

Education system needs a new direction considering the present and future challenges

Coffee Table News Network

Nagpur, D. 4. The main objective of the new education policy is to Indianize global knowledge and globalize Indian knowledge. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis today said that we will not be great by glorifying historical matters, but we will also have to give direction to the education system keeping in mind the present and future global challenges. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis was speaking as a special guest at the inaugural session of the National Conference 'Maharashtra Gyan Sabha-2026: Education for Developed Maharashtra' at VNIT in association with Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University, Gondwana

University, Visvesvaraya National Institute of Engineering, IIM Nagpur and Shiksha Sanskriti Utthan Nyas, New Delhi. On this occasion, Atul Kothari, National Secretary, Shiksha Sanskriti Utthan Nyas, Dr. Prashant Narnavare, Secretary to the Governor, Bhimraya Metri, Director, IIM Nagpur, Dr. Manali Kshirsagar, Vice Chancellor, Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University, Prashant Bokare, Vice Chancellor, Gondwana University, Madabhushi Madan Gopal, Chairman, Board of Directors, VNIT, Dr. Premal Patel, Director, Laghu Udyog Bharati, Ravneet Khurana, Laghu Udyog Bharati were present on the occasion. Chief Minister Fadnavis said that today the world is



moving forward at a very fast pace. The first industrial revolution came in 1760. The period of the three industrial revolutions that came after that is about two and a half hundred years. However, in the last fifteen years, the

world has experienced three industrial revolutions. If we don't keep pace of change in mind, we can be left behind. Indians have been instrumental in the development of AI and Deep Technology, which has accelerated this revolution. We

want to create such a human resource through the education policy, in which the overall development of the individual is expected to be accompanied by the inculcation of moral and professional qualities. As a

professional, physical, moral, physical ability, he is also expected to contribute to the country's economy. We want to develop an education system that combines global knowledge with Indian knowledge system and addresses global challenges, said Chief Minister Fadnavis. The Chief Minister said that the nature of sixty percent jobs will change in the next one thousand days. Deep tech and AI technology is transforming all sectors. This does not mean that this will lead to large-scale unemployment. A similar discussion was started when the computer revolution came in the country. However, we had made our mark in that area as well. Technology never stops. In such a situation, we also need to move forward with technology. Universities and

teachers also need to think about what subjects are relevant and relevant in today's time. If there are three industrial revolutions in fifteen years, nothing can be permanent in society. Everyone will have to adopt new methods and the education sector will have to be adapted for it and the flow of knowledge will have to be taken forward, appealed the Chief Minister. There was a time when we were not in favour of foreign universities. Because at that time we couldn't compete with them. That is no longer the case today. We are developing an educated city in Navi Mumbai. It will provide an opportunity for our children to study in many foreign universities at a low cost. Our universities should also participate in this competition and reach that level of

education, appealed the Chief Minister. A souvenir was released by the Chief Minister and dignitaries on the occasion. A booklet titled 'Best Practices of Gondwana University' was also released on the occasion. Dr. Manali Kshirsagar, Vice Chancellor, Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University proposed the vote of thanks. The two-day conference is being attended by experts and representatives from academia and industry from across the country. The Maharashtra Knowledge Assembly is being organized on the theme of 'Education for a developed Maharashtra in the context of the New Education Policy'.

Will Maharashtra get the 37th district? The state government's big decision

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There is a renewed discussion about the creation of a new district in the state and the latest decision in Buldhana district is likely to make it 'Khamgaon district'. The new

administrative decision of the state government has given a lot of impetus to this discussion. On April 2, 2026, the decision to restructure the revenue system was taken. According to this decision, Buldhana

district has been included in the list of big districts and emphasis has been laid on making the administration more efficient. As part of this, a new additional collector's office will be set up at Khamgaon. With

this decision, two administrative centers will be created - Buldhana and Khamgaon. This will help reduce the pressure on the headquarters and Khamgaon is likely to be developed as an independent

administrative centre. Against this backdrop, the demand for the status of a separate district for Khamgaon is gaining momentum again. Meanwhile, the government has taken a big step to simplify the

administration at the taluka level as well. The new Upper Tehsil offices will be opened at Dongaon in Mehkar taluka, Sakharkheda in Sindkhedraja taluka and Lakhanwada in Khamgaon taluka. This

decision will reduce the need for rural residents to travel long distances for revenue related purposes. It will save time and cost as the service will be available at the local level. Overall, this

decision to decentralize administration and increase facilities has given more momentum to the discussions of getting the 37th district of Maharashtra in the future.

Uttarakhand: LPG scarcity hits Rishikesh hospitality sector ahead of Char Dham Yatra

Coffee Table News Network

As the Middle East crisis triggered by the Iran-US-Israel war enters its 35th day, various cities across India continue to grapple with a persistent LPG shortage. Rishikesh has not been spared, with the city now facing a similar energy crisis ahead of the Char Dham Yatra. The hospitality sector in Rishikesh has been the hardest hit; hotel owners and roadside dhaba operators are struggling to maintain daily operations in light of the LPG crisis. As a result, they have shifted to alternative fuels like wood and coal to handle their daily operation, which present significant logistical challenges for the eatery outlets. Vivek Tiwari, a local restaurant owner, highlighted the severity of the situation, noting his business has been forced to resort to alternatives such as wood and coal to sustain their operations. He further acknowledged that while there has been a marginal improvement in the supply of commercial LPG, it remains far below the levels required to meet daily demand. "Restaurants in Rishikesh are being forced to use



alternatives like wood and coal to sustain daily operations. As the Char Dham Yatra is set to begin, the government and gas agencies need to be transparent about their supply strategy. While there has been a marginal improvement and we are receiving commercial cylinders from agencies, the current supply remains well below the requirement needed to sustain daily operations," Tiwari told ANI. However, Rishabh, another restaurant owner, was vocal in his criticism of the ongoing LPG shortage. He revealed that despite having a formal commercial connection, the supply remains nonexistent; as a result, he too is forced to rely on coal and traditional furnaces to keep the kitchen running. He alleged that gas agencies are unable

to meet the demand for commercial LPG supply. "There is a severe problem with the gas supply; we simply are not getting it. We have had to bring in coal and a furnace just to manage our restaurant. Despite holding a commercial connection, the gas remains unavailable. Even the agencies have raised their hands, declaring there is no possibility of a supply. We have been dealing with these challenges for 15 to 20 days now," said Rishabh. He further warned that if the situation persists, the upcoming Char Dham Yatra could face problems. He added that businesses may be forced to either suspend operations entirely or significantly increase food prices just to keep their business alive. "If the situation remains like this, we will either close our

restaurants or increase food prices to keep our business alive. Even the Char Dham Yatra will be adversely affected," warned Rishabh. Meanwhile, at the second meeting of the Informal Group of Ministers (IGoM), which monitors the evolving situation in West Asia and suggest proactive measures for its minimum impact on India, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said that in view of the "uncertain situation", the Defence Minister underlined the importance of round-the-clock monitoring of the situation and the need to respond in a calibrated manner to deal with any eventuality. He stressed the need to leave no stone unturned to ensure that the people of the country face the minimum effect of the conflict

Coffee Table

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CM expresses condolences over car accident in Dindori; announces Rs 5 lakh assistance to families of deceased

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News Network

NASHIK: Nine members of the Dargode family from Indore village in Dindori taluka of Nashik district died when their car, an 'Irtika', fell into a well in Shivajinagar area of Dindori city while they were returning home. The incident is causing a stir in the area, and Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has expressed his condolences and announced help to the families of the deceased. Chief Minister Fadnavis made a post on social media and said, "9 people died

in an accident when a school vehicle fell into a well in Dindori, Nashik district, including 6 students. This is a very unfortunate and heartbreaking incident. Heartfelt tributes to the deceased. We share in the grief of their families. I have discussed with Minister Girish Mahajan and he has visited the spot and is coordinating. Five lakhs of financial assistance will be provided to the families of the deceased by the state government. He has also said that orders have been given to the district

administration to investigate this incident. Minister Girish Mahajan visited the spot and took information about the incident. Later, while interacting with the media, he said, "While the cement concrete road was being constructed, It is shocking to see that there is a well. What were the concerned officials and contractors doing while constructing the road? Raising the question, all the technical and administrative records in this case will be checked, and not a single official who is negligent will



be spared. Also, a case has already been registered against the well owner. However, not only action will be taken against the owner, but the road planning and construction department will also be investigated. Who exactly is responsible for the



accident will also be investigated and further legal action will be taken accordingly. Mahajan also said that instructions have been given to immediately close the well in Dindori to avoid future accidents. The Dargode family had come to Dindori

City for a private class love gathering. At this time, after the program was over, everyone was returning home in their 'Irtika' car (MH 15 JS 1053). At that time, around 10 pm, the driver lost control near Raju Raje's well in

Shivajinagar area and the speeding car fell directly into the well filled with water. As soon as the incident was reported, local citizens rushed to help. However, it was difficult to find the car as the well was deep and filled with water. The rescue operation was hampered by the darkness of the night. After receiving information about the incident, the administration, police and NDRF teams reached the spot. Then the car was pulled out of the well with the help of a crane.

However, by then nine people had died. A case of culpable homicide has been registered against the well owner Rajendra Raje in this case. Sunil Dattatray Dargode (age 32), Reshma Sunil Dargode (age 27), Asha Anil Dargode (age 32), Gunawati Sunil Dargode (age 11), Shreyash Anil Dargode (age 11), Shrawani Anil Dargode (age 11), Srushti Anil Dargode (age 14), Samrudhi Rajendra Dargode (age 7) Shraddha Anil Dargode (age 13)

Call for Concrete Measures for Cancer Patients MP Nilesh Lanke Raises Issue in Lok Sabha

Coffee Table
News Network

Ahilyanagar: Member of Parliament Nilesh Lanke raised serious concerns in the Lok Sabha, drawing the Central Government's attention to the hardships faced by cancer patients. He stated that due to the lack of adequate medical facilities in rural areas, patients are compelled to travel to major cities for treatment. Citing the example of Ahilyanagar, one of the largest districts in Maharashtra, he said that needy cancer patients from the district frequently have to travel to hospitals in Mumbai and Pune for chemotherapy. This places a significant financial and emotional



burden on patients and their families. He further highlighted that many rural families are forced to sell agricultural land, jewellery, and other assets to afford treatment. "This situation is not just a failure of the healthcare system, but also a test of the government's sensitivity," he asserted. While the government has announced the establishment of day-care cancer centres in every

district, Lanke stressed that effective implementation is crucial. He also demanded the expansion of the main cancer treatment facility at the district hospital in Ahilyanagar and the setting up of sub-centres in every taluka. Additionally, he pointed out that the 5 lakh financial assistance provided under the Ayushman Bharat is inadequate for treating serious illnesses like cancer.

In this context, he urged the Central Government to increase the financial limit and establish a dedicated 'Cancer Assistance Fund' for patients. "The lives of poor patients depend not on announcements, but on timely and affordable treatment. The government must take immediate and concrete decisions to provide relief to cancer patients in rural areas," Lanke appealed.

ADCC Bank Deposits Reach ₹11,311 Crore; Loan Recovery at 34.47% by March-End Chairman Chandrashekhar Ghule Patil Shares Performance Highlights

Coffee Table
News Network

Ahilyanagar: The Ahilyanagar District Central Co operative Bank has recorded deposits of 11,311 crore by the end of March 2026, reflecting strong trust among depositors, informed Chairman Chandrashekhar Ghule Patil. He stated that this marks the first time in the bank's history that deposits have crossed such a significant milestone. Expressing gratitude to depositors, Ghule Patil also highlighted that despite challenging conditions, farmer members have repaid loans on time, resulting in a loan recovery rate of 34.47%. He noted that customers across the district have shown



confidence in the bank by investing their savings. The bank is offering attractive interest rates and services, and is also emerging as a leader in digital banking services in the state. Over the past four months, the bank has implemented a special initiative for gold loans, offering loans up to 5 lakh per individual at an interest rate of 8%. This has led to a significant rise in gold loan disbursement, reaching 146 crore by March-end 2026. Currently, gold loan services are



available across 118 branches and will soon be expanded to 160 branches. Ghule Patil further stated that as per Reserve Bank of India norms, the bank's Credit-Deposit (CD) ratio stands at an impressive 68.22%, which is considered ideal in the banking sector. Vice Chairman Madhavrao Kanavade said that the bank had a recoverable loan amount of 5,834 crore for the current cooperative year, out of which 2,011 crore has been recovered by March 2026. Of this, 1,863 crore comprises crop loans. He appreciated

the efforts of farmer members and cooperative service societies for their significant contribution to recovery, helping ease financial pressures on cooperative institutions. Chief Executive Officer Ravsaheb Warpe credited the bank's board of directors, staff, and officials of cooperative societies for their dedicated efforts. He added that branches remained operational even on holidays to facilitate loan repayments by farmers. He assured that just as farmers have supported the bank through timely repayments, the bank will continue to extend substantial crop loans to support the farming community.

The dispute over the statue of Shivaji Maharaj has finally been resolved;

Coffee Table
News Network

Solapur: The dispute over the installation of the statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in Anjangaon in Madha taluka has finally been resolved and the village has become tension-free for the fourth day. To avoid the conflict over the installation of the statue, a meeting of leaders of both communities was held at Mohol Police Station on Friday night in the presence of Inspector General of Police of Kolhapur area Sunil Phulari. A meeting was held with a delegation of the Dhangar community and Maratha community of Anjangaon along with Phulari. In this meeting, both communities agreed that the place where the statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was installed belongs to the Kheloba temple and now this statue will be shifted. For this, BJP leader and former MLA Rajan Patil informed at



midnight that representatives of both communities will find a new place together. Detailed information about this is that after the conflict over the statue of Shivaji Maharaj arose, there was a lot of discussion on this issue at the state level. Therefore, efforts are being made by the administration and local politicians to find a solution to this issue. On Friday night, a meeting was organized between Guardian Minister Jayakumar Gore, Kolhapur area IG Sunil Phulare, new District Collector Karthikeyan, Superintendent of

Police Atul Kulkarni, former MLA of Mohol Rajan Patil and Maratha community representatives. A successful solution was found in this meeting. Since the place where the statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is installed is a temple, it has been decided in the meeting that the statue will be shifted to the place preferred by the villagers and the Maratha community tomorrow. The site will be searched on Saturday and it has been said that Guardian Minister Jayakumar Gore will immediately approve a fund of Rs. 1 crore for the

beautification of the statue at the relocated site in Anjangaon. The District Collector and Superintendent of Police will visit the village with the villagers and determine the place. The meeting was attended by Solapur District Rural Superintendent of Police Atul Kulkarni, Karthikeyan, who recently took charge of the post of District Officer, Madha Division Provincial Officer Jayashree Awhad, Mohol Tehsildar Sachin Bhosale, Police Inspector Bajirao Powar, Anjangaon Mandal Officer Talathi, etc.

Jogeshwari Terminus to get another year, 4 platforms to connect with metro rail

Coffee Table
News Network

Mumbai: After Dadar, CSMT and Bandra, the fourth railway terminus is being built in Mumbai. The work on this fourth terminus is underway at Jogeshwari railway station located in the western part of the city. The completion date of this terminus has been postponed three times and now Mumbaikars will have to wait for 2027 for this. However, many changes have been made in the design of this terminus and this upgrade will delay the project by a year. The first phase of Jogeshwari Terminus was to be started in December 2025. Then it was postponed till June 2026. But now we will have to wait another year for these works. Major termini like Bandra, Dadar and Mumbai Central are currently very crowded. Therefore, with the help of this new terminus, the work of crowd distribution will be done. Earlier, three platforms were to be built at this



terminus. But now, Railway Manager Pankaj Singh has informed that another new platform has been built for passengers by increasing the width of this platform. Also, a coaching depot for Vande Bharat Express will also be built at this terminus. He informed that this work will be completed by 2027. Earlier, three main platforms were to be built at this terminus. One of them was the home platform, each of which was 600 meters wide. Now the width of this platform has been increased and a fourth platform is being built. This

platform number 4 will be the home platform. This terminus is being built near the Ram Mandir station of Mumbai Suburban Railway. Also, it is just 250 meters away from the Jogeshwari Metro station on Metro Line 7. Also, a parking area along with cab, rickshaw stands, Ola-Uber pickup and drop-off points will be built at this terminus. 12 mail and express trains of 24 coaches will run at Jogeshwari Terminus daily. Meanwhile, since this terminus is also very close to SV Road in the city, passengers will be able to reach it easily from all routes

including rail, metro and road. Meanwhile, a 6-meter wide pedestrian bridge will be built by connecting the pedestrian bridge at Ram Mandir railway station. Also, a 12-meter wide foot over bridge connecting all the platforms will also be built. With all these facilities, Jogeshwari Terminus will be beneficial for passengers. However, citizens are worried due to the delay in the work. Due to the construction going on on the east side of Ram Mandir station, passengers at the railway station are facing difficulties.

Locals surround Narhari reservoir after Dindori accident; Who is responsible for the deaths of 'those' 9 people?

Coffee Table
News Network

Nashik : After 9 members of a family died in a well accident in Dindori, there was a lot of tension and anger in the area today. When Minister Narhari Zirwal visited the hospital to console the families of the deceased, angry locals surrounded him. "Who is responsible for these innocent deaths?" Citizens have demanded strict action against the class driver and the well owner, asking this. As soon as they reached Narhari Zirwal hospital, citizens expressed their feelings. Locals complained to the Zirwals about the lack of protection for the well, incomplete road work and negligence of the class management. "If the well had a net or a high wall, 9 lives would have been saved today," the villagers expressed their anger. Speaking to the media, Narhari Zirwal said, "Today is a 'black day' for Dindori. The death of nine people from



one family is a very serious incident. Strict steps will be taken to prevent such incidents from happening in the future. The well owner compounded the house, so why didn't he provide security to the well? Also, the municipality took the road to the well and ended there, it was necessary to have a protective wall there. He informed that a case has been registered against the well owner in this matter. The Dargode family from Indore village in Dindori taluka had come to Dindori town for a private class reunion. After the program was over happily, everyone was returning home in their 'Irtika' car (serial

number MH15-JS-1053). Around 10 pm, near Raju Raje's well in Shivaji Nagar area. The driver lost control of the car. After this, the car crashed directly into a well filled with water. As soon as the accident was heard, local citizens rushed to help. However, since the well was deep and filled with water, it was difficult to search for the car. Moreover, the darkness of the night was creating major obstacles in the rescue operation. As soon as the information about the incident was received, the administration, police and NDRF teams reached the spot. Finally, the car was pulled out of the

well with the help of a crane, but by then nine people inside had died. Meanwhile, a case of culpable homicide has been registered against the well owner Rajendra Raje in the Dindori accident case. On the other hand, Adv. Vikram Raje, a relative of the well owner, expressed grief over the incident. "This well is from 1972 and this well has provided water to the entire village during the drought. The well had a grate and angles, but someone removed them. We also demanded that the Nagar Panchayat install a grate on this road," he explained.

Naked body of missing businessman found in bushes; Suspected of being killed by a blow to the head

Coffee Table
News Network

Nagpur Crime News: A very shocking incident has come to light in the Wadi area of Nagpur. The naked body of a renowned machinery spare parts businessman who had been missing for the past few hours was found on Khadgaon Road in Lava area, creating a stir. The deceased has been named Suchit Bhojapure (44), and the police have expressed initial suspicion that he was brutally murdered. Suchit Bhojapure had been missing since Friday night. A missing complaint was registered at the Wadi police station after his family searched everywhere but could



not find him. Meanwhile, this morning, the body of a person was found by local citizens in the bushes at a deserted place on Khadgaon Road. On receiving information, the Wadi police rushed to the spot. The dead body was completely naked, and his vehicle or any other belongings were

not found at the spot. Due to this, the police initially faced great difficulty in identifying the deceased. Finally, when the police showed the photograph of the body to Bhojapure's family based on the missing person complaint, it was confirmed that the body was that of

Suchit. At this time, the outcry from his wife and two daughters was heartbreaking. Signs of a blow to Suchit's head with a heavy object have been found. Therefore, the suspicion has been raised that this is not just an accident but a premeditated murder. Suchit's father has filed a complaint with the police, stating that this is a direct form of murder. The Wadi police have started investigating the case very seriously. A dog squad was called to the scene to collect evidence. The murder of businessman Suchit Bhojapure has created an atmosphere of fear in the business community of Nagpur and the Wadi area.

The country's longest urban tunnel is in Mumbai! Thane-Borivali double tunnels will save time;

Coffee Table
News Network

Mumbai: Work on the Thane-Borivali double tunnel in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region will begin soon. This will create connectivity between the east and west parts of the city. The distance between Mumbai and Thane will be reduced. This route is 11.84 km long and the current travel time of 60 to 90 minutes will be greatly reduced. The Thane to Borivali double tunnel will pass under the Sanjay Gandhi National Park. Officials have assured that the construction will be done with

minimal damage to the forest area. Therefore, advanced tunnel boring machines will be used. This route is likely to reduce the travel time to just 15 minutes, and the aim is to complete this route by 2028. Currently, this route is 23 km long. Currently, while traveling from Thane to Borivali, one has to take the Ghodbunder route. However, due to daily traffic jams on this route, the journey takes one to one and a half hours. Therefore, this important tunnel will be of great benefit to the citizens. The work

of Goregaon Mulund Link Road started in March 2023. This work is likely to be completed by May 2028. Out of the 11.84 km route, 10.25 km route will be part of double tunnels. A machine named 'Nayak' will be used for digging underground tunnels. This is the only single shield hard rock TBM in the country. With the help of 'Nayak', this excavation will start soon. After that, the next excavation will be done by a machine named Arjun. The excavation will be safe with this tunnel boring machine. There will

be a total of three lanes in each underground tunnel. This also includes an emergency lane. Also, cross passages will be created at a distance of 300 meters to exit the tunnels. Also, fire extinguishing equipment, smoke detectors and LED-based information boards will be installed in the tunnels for safety. Meanwhile, connectors will also be set up on these routes. Ghodbunder Road in Thane will be connected to the Western Express Highway. This will improve connectivity in the area.

'Ratnagiri Passenger' will depart from Divya instead of Dadar, project currently delayed;

Coffee Table
News Network

Mumbai: Passengers will now have to wait indefinitely for the 'Dadar-Ratnagiri', the favorite train of the Konkan people. The Dadar-Ratnagiri railway will be started after the completion of the CSMT-Kurla fifth/sixth line project, which has been stalled for the last 17 years. When the railway administration was asked about the timeline of the project, it was said that it will be finalized after the completion of land acquisition, so Dadar-Ratnagiri is now likely to be delayed indefinitely. Prateek Goswami, who is holding additional charge of the General Manager of Central Railway, gave this information on Thursday regarding the record revenue growth in the recently concluded financial year. All senior railway officials were present at the program at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus. At this time, questions



were raised about the local delays on the Central Railway, the slow work of 15 coaches and Dadar-Ratnagiri. There is displeasure among the Konkan people since the Dadar-Ratnagiri Express was started on Divya. The number of passengers living in South Mumbai including Lalbagh, Parel and on the Western Railway is more. A direct question was raised whether this train will start from Dadar again due to high passenger demand. The work on the fifth-sixth line project is underway. The project

timeframe will be decided after the land acquisition for the project is completed. Currently, running this train from Dadar affects the punctuality of the suburban railway. After all considerations, it was decided to run this train from Diva station in 2021, explained General Manager Prateek Goswami. The Western Railway administration had refused to pay compensation to the family of the railway employee who died after falling from a local near Mumbai Central station while

going to Borivali. The Railway Accident Tribunal had also rejected the compensation claim. Finally, the Bombay High Court has ordered the compensation to be paid and the family has got a big relief after 16 years. After the Railway Accident Tribunal rejected the claim on March 5, 2021, Bharti Sonawane and her two daughters had filed an appeal through Advocate Mohan Rao. After the hearing, Justice. Rajesh Patil gave this decision on Thursday.

Thackeray's Shiv Sena is in trouble due to Congress's stance!

Coffee Table
News Network

Baramati: In the wake of the Baramati bypoll, developments in the state's political circles have gained momentum. In the same vein, the Congress is preparing to field candidates in the Rahuri and Baramati bypoll elections in the Mahavikas Aghadi, and this stance of the Congress is likely to create a dilemma for Thackeray's Shiv Sena. Should they support the Congress's stance as the Mahavikas Aghadi or should they respect the NCP's request to hold the Baramati bypolls unopposed and support Sunetra Pawar? This question has arisen before them. What decision will Thackeray's Shiv Sena take in all this? It will be important to see. (Rahuri and Baramati bypoll election) Regarding the fielding of Congress candidates in the Rahuri and Baramati bypolls, the Congress leaders in the state are seen announcing their position and then discussing with the party, without having much discussion with the other two parties in the Mahavikas Aghadi. It is reported that Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar called Uddhav Thackeray and requested him to support the Baramati



by-election. In all this, instead of going with the Congress party, the Nationalist Congress Party led by Sharad Chandra Pawar has supported the Baramati by-election unopposed. So what exactly will Thackeray's Shiv Sena take? Everyone's attention is on this. (Rahuri and Baramati bypoll election) It has been reported that Nationalist Congress Party President and Deputy Chief Minister of the state Sunetra Pawar called Shiv Sena Thackeray's party chief Uddhav Thackeray. It has been reported that Sunetra Pawar has requested Uddhav Thackeray to support the Baramati assembly by-election. It has been reported that Sunetra Pawar will also request Congress leaders for support. Meanwhile, the NCP has started efforts to make the Baramati by-election unopposed. Sunetra Pawar will file her nomination on Monday (April 6) and NCP leaders and ministers will be present at the time. (uddhav thackeray)

There are talks that the Congress party will field its candidate in the Baramati by-election, information came to light yesterday that the Congress had also interviewed some interested candidates for the election. The Congress party is also discussing the candidacy with other allied parties in the Maha Vikas Aghadi, and in the meantime, the NCP has started moving to make the Baramati by-election unopposed. For this, information has come to light that Sunetra Pawar called Shiv Sena Thackeray group chief Uddhav Thackeray. It is known that Sunetra Pawar has requested Uddhav Thackeray to support her in this election. (uddhav thackeray) Meanwhile, the Congress party is insistent on contesting the Rahuri and Baramati assembly elections. The Congress has started the process of fielding candidates in both these constituencies. Similarly, Sunetra Pawar and some NCP leaders will also

request senior Congress leaders and demand that they support their party. However, it will also be important to see what role Uddhav Thackeray will play after the request by Sunetra Pawar and NCP leaders. The NCP is trying to make this by-election unopposed. Baramati bypoll election: Voting on April 23, counting on 'this' day The by-elections for the Baramati and Rahuri assembly constituencies in Maharashtra have been announced. Voting for Rahuri and Baramati will be held on April 23 and the counting of votes will be held on May 4. The seat of Rahuri assembly constituency in Ahilyanagar district has fallen vacant due to the death of BJP MLA Shivajirao Kardile. Meanwhile, the late Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar died in a plane crash on January 28. Due to this, the seat of Baramati assembly constituency is vacant. By-elections have been announced for both these seats.

21-year-old youth runs a big business behind a massage center, two young women rescued by police

Coffee Table
News Network

Pune: A shocking example of what goes on behind the elite facade of the city has come to light in Kalyaninagar. It was reported that prostitution was going on in the Yerwada area under the name of a massage center. After this, a big racket was exposed in a police raid. This operation in a very posh area of Pune has created a stir. This center was running under the name 'Nira Spa' in the city's Ishwardham Apartment near Joggers Park. Although everything looks like a regular spa from the outside,

there was a different picture inside. The police had received information that prostitution was being offered directly to customers under the name of massage. To verify the veracity of this information, the police sent a fake customer and the type of thing going on there was revealed. As soon as the information was confirmed, the police raided it around 8:30 pm and took action. In this operation, the manager of the spa center, Armaan Rahimuddin Hussain, was arrested. It has come to light that this entire scheme is being run by this young man, who is just 21 years old. At

this time, the police rescued two young women from this trap. In the preliminary investigation, it has been revealed that they were lured into this business by showing them money. A case has been registered in this case at the Yerwada police station and action has been taken against the accused under the Immoral Trade (Prevention) Act. It is possible that some more people are involved in this racket and the search for a suspect named 'Raj' is currently underway. This operation was carried out under the guidance of Additional Police

Commissioner Manoj Patil, Deputy Commissioner of Police Rajnikant Chilumula and Assistant Police Commissioner Sunil Jaitapurkar. The operation was successful by a team of Senior Police Inspector Anjum Bagwan and Police Inspector Vijay Thakar. Meanwhile, anger is being expressed among the local citizens after it was revealed that such a business is running in such a posh area. "We should now keep a close eye on what is actually going on under the name of the spa center," is a demand being made by citizens.

Editorial...

A sorry state of affairs in Bengal

ECI and the state administration have much to answer for the mess around the election process. The deplorable incident involving seven judicial officers who were taken hostage inside a government building in central Bengal earlier this week during the special intensive revision (SIR) of the electoral roll-underlines the lacunae in the administration's preparation for the sensitive process, the deep politicisation of the poll campaign in a state where political violence is endemic, and the emotions that continue to run high over the controversial deletions of millions of names. All stakeholders must come together to lower the political temperature and tamp down on rhetoric. Calmer heads must prevail. First, the predicament of the seven judicial officers adjudicating cases of logical discrepancy under the SIR—who were confined for nearly 10 hours inside a Block Development Office's premises in Kaliachak, Malda—underlines the poor response and coordination of state government officials. Despite the protests beginning around 2:30 pm and growing increasingly restive, local officials dithered. Despite urgent communications from the high court registry to the state administration, no effective action was taken until late night. The officers were denied even basic necessities such as food and water, and senior officials, including the district magistrate and superintendent of police, did not reach the spot. Only the involvement of the Calcutta High Court chief justice finally pushed the director general of police and home secretary to intervene that too around 11 pm. The officers were released only around midnight, and even then, they were pelted with stones and assaulted with bamboo sticks while leaving the premises. The Supreme Court has rightly deprecated the "complete failure of civil and police administration" and taken top state officials to task, even as it ordered a probe. But some responsibility must also rest with the Election Commission of

India (ECI), which has not only transferred 480 officials in West Bengal—more than 30 times the number transferred in 2021 and 20 times the number transferred in the other four poll-bound regions—but also picked top administrative and police officials. If these officials have failed to act responsibly, ECI must take its selection of names into cognisance. Second, political violence in Bengal has proven difficult to uproot. This culture of dangerous escalation has been nurtured by political leaders of all ideological shades because it fulfils their short-term electoral goals. In a large and diverse state with many sensitive districts, political muscle not only incites clashes but also stymies genuine electoral churn and free-and-fair campaigns. The arrest of political leaders in connection with the violence in Malda only underscores the connection between the polls and violence—which must be severed for the sake of the state and its electorate. The apex court itself was forced to take note of the presence of political actors at the protest site, and said it had "not seen such politicisation in any state". This is a sorry state of affairs. And three, the protests in various parts of north Bengal and Kolkata signal that emotions are running high over SIR, which has been blighted by constant rule changes, a standoff between the state government and ECI, and a protracted process that now threatens to not finish before the two-phase assembly elections later this month. Questions have rightly been raised about holding the exercise close to the polls and the creation of the "logical discrepancy" category, as well as about Bengal being the only state where tensions simmered, and the stonewalling by the state government. Caught in this melee are ordinary people whose right to vote is now at stake. Violence can never be tolerated in a democratic country. Disenfranchisement can't be either

The price we pay for a free encyclopaedia

Coffee Table
News Network

The second most viewed page on Wikipedia in the past week was its entry on the blockbuster *Dhurandhar 2*. The excitement was the result of media coverage of a tussle between editors of the entry over whether to label the film "propaganda". So intense was the "edit war" that Wikipedia's founder, Jimmy Wales, was compelled to remind the editors in favour of describing the film as "propaganda" that the website is meant to uphold a "neutral point of view". When challenged, Wales conceded to the disgruntled editors that they could note that "reliable sources" had described the film as propaganda. Thereupon, these editors began copiously citing reviews in left-wing publications that described the film as "propaganda". Consequently, the term "propaganda" now appears over 25 times in the entry on *Dhurandhar 2*. By contrast, the term appears three times on the page for *Wolf Warrior 2* and only once for *Top Gun: Maverick*—films that were actively endorsed by governments in China and America. The *Dhurandhar 2* imbroglio underscores serious deficiencies in the

Wikipedia enterprise. The first is blindness to self-interest. Wikipedia prides itself on being a "free encyclopedia". What this really means is that its editors perform unpaid labour. Now, unless Wikipedia has miraculously solved the eternal question of how to make humans genuinely selfless, we must assume that editors who devote countless hours to writing, editing, and disputing entries on "contentious" topics have a strong interest in them in other words, they are likely ideologues or partisans. This worry is greatly exacerbated by Wikipedia's willingness to let editors use aliases. This means we must believe that Wikipedia's entries are produced by individuals who, unlike even saints, want no recognition for their charitable work. This is not the image that comes to mind, however, when one visits the clunky "Talk" section that underpins every entry on Wikipedia. Here, it becomes apparent that the decision-making process as to what is included in an entry can be rather arbitrary. The acronym-heavy discussions are dominated by "experienced" editors who can decide what the "consensus" view on a "contentious" topic is and thereby "close" discussions in favour

of their preferred point of view. This brings us to a third shortcoming. Wikipedia's leaders are conscious of the threat of bias (as Wales' intervention shows). The problem is that they try to combat bias through procedural rules. This is a mirage because rules have to be interpreted and applied. Thus, for example, editors who wanted to label *Dhurandhar 2* as "propaganda" worked around the "neutral point of view" rule that Wales stressed by citing another rule related to "due weight", which instructs editors to prioritise "reliable sources". In other words, the way to control the narrative in a Wikipedia entry is to cite sources favourable to one's interpretation as "reliable" (and to discredit as "unreliable" those that offer a contrary perspective), and to then "canvass" support among sympathetic editors, who then "protect" the entry from "disruptive editing" by challengers. The end result is not a marketplace of ideas but competition among cartels of cranks. Wikipedia's leaders have responded to this difficulty by providing a series of "dispute resolution" mechanisms crowned by the Arbitration Committee (ArbCom). But this approach is not designed to yield substantive

remedies. The members of the ArbCom, who also use aliases, focus purely on matters of procedure and conduct. They can, for example, "indefinitely" ban editors who egregiously violate Wikipedia's rules (though this does not prevent these individuals from resuming their old ways under a new alias, a technique known as "sock puppetry"). This leaves untouched the more subtleway of pushing a favoured narrative, which is to their emphasis the "reliability" of one's favoured sources and to demand that "due weight" be accorded to them. When such substantive judgment is exercised pseudonymously, it becomes difficult to detect whether an editor or indeed a clique is behaving maliciously. This is precisely why we expect courtrooms to operate publicly: It allows observers to evaluate biases and hold judges responsible for foul judgement. This deficiency raises a broader concern. What happens on Wikipedia no longer stays there. Because Wikipedia contains free and structured data, it has a disproportionate impact on the training imparted to Artificial Intelligence (AI) models. This means that the biases of its editors are likely to be propagated widely. It

is, therefore, insufficient to say that those who use Wikipedia do so at their own peril. Wikipedia defends itself against such criticism by pointing to the long-term advantages of "radical transparency". There are indeed studies that show that entries on Wikipedia tend to become less partisan in the long run, as new editors enter the fray and challenge obvious biases in existing entries. But this does not really help when Wikipedia and AI are used as they commonly are to quickly come to grips with current events and controversies. In such cases, the reader does not obtain the "wisdom of the crowd" but the self-interested views of advocates who are better organised and resourced, with the "truth" lagging behind as editors squabble and manoeuvre on the Stone Age interface of the "Talk" page. The criticism voiced here is not meant to imply that Wikipedia is a malign force. Its great value lies in the fact that it challenges credentialism and allows every individual to contribute to collective knowledge. Unfortunately, its rules have turned the great gift of freedom against itself. Rather than defeat gatekeeping, Wikipedia encourages a particularly

invidious form of it. The obvious remedy to this deficiency is to introduce a tincture of responsibility by requiring editors to verify and disclose their identity on the grounds that those who wish to contribute to a collective enterprise that deeply affects public discourse ought to do so openly. This course of action is, admittedly, not costless. The prospect of public criticism may leave some individuals unwilling to contribute to Wikipedia. For instance, an individual living in West Bengal may not feel free to openly contribute to the entry on the Trinamool Congress. Even so, the burden being imposed on such an individual is hardly unreasonable. Those who greatly value their privacy or security are not being denied a chance to speak, they can continue to write pseudonymously on other forums such as Substack or X. Nor should we forget the other side of the ledger—there is a very real danger that permitting aliases in order to protect speech can end up endangering Wikipedia's mission. It will, as recent events show, lead to Wikipedia being seen not as a repository of knowledge but of propaganda.

The US's unclear goals and endgame in the Iran war

Coffee Table
News Network

The much awaited address to the nation by US President Donald Trump turned out to be a damp squib. The world tuned in-eager to see whether Trump would announce an end to the war against Iran—but it instead got several minutes of the President's usual self-praise and little else. The fact that no dramatic announcements were made is in itself interesting, as it raises a key question: Why did Trump choose to speak, and what could be the end-effect of this? First, the speech was clearly aimed at rescuing the President's approval ratings at home, which have dropped sharply, with even the Republican approval falling from 52% in January to 43% now. Last week saw the largest non-violent march against Trump's policies. It is true that the 'No Kings' protest was not specifically against the war, but took aim at the sheer illegality of Trump's many actions, including starting a war without taking the UN route for this. If Trump expects that his rambling speech will fire up his Make America Great

Again (MAGA) base, with its juxtaposition of past, multi-year wars against the ongoing 35-day war against Iran, he has got it completely wrong. This could go on for decades, even longer than any other war in US history. Washington may indeed bomb Iran "back to the Stone Age", but a civilisational State will not forget. Expect a shift to unconventional war and decades of terrorism. This is not over till there is perception of victory for the other side as well. It is Iran in the driving seat, and everyone knows it. Second, the speech was preceded by dire warnings of the US wanting to pull out of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Nato) due to its complete refusal to back Washington. In his speech, Trump petulantly declared that those who used the Strait of Hormuz could defend it themselves. Hours earlier, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer had announced that he would be holding a virtual meeting of various countries, from European States to Nigeria and the UAE, to "assess all viable diplomatic and political measures...to restore freedom of navigation". (At least



40 countries, including India, attended the meeting and discussed potential joint action to open the Strait of Hormuz.) Separately, British military planners would later consider how to "marshal the UK's capabilities" to make the strait accessible, but notably, only after the fighting has stopped. However, the UK's military planners visited US Central Command to look at "options", indicating that a certain dependency continues. The official line is that the US has not been "directly" invited. Starmer says the UK will increase economic and security cooperation with the European Union with a summit planned. The "special relationship" with the US has been badly denied. Trump's "go get your own oil" stance seems to have backfired. These countries are doing just that. That's another negative. Third, even as he threatened further military action, Trump mentioned a more "reasonable leadership" at the helm in Tehran. A US peace framework remains secret, but apart from the usual demand of Iran having to end all nuclear activity and offensive missile programmes, the US also seems ready to offer assistance for a peaceful nuclear power programme. Meanwhile, China has also proposed a five-point plan with Pakistan that pointedly

calls for only civilian/commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz—in other words, there should be no US bases there needing to be replenished and defended by US warships. Iran's parliament has just passed legislation to impose tolls with a framework that includes Oman, but explicitly bars the US and Israel. It also wants war reparations and a strong security guarantee. Meanwhile, with the Houthis now active along the other exit through the Red Sea, oil and gas movement remains a huge bargaining chip for Iran. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's letter to the American people dismisses any Iranian threat to them and points to "strategic bewilderment". In the final analysis, Trump has no "victory" to announce, but then it was never clear what he wanted in the first place. Trump did speak of a victorious US army destroying a "powerful" Iran in his speech. But he wants a victory that he can televise and gloat over, which is why speculation continues on possible deployment of ground troops, to grab the alleged 440 kg stock of "near enriched uranium" or to occupy strategic islands just off the UAE's coast. Both, however, would

lead to heavy US casualties. The alternative is that either of these occurs as part of an agreement. After all, Iran agreed to "no stockpiling" before the war even began. This time, it will demand heavy reparations and a strong security guarantee. Such an agreement could be in the form of a strong financial pact which is, in fact, crucial to prevent a "forever war" headlined by terrorism, except that the Trump administration is ideologically incapable of understanding this. And security guarantees from the US are worthless without some form of international backing. In other words, a group of other countries will have to bail Trump out, so that he gets a good rating before the US mid-term elections. Ironic indeed, but that is precisely what a palpably tired US President seems to be asking for. It is perhaps time for India to confer with others over a possible UN General Assembly imposed ceasefire in Iran. It has been done before—the Suez Crisis of 1956, for instance. History may repeat itself, but this time only if Europe and China step up negative

Navy commissions N-powered, N-capable sub INS Aridaman

Coffee Table
News Network

NEW DELHI: The Indian Navy on Friday commissioned its newest nuclear nuclear-powered powered ballistic sile submarine, INS Aridaman, service during a ceremony kept under wraps in Visakhapatnam as it was built under a highly classified programme to bolster the sea leg of the coun try's nuclear trind the ability to launch strategic weapons from land, air and sea, top officials aware of the matter said.the navy It entered service on a day defence minister Rajnath Singh stressed that a powerful navy is "an absolute necessity" Hours before the Hours inducted the locally-built Aridaman, Singh made a rare acknowledgement of the steady expansion of India's deployed nuclear forces. It is the country's third Arihant-class submarine, and will serve as an undetectable launch platform for delivering warheads thousands o kilometres way."Shahd nahi

shakti hai, 'Ari daman (Aridaman is not a word but a symbol of strength)," be wrote on X The commissioning mony-the second of the day took place in Singh's presence, the officials said on the condition of anonymity. The defence min ister earlier presided over the commissioning ceremony for the stealth frigate, INS Taragiri. 'Tarag which will further boost the navy's ability to secure the coun-try's interests in the vast Indian Ocean Region (OR) where China is attempting to strengthen its hold. "Building a strong and capa Defence minister Rajnath Singh at the commissioning ceremony of INS Taragiri in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, on Friday. ble navy is not merely an option but an absolute necessity in today's times," Singh said during Taragiri's commissioning, hailing India's round-the-clock naval deployments in the IOR amid escalating global uncertainties. "Whenever tensions flare, the Indian Navy steps in to guaran tee



the security of commercial vessels and oil tankers. It is not only safeguarding India's national interests, but is also prepared to take every necessary measure to protect our citizens and trade routes across the globe. It is this capability that firmly establishes India as responsible and formidable mar itime power." India's fourth SSBN code named S-4", is likely to enter ser vice in 2027, the officials said. SSBN stands for ship submersi ble ballistic nuclear or nuclear powered ballistic missile subma rine. The United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China are the only other coun tries that

can deliver nuclear warheads from a submarine. India's first indigenous SSBN, the 6,000-tonne INS Arihant, was commissioned around 10 years ago and it successfully completed its first deterrence patrol in 2018, with Prime Minis ter Narendra Modi then announcing that the subma rine's success "gives a fitting response to those who indulge in nuclear blackmail."The fully operational subma rine then completed the sea leg of India's nuclear triad. Arihant is armed with B-05 submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) capable of delivering nuclear warheads 750 km

away, The navy commissioned its sec ond indigenous SSBN, INS Arig haat, in Visakhapatnam in August 2024. Aridaman is bigger than the two 55BNs inducted earlier and can launch longer range nge missiles. It is armed with K-4 SLBMs capable of striking targets up to 3,500 km away. These SSBNs will remain on con tinuous deterrence patrols and will be capable of launching nuclear missiles when the signal goes out from New Delhi. India already has the capabil ity to carry out nuclear strikes with fighter planes and land-launched missiles. The Agni series of ballistic missiles and

warplanes such as Rafales, Sukhoi-30s and French-origin Mirage-2000s can deliver nuclear warheads. India's nuclear doctrine, promulgated in 2003, commits the country to a "no first use" posture, with weapons to be used only in retaliation against a nuclear attack on Indian territory or Indian forces. It further states that nuclear retaliation to a first strike will be massive and designed to inflict unimaginable damage.India has more nuclear weapons than Pakistan, but Beijing's strategic arsenal is bigger than New Delhi's, said the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in a yearbook released last June. It pegged the number of nuclear warheads in the Indian arsenal at 180 as of January 2025 compared to China's 600 and Pakistan's 170.INS Taragiri is the fourth stealth frigate commissioned into the navy under the Rs 45,000-crore seven-ship Project 17A; the rest will be inducted by the year-end.

Nilgiri. Udaygiri and Himgiri were commissioned last year, and Mahendragiri, Dunagiri and Vindhyagiri will follow Taragiri into the navy this year. The P-17A platforms show case the country's warship International order.building prowess, have an indig enous content of 75% and come with modern weapons, sensors and systems to dominate the sea hattlespace. P-17A is a follow-on of the Shivalik-class (P-17) stealth frigates and represents a signifi cant upgrade over the previous warships 'INS Taragiri is capable of high-speed transit and can remain deployed at sea for extended periods. It is equipped with systems designed to moni tor enemy movements, ensure its own security, and if neces sary, deliver an immediate response." Singh said.The P-17A frigates are/will be equipped with modern weapons. and systems, including the BrahMos supersonic

cruise missile, the MF-STAR surveil lance radar, and the Barak -8 sur face-to-air missile system. The warships have a displacement of 6,670 tonnes, are 149 metres. long. can reach reach a top top speed of 28 knots and carry 225 per personnel The new platforms will boost the navy's operational capabilities and combat readiness in the 108, strategic maritime expanse where challenges. include China's carefully calcu-lated power play 5 power play for influence and defending the rules-based "We must not limit ourselves to safeguarding our coastlines; we must also ensure the security of critical sea lanes, choke points, and digital infrastructure that are inextricably linked to our national interests. Whenever India constructs and deploys advanced vessels such as INS Taragiri. It serves as a guarantee of peace and prosperity for the entire region. Singh said.

Congress split on Iran stand as Sharma says politicisation is national disservice



Coffee Table
News Network

NEW DELHI: Senior Congress leader and former Union minister Anand Sharma's praise for the BJP-led Centre's handling of the West Asia crisis drew a restrained response from his party on Friday, with Jairam Ramesh asserting that the Congress remains a democratic platform where diverse views can be expressed. Earlier, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor sparked a political row after he said that India's silence on the West Asia war is a responsible statecraft, not moral surrender. On Thursday, Sharma hailed India's diplomatic handling of the West Asia crisis as "mature and skilful", saying it has helped the country avoid "potential minefields". He also urged India to take

the lead in mobilising the Global South and strategic-partner countries to collectively work towards the restoration of peace and order in the region.This was at variance with the position taken by Congress leadership, which has raised serious doubts about the direction and credibility of India's foreign policy. The party was 'dissatisfied' with the response of the government's handling of the West Asia crisis' at a recent all party meeting convened by the Centre to discuss the same.However, Sharma in his statement said that national unity and a mature response guided by national interest is the need of the hour. "India's response must be backed by a national consensus and resolve. Government has held an all-party meeting to apprise

the leadership of political parties of the situation and policy decisions in an unpredictable and volatile situation.This national dialogue should be sustained. National unity and a mature response guided by national interest is the need of the hour," the Congress leader said.Asked about Anand Sharma lauding the Modi government's handling of the West Asia crisis, Ramesh said, "This is an example and it clearly establishes that the Congress is the only democratic party in the country."Sharma had described India's diplomatic approach as "mature and skilful", crediting it with steering the country clear of potential pitfalls, even as his remarks diverged from the party's broader stance on the

issue. Sharma has handled the commerce and external affairs ministries during the UPA regime. "The world cannot remain a mute spectator to the collapse of rule based multilateral order and global crisis management mechanism. India has throughout history commanded respect for its moral authority and commitment to peace. There is much at stake, especially the future of the younger generation," he said.Not just Sharma, former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath also put the party in an awkward spot with his remark that "there is no shortage of domestic LPG cylinders in the country but the government's arrangements on the issue are lacking amid the West Asia crisis.

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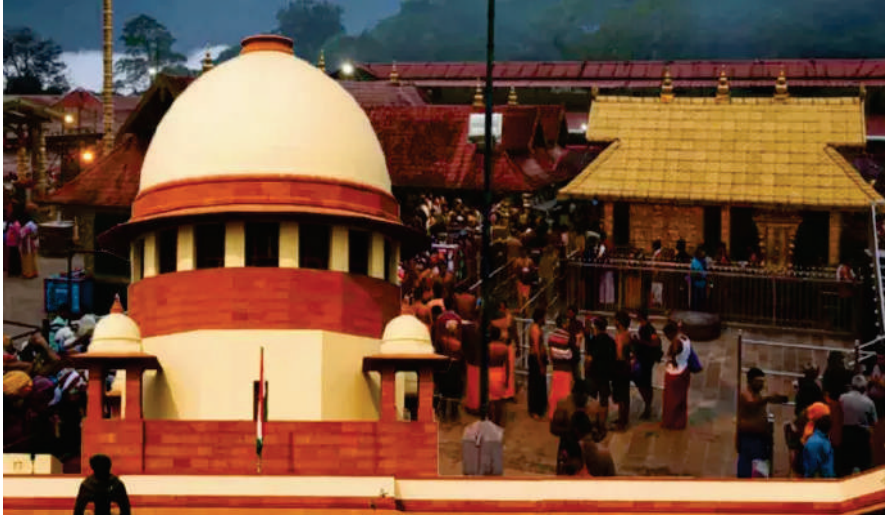
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Sabarimala Reference | Internal Autonomy Of Religion Must Be Protected : Jain Organisations Tell Supreme Court

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News Network

Certain Jain organizations have filed submissions before the Supreme Court in the Sabarimala Reference matter, contending that regulation of religious practices should be left upon adherents of the religion and a person belonging to one religion should not be permitted to challenge practices of another religion. The applicants contend that issues which concern the internal authority or autonomy of a religion to define and govern its own practices are protected under Article 25. They argue that whether a particular practice is religious or not is not for the courts to decide. Rather, it is for the religion's adherents to decide, unless there is a dispute between different factions within the religious denomination which cannot be resolved internally. "the State - whether in the form of the Legislature, Executive, or the Courts - ought not to have a role in defining, limiting, or adjudicating upon what a community genuinely holds to be its religious practice, so long as there is no dispute within that community which cannot be resolved through the internal mechanisms recognised in the religion of that community." As per the applicants, "religion is not a creation of the Constitution, nor is it an area whose legitimacy is derived from the State. Consequently, the creatures of the Constitution, viz. the Legislature, Executive, and the Courts, cannot seek to define the contours of an individual's religion. It is submitted that the State ought not to be permitted to determine what is protected under Article 25 by arrogating to itself the power to determine what is or is not a part of an individual's religion." The applicants aver that Courts cannot assume an ecclesiastical jurisdiction to decide disputes regarding religious practices. "the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom cannot be interpreted in a manner that authorises the State, or constitutional courts for that matter, to sit in an 'ecclesiastical' jurisdiction to determine the possible or appropriate content of a religion or religious practice." It is highlighted that Article 25, which guarantees freedom of religion, comprises the word 'practice' of religion, and not 'worship' of



religion, thus restricting the scope of interference. "Worship" would have confined the guarantee to ritual acts in a place of religious assembly. 'Practise', by contrast, extends to the full range of activities which a religious group genuinely holds to be mandated by its faith - including rites, ceremonies, observances, the administration and management of religious places of worship and endowments, and the conduct of daily religious life or whatever genuinely is practised as a religious practice, thus restricting the scope of the secular activities that the State may regulate or restrict." It has been contended that determination of the scope and ambit of religious practice is itself a religious practice, within the ambit of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. As per the applicants, Courts can interfere with disputes concerning religious practices only under two circumstances: (1) When a dispute between different factions within a religious denomination cannot be resolved internally. A civil Court may decide the issue to that limited extent by considering it as a question of fact, not law, and State (legislative or executive) shall have no role in this regard. (2) When the State passes a law impinging upon religious practices of a particular group, a constitutional court shall decide. Although, such interference must also be to a limited extent and the Court must not entertain a question whether a particular religious practice is integral, essential or part of the religion. "The proper test for legislative competence under Article 25(2) is not whether a practice is 'essential' or 'integral' to a religion as determined by a court, but whether it is genuinely held and observed by the religion... What the courts are required to determine is only whether the impugned action is actually traceable to the one of the grounds stated in Article 25, such as public order, morality, health, or 'other provisions of the Constitution'

based on a strict construction." The applicants also urge that the term "essential" was introduced in the Supreme Court's decision in Shirur Mutt, while it does not find place in any of the 6 grounds contained in Article 25 based on which State can interfere with religious practices. It is argued that if the subject activity is taking place inside the place of worship, then it is a religious activity. "The administration of the place of worship and the management of its finances is clearly a religious activity - protected under Article 26 - and cannot be interfered in by the State under the guise of Article 25(2)(a) of the Constitution." The applicants further contend, "In deciding whether a religious practice is 'part' of a religion, or only loosely 'associated' with it, the beliefs, scriptures, and tenets of the religion have to be considered. the deliberate use of the word 'social' - and not 'religious' - in Article 25(2)(b) makes it distinctively clear that the State may make laws only with respect to the social dimension of religion, not the religious dimension per se." It is also submitted that Articles 25 and 26 should be elevated to the status of being part of basic structure of the Constitution. The applicants state that there is interconnection between Articles 25, 26 on one hand and Articles 14 (right to equality), 19 (freedom of thought and expression) and 21 (right to life and personal liberty) on the other. Moreover, secularism, which has consistently been recognized as part of the basic structure, is also linked to freedom of religion. In the context of State acquisition of religious properties, the applicants distinguish between (i) properties which are themselves places of worship (such as natural sacred sites and created places of worship), and (ii) properties dedicated to a place of worship or religious denomination. It is

stated that the State cannot acquire naturally sacred sites, as they are irreplaceable and their sanctity is inseparable from their location. Properties dedicated to a religious denomination, on the other hand, may be acquired by the State under limited circumstances. 'Morality' should not be understood as 'constitutional morality' The applicants also argue that the term "morality" in Articles 25 and 26 is not be understood as "constitutional morality". A secular court cannot assume a "paternalistic" role by declaring a genuinely held religious belief as immoral, they claim. An example in this regard is given regarding position of Jain women in ascetic life - earlier, they were not allowed to renounce worldly life as monks, but over time, the position has changed through internal reforms within the religion. At last, the applicants emphasize that a person not belonging to a particular religious denomination ought not to be allowed to challenge another religious denomination's practices through a PIL. A 9-judge bench of the Supreme Court will commence hearing the issues raised in the Sabarimala reference on April 7. The submissions were filed by Githar Ganga, Jyot, Shree Tapagacchiya Atma Kamal Labdhisurwarji Jain Gyan Mandir Trust and Paushadhshala, Shree Mumbai Jain Sangh Sangathan, and Babu Amichand Panalal Adishwarji Jain Temple Trust. The intervention application of the Jain organisations has been settled by Senior Advocate Krishnan Venugopal. Earlier, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board also filed its submissions in the reference, arguing that it was not for the Courts to determine if any practice was essential to any religion.

Pay Commission Benefits Can't Be Denied By Creating Additional Conditions

Coffee Table
News Network

The Supreme Court on April 1 observed that the Central Pay Commission's recommendation cannot be loosely construed to deny a benefit to an employee by creating an additional condition to deny the benefit of the pay commission. A bench of Justice Pankaj Mithal and Justice S.V.N. Bhatti heard the matter concerning the respondents, who had initially joined the Border Roads Organisation in subordinate engineering cadres and were later redesignated as Junior Engineers following cadre merger. After completing 4 years of continuous service at Level 8 with Grade Pay of 4,800, they became eligible for Non-Functional Upgradation (NFU) to Level 9 (Grade Pay 5,400) as per



Seventh Central Pay Commission recommendation. However, the Government denied the benefit on the ground that only direct recruits to Level 8 were entitled to NFU, despite the Pay Commission neither prescribing such a restriction nor mandating that the benefit be confined to direct recruits. The Delhi High Court allowed the Respondents' plea and directed the extension of Level 9 benefit to them, leading to the Union's appeal before the Supreme Court. Dismissing the Union's appeal, the judgment authored by Justice S.V.N.

Bhatti observed that the Government had unjustifiably withheld the NFU benefit from the respondents by introducing an additional condition, namely, that only direct recruits to Level 8 would be eligible. The Court held that such a requirement finds no place in the Seventh Pay Commission recommendations and could not be imposed to deny the benefit. The denial of NFU on the ground that the Writ Petitioners have not joined the service with grade pay of Rs. 4,800/-, thus, introducing entry-level into the subject paragraphs of

Seventh Central Pay Commission Recommendations, may amount to adding additional conditions for extending the benefit of NFU.", the court observed. "The requirement appears to be from the plain reading that upon completion of four years of service in Level 8 and on the seniority-cum-suitability, a Junior Engineer is entitled to NFU. The insistence on the option with an entry-level Junior Grade at Rs. 4,800/- would deny a benefit recommended by the Seventh Central Pay Commission to the Writ Petitioners.", the court added. "The denial is not for valid reasons. Therefore, we see no reason to interfere with the Order under appeal. The Civil Appeal stands dismissed.", the court ordered. Accordingly, the appeal was dismissed.

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VIJAYAWADA: Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has termed the granting of legal status to Capital Amaravati a historic victory of the people, asserting that it reflects the collective will of both the State and the Centre. He further said the passage of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2026 in both Houses of Parliament marks a decisive moment in AP's post-bifurcation journey and brings clarity to the long-pending capital issue. "Capital construction is a long-term process. The development of Amaravati will continue in a phased and sustainable manner. Amaravati will emerge as an unstoppable and permanent capital. The entire area notified by the Capital Region Development

Authority will be recognised as the capital region now with full legal sanctity," he said, cautioning that any attempts to hinder the progress of Amaravati will not succeed. Addressing the media at his Undavalli camp office on Friday, Naidu said the bill on Amaravati received widespread support in Parliament. Naidu thanks Modi, Shah for passage of Amaravati bill in Parl. He expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah on behalf of the people of AP for the passage of the bill providing legal sanctity to Capital Amaravati. "With legal sanctity, Amaravati development will move forward with renewed momentum, paving the way for a stronger and more prosperous Andhra Pradesh," he asserted. Emphasising the emotional and cultural significance



of Amaravati, he said the capital was symbolically sanctified with soil and water collected from temples and sacred places across the country. He also recalled that the Prime Minister contributed soil from Parliament and water from the Yamuna River during the foundation laying ceremony of Capital Amaravati, symbolising national unity and support. Explaining the rationale behind

Amaravati's selection as the State capital, Naidu said it was based on the recommendations of the Sivaramakrishnan Committee, which identified the Guntur-Vijayawada region as a suitable location. He pointed out that the region's central location, cultural relevance, availability of water resources, and fertile land made it an ideal choice for establishing a capital city. "Farmers

voluntarily contributed around 34,000 acres without seeking monetary compensation, demonstrating remarkable trust in the government's vision. This is a unique example of public participation in a large-scale development initiative," he said. Andhra Pradesh aims to become a \$2.4 trillion economy by 2047 with Amaravati acting as a key growth engine as it is being developed

as a self-sustainable and monetisation-driven project, Naidu said. The Chief Minister alleged that the previous government had failed to make progress on key commitments related to the State bifurcation. After coming to power, the NDA government has secured funds for major projects such as Polavaram, Amaravati, Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, Railway Zone and Rayalaseema Horticulture Hub, he said. "People rejected conspiracies," Naidu said while he moved forward with planned development, the opposition had indulged in conspiracies to stall the progress of Amaravati. False narratives were spread branding the capital region as a desert, flood-prone and unfit for construction, and even letters were written to the World Bank to halt aid. Criticising the three-

capital proposal of the previous YSRCP regime, he said it only created confusion and division. The opposition had earlier supported the proposal, including proposing a large land base for the capital. However, their subsequent change in stand led to confusion and policy uncertainty, impacting the progress of the capital project, he explained. He further alleged that the previous regime halted ongoing works and disrupted progress. Large-scale construction activities came to a standstill despite significant investments and workforce deployment, affecting both development momentum and employment opportunities, he deplored. "People delivered a clear mandate in the 2024 elections, reaffirming Amaravati as the capital of Andhra

Pradesh. The verdict was a reflection of public confidence in the original vision for the State's growth and development," he said. "Telangana is my brainchild," Naidu clarified that he never opposed to Telangana, describing it as his "brainchild" and recalling that the Telugu Desam Party was founded there. The TDP supremo said he had earlier made it clear that he would take oath as Chief Minister only after the merger of seven mandals in Andhra Pradesh to facilitate the execution of the Polavaram Irrigation Project post bifurcation. The Centre also felt that inclusion of these mandals was essential for the execution of the Polavaram project. With his experience and support from the Centre, the merger of seven mandals was successfully completed, Naidu added.

New Delhi Municipal Council to build on Jan Vishwas Bill clauses

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NEW DELHI: The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) is set to align its enforcement approach with the Centre's Jan Vishwas Bill, 2026, which decriminalises over 1,000 minor offences and signals a shift towards trust-based governance. On Thursday, the bill was passed by both houses of Parliament. On March 30, the NDMC said that implementing the Unit Area Method (UAM) introduced by the bill could reduce property tax by 30 to 50%, particularly helping the old and self-occupied properties. Introduced by Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Jitin Prasada in the LS, the bill proposed many changes to the NDMC Act, 1994. Pointing out benefits of UAM, NDMC Vice-Chairman Kuljeet Chahal pointed out the reduction of



about 30 to 50% in property tax in the NDMC area and noted that the age factor will provide relief for older properties, and bifurcation will allow separate assessment of different portions of a property. Additionally, the bill proposes a complete overhaul of the tax structure, specifying that property tax will now comprise two components: building tax and vacant land tax, replacing the earlier Section 61 of the New Delhi Municipal Act 1994. The reforms aim to reduce the fear of criminal action for minor and

first-time lapses, replacing immediate penalties with warnings and encouraging voluntary compliance among citizens and businesses. In the case of the NDMC area, the shift could mean fewer punitive actions for minor violations such as documentation gaps or procedural delays. Officials also said that the emphasis will now be giving violators an opportunity to rectify mistakes before penalties are imposed. Under the framework, first-time and minor offences will invite warnings instead of

prosecution, while penalties, where necessary, will be proportionate to the severity of the violation to ensure balanced enforcement. In addition to that, the bill also proposes faster and transparent resolution of disputes through adjudicating officers and appellate authorities, a move that is expected to ease burden on courts and speed up grievance redressal. A dynamic penalty mechanism has also been proposed, under which fines will be periodically revised to remain effective and relevant over time.

33 prototypes shortlisted to fix Delhi's air pollution crisis

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News Network

NEW DELHI: Nearly 33 prototypes shortlisted under the Delhi government's 'innovation challenge' to address air pollution are set to enter the second phase of trials, officials familiar with the matter said on Friday. The shortlisted prototypes include solar-powered, pole-mounted dust traps; filterless devices that capture smoke, dust, and carbon; electrostatic mist sprayers; smart dust-suppression and monitoring systems; and retrofitted, vehicle-mounted air purifiers designed to improve the emission quality in cars. Selected from a large pool of applications, these innovations were showcased at the Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi in January this year as part of an exhibition. The challenge, launched by the Delhi government, seeks to identify practical and scalable solutions to tackle the city's air pollution. According to



an official, "The innovation challenge is now ready to enter the second phase. Trials will begin, and the government will provide the necessary infrastructure for their implementation." Another official said the trials are expected to commence in the first week of May and conclude within three months. An eight-member expert committee, led by IIT Professor Sagnik Dey, will evaluate the proposals to determine the most practical and cost-effective solutions to curb air pollution. The selected innovations will subsequently be

adopted by the Delhi government for operational use. An official added that a meeting will be held on Monday to finalise the trial framework and the arrangements for its execution. "The current plan is to proceed with trials for all 33 innovations. As the process advances, we will begin narrowing down the most effective technologies," the official noted. Additionally, according to the guidelines, winning projects will be eligible for incentives from the Delhi Pollution Control Committee,

including Rs 5 lakh upon successful evaluation by the expert committee and up to Rs 50 lakh for solutions verified by National Physical Laboratory-equivalent labs and recommended for government adoption. "Most effective" The shortlisted prototypes include solar-powered, pole-mounted dust traps; filterless devices that capture smoke. The plan is to proceed with trials for all innovations. The most effective ones will eventually be finalised

TMC seeks removal of Bhabanipur poll official; alleges proximity with BJP's Suwendu Adhikari

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KOLKATA: The TMC sought the immediate removal of the returning officer for the Bhabanipur assembly constituency in West Bengal, alleging he has a proximity with BJP candidate Suwendu Adhikari. In a representation submitted to Chief Electoral Officer Manoj Kumar Agarwal on Friday, the ruling party raised objections to the appointment of RO for the Bhabanipur seat in

southern Kolkata. The party alleged that the returning officer has a "documented and close association" with Adhikari, who is contesting from Bhabanipur against Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. Adhikari is also in the electoral fray from Nandigram in Purba Medinipur district. According to the complaint, the RO had earlier served as block development officer in Nandigram-II, where his proximity to Adhikari was allegedly visible in public engagements. The

TMC claimed that such an association creates a "reasonable apprehension of bias" and "compromises the neutrality" required for conducting elections. The party also questioned the RO's current posting as additional director of land records, stating that the position is typically held by more senior officers. The TMC alleged that his appointment to the role, particularly ahead of elections, raises concerns of "preferential and motivated



deployment". Emphasising the critical role of a returning officer, the TMC said the official is responsible for key electoral processes,

including nomination scrutiny, conduct of polling and declaration of results, and therefore must be "unimpeachably

neutral". Citing Article 324 of the Constitution and provisions of the Representation of the People Act, the Trinamool Congress argued that the

Election Commission is duty-bound to ensure free and fair polls by appointing officers without any perceived bias. The party also referred to the Model Code of Conduct, which mandates administrative neutrality, and alleged that the RO's continuation violates these principles. The TMC representation noted that the Election Commission had earlier sought a panel of three alternative officers from the state government,

following a complaint lodged on March 24. While the state complied, no decision has yet been taken to replace the RO, the letter, signed by senior TMC leaders Shashi Panja, Aroop Biswas, Baiswanor Chattopadhyay, claimed. Calling the situation "constitutionally untenable" and "electorally dangerous", the TMC urged the EC to take "immediate, reasoned and transparent action to ensure the integrity of the electoral process".

Trump admin seeks \$1.5 trillion def budget as war drives costs

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WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump asked lawmakers on Friday to approve a massive \$1.5 trillion defence budget for 2027, as the United States faces rising costs from its war with Iran and mounting global security commitments. The proposal would lift Pentagon spending by more than 40% in a single year the sharpest increase since World War II-as Washington seeks to sustain military operations and rebuild depleted weapons stockpiles. The request highlights the growing financial pressure of a conflict now in its fifth week, and sets up a political battle in Congress over how to fund a dramatic expansion of military spending. US media citing closed-door congressional briefings -have reported that the Iran war could be costing as much as \$2 billion a day, underscoring the scale of the burden even before longer-term reconstruction and resupply costs are factored in. To offset part of the increase, Trump is proposing around \$73 billion in cuts to non-defence spending roughly 10% "reducing or



eliminating woke, weaponised and wasteful pro-grams, and by returning State and local responsibilities to their respective governments". The president has framed the defence increase in urgent terms, arguing that military investment must take precedence during wartime, even at US aircraft carrier Gerald R. Ford receives supplies in Croatia. Iran war could be costing as much as \$2 billion a day. the expense of federal social programmes. "It's not possible for us to take care of day care, Medicaid, Medicare," Trump said at a recent private event, adding that such responsibilities could be handled at the state level while Washington focuses on "military protection." "Reckless foreign wars' Democrats swiftly attacked the proposal, with the

party's Senate budget leader Patty Murray warning it prioritised military spending over Americans' needs and accusing Trump of pursuing "reckless foreign wars". "Donald Trump might be happy to spend more money on bombs in the Middle East than on families here in America but I am not," she said in a statement. The White House released the request as part of a detailed 92-page budget proposal, alongside summaries outlining its priorities across federal agencies. The plan is not binding but 9/47 REUTERS serves as a statement of the administration's priorities as Congress begins drafting spending legislation, with lawmakers retaining the power to rewrite or reject it. Trump is urging Congress to approve the bulk of

the defence budget - more than \$1.1 trillion - through the standard appropriations process, while seeking to pass a further \$350 billion using a party-line mechanism that would bypass Democratic support. Republican leaders have shown openness to that approach, particularly as they push for higher defence and immigration enforcement spending. But the plan may face resistance within Trump's own party, where some lawmakers are wary of deepening federal deficits. The United States is already running annual short-falls approaching \$2 trillion, with total debt exceeding \$39 trillion, leaving limited fiscal space for new spending without further widening the gap.

Iran says 'no' to Islamabad's attempt to play peace broker, continues 83rd wave of counter strikes

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Islamabad's attempt to position itself as a mediator in the West Asia conflict has come to naught with the Iranian side refusing to meet any US led delegation in Pakistan, reports the Wall Street Journal. Iran has also called the list of demands from the US as unacceptable, pushing the possibility of an early resolution to the crisis to the back burner. Pakistan had staked its diplomatic heft by pitching itself as a mediator claiming to have been behind messaging to both the Iranian and US sides. However, it appears that with this significant trust deficit the Iranians are reluctant to let Islamabad play any role in negotiations. However, some hope was ignited as reports suggested that Iran could move towards a mediation effort brokered by Qatar, another key player in the region. Meanwhile,



tensions have escalated in the region after the reports of a missing US airman after a US aircraft was downed by the Iranians and the taking down of another US A-10 plane. US President Donald Trump withheld details regarding the potential US response should a missing crew member, forced to eject over Iran, be harmed or captured. The President declined to specify a course of action during a brief telephone interview with The Independent on Friday. When questioned by The Independent about the measures he might take if the airman is mistreated by Iranian forces, Trump stated,

"Well, I can't comment on it because we hope that's not going to happen." The Iranians say their forces have now executed Wave 93 of their retaliatory campaign against US-Israel. IRGC claimed to have dealt precise blows to critical Israeli military staging grounds deep inside the occupied territories. During this IRGC said that centres of gathering and combat support of the Israelis in Western Galilee, Haifa, Kafr Kanna, and Krayot were precisely hit. In what will spell further trouble for the US and its allies, Iran said it has the ability to sustain the current situation in the Strait of

Hormu for years. A senior Iranian security official told Press TV that Iran's heightened sensitivity over the strategic waterway stems from the fact that the majority of equipment used to supply US military bases and garrisons across the region has historically been transported by sea. "Iran has the capability to sustain this situation for years," the official said, referring to the effective shutdown of the strategic waterway to US and allied vessels. The official further stated that Iran believes it should no longer allow such logistical support to continue.

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