 3 KMS, SAY FRUSTRATED COMMUTERS ON MUMBAI-A'BAD NH

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Ongoing concreting work on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad highway has caused significant traffic disruptions, with vehicles stranded for hours and chaos prevailing due to mismanagement. White topping work near the Khaniwade toll plaza and Tungarshwar temple, executed by contractor Nirmal BuildInfra

Private Limited, has reportedly been initiated without obtaining a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from local police, leading to a chaotic situation.

Commuters, including ambulances and airport-bound cabs, have faced extensive delays, particularly at night when unregulated traffic forces inter-state heavy vehicles to shut down engines for prolonged periods.

TOP OF THE DAY

FIRE DESTROYS FACTORY IN MAHARASHTRA'S TALOJA MIDC; NO ONE HURT

Mumbai: A fire destroyed a factory in an industrial pocket in Navi Mumbai, an official said on Friday. No one was injured in the fire that broke out at the packaging unit at plot no.C-03 in Taloja MIDC area, about 35 km from Mumbai, around 8.30 pm on Thursday, he said. An official from the Taloja fire station said local firemen and others from neighbouring fire stations rushed to the spot and controlled the blaze. While the fire destroyed the factory, its cause is being probed, he added.

GOVERNMENT CLEARS RS 23.41 LAKH DUES FOR MUMBAI POLICE MOUNTED UNIT

MUMBAI: The state government has approved the release of Rs 23.41 lakh in pending dues for the Mumbai Police Mounted Unit, covering expenses like temporary stables, saddlery materials, and horse-related costs during the Covid-19 lockdown. Expenditure totaling Rs 54.83 lakh, including horse feed, medicines, and stable-related expenses, has received approval, with Rs 23.41 lakh remaining pending. The Mounted Police Unit, currently with four horses, originally acquired 13 in 2020, but losses and transfers have reduced their number.

PMLA COURT REJECTS ACCUSED'S BID FOR HOSPITAL TRANSFER

MUMBAI: The PMLA court dismissed Sagar Suryavanshi's request to move to a private hospital in the Seva Vikas Cooperative Bank fraud case, stating he concealed facts while seeking the order for private hospitalization. Suryavanshi, facing charges of cheating, obtained the order from a Pune magistrate court but failed to disclose his ongoing bail application. The PMLA court emphasized that his medical condition didn't warrant treatment outside JJ Hospital and criticized the attempt to misuse the opportunity.

SECOND COVID-19 DEATH IN NASHIK, RECORDS HIGHEST DAILY CASES

NASHIK: Maharashtra witnessed its second consecutive COVID-19 death in Nashik, alongside 117 new cases—the highest in the last three to four months. Mumbai reported 25 cases, Pune circle 28, Thane Municipal Corporation 13, Navi Mumbai 12, Nagpur 10, and other regions contributing to the surge. State health minister Tanaji Sawant urged citizens to stay alert amid the new variant (JN.1), emphasizing the importance of increased surveillance and testing in the next 10-15 days, especially during the festive season.

● Agencies

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Prof. M.D. Nalapat

MANAGING EDITOR

Pankaj Vohra

EDITOR

Joyeeta Basu

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Mumbai Office: Juhu Hotel, Juhu Tara Road, Santa Cruz-West, Mumbai-400049.

Chandigarh Office: SCO-7, Sector 17-E, Chandigarh- 160017

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For Subscriptions and Circulation Complaints Contact:

DELHI

Vinod Kumar Rana
Mobile: +91-7011055010

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