

Development works worth Rs 35,000 cr to be done for Simhastha Kumbh Mela - CM Fadnavis

Coffee Table
News Network

Nashik, Date 5: Various development works worth Rs 35,000 crores are being done to make the Simhastha Kumbh Mela to be held next year in Trimbakeshwar, Nashik, which was blessed by the touch of Lord Shri Ram, grand and unforgettable. Plans have been made to provide various facilities to the devotees and the guidance of saints and great men is important in this process, asserted Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. The two-day meeting of the Akhil Bharatiya Sant Samiti-National Working Committee concluded at the Shri Swami Narayan Temple in Tapovan. At that time, Chief

Minister Shri. Fadnavis was speaking. The program was attended by Kumbh Mela Minister Girish Mahajan, School Education Minister Dadaji Bhuse, Akhil Bharatiya Sant Samiti President Avichal Devacharyaji, Mahant Shri Gyan Devsingh Maharaj, Akhil Bharatiya Akhara Parishad President Ravindrapuri Maharaj, Sant Nivrutti Maharaj, Raosaheb Maharaj Gosavi, Purushottam Maharaj Dehukar, Ashok Tiwari, Shri Yatindranand Giriji Maharaj, Janardanahari Maharaj, Swami Sanvidanand Saraswati, Jitendranand Swami, Brahmashnand Maharaj, Rajendra Das, Mahant Durgadas Maharaj, Bhakticharandas Maharaj etc. Chief



Minister Shri. Fadnavis said that measures are being taken to ensure that devotees can bathe in the pure and flowing water of Godavari. Efforts are being made to ensure that the flow of Godavari is perennial at Trimbakeshwar. A water purification project has been undertaken for Kushavarta. Development works such as

Trimbakeshwar road, Nashik Parikrama road, facilities at the railway station, increasing the number and length of ghats, conservation of old temples, widening of roads leading to the temple, expansion of Ozar airport etc. have been underway. A decision has been taken to acquire land permanently for Sadhugram. All necessary infrastructure

facilities will be provided in Sadhugram, he also said. Similarly, the Nashik Trimbakeshwar Kumbh Mela Development Authority has been established on the lines of Prayagraj for the Kumbh Mela. A team of officials from Nashik had visited Prayagraj for the detailed and precise planning of the Kumbh Mela. This

year, ten times more devotees are likely to come as compared to the previous Kumbh Mela and planning is being done in that regard. While carrying out development works, suggestions from sadhus, mahants and akhadas will also be accepted, said the Chief Minister Shri. Fadnavis said. Stating that the power of saints is a noble power and that the saints have preserved Indian culture, the Chief Minister said that while other cultures of the world were becoming extinct, Indian culture survived. It is ancient as well as ever-changing. This is the specialty of Indian culture. The continuity of culture has been maintained by the saints who have kept aside the bad aspects of this trend. The Warkari

sect of Maharashtra has also faced many attacks and maintained the tradition of Wari. This tradition is reflected in the Kumbh Mela. The Kumbh Mela is the biggest festival of Indian spiritual culture. It is a festival of purification of the mind and soul. This is the festival of keeping the pollution of thoughts away and making Indian culture flow. Since devotees of all castes and religions participate in this festival, the Kumbh Mela is a symbol of national unity and Indian culture, he also said. Shri. Fadnavis expressed his belief that the Kumbh Mela to be held next year will be unforgettable as not only holy bathing is done during the Kumbh Mela, but also guidance and

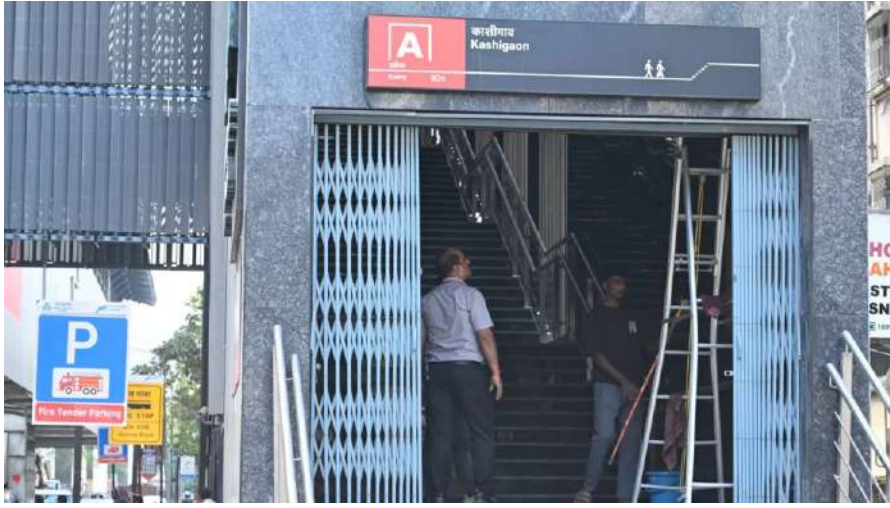
exchange of ideas from sadhus and saints. The Chief Minister said that the Maharashtra Freedom of Religion Bill will curb the wrongdoings in the society and strict action will be taken against those who commit fraud. At this time, Awichal Devacharya, Jitendranand Swami, Ravindrapuri Maharaj, Tushar Bhosale expressed their views. On this occasion, MLA Adv. Rahul Dhikle, Mayor Himgauri Adke-Aher, Deputy Mayor Vilas Shinde, Standing Committee Chairman Machhindra Sanap, former MLA Balasaheb Sanap, Municipal Corporation corporators along with sadhus, saints, and mahants from all over the country were present.

Big boost to infrastructure for Mumbai

CM Devendra Fadnavis to inaugurate Metro Line 9 and 2B, launch twin tunnel and pod taxis

Coffee Table
News Network

Mumbai's infrastructure projects are set to get a major boost as Chief Minister (CM) Devendra Fadnavis, along with Deputy CMs Eknath Shinde and Sunetra Pawar, is set to inaugurate and launch four key projects on Tuesday. At 10 am, the leaders will inaugurate Phase-1 of Metro Line-9 (Dahisar to Mira Road) at Dahisar East Metro Station. It will be followed by the launch of Thane-Borivali twin tunnel project using a tunnel boring machine (TBM) at 11.30 am in Manpada, Thane. An hour later at 12.30 pm, the leaders will head to the Diamond Garden Metro Station in Chembur, where they will inaugurate the first phase of Mumbai Metro Line-2B (DN Nagar to Mandale) and perform an e-groundbreaking



ceremony of the pod taxi project. Metro Line-9, connecting Dahisar East to Mira Bhayandar, is set to become operational soon. The corridor has been a long-pending demand of residents in the area. Pending works, including final touches at stations and escalators, are nearing completion after the line received the necessary safety clearance. The corridor was set for inauguration on Monday. However, it will now be inaugurated a day later. Once

operational, it is expected to greatly relieve commuters in the Dahisar-Mira Bhayandar belt. This elevated corridor is expected to improve north-south connectivity in Mumbai and reduce pressure on existing road networks by offering a faster and more reliable public transport option to daily commuters. The twin tunnels aim to enhance connectivity between Thane and Borivali, ease heavy traffic congestion on this busy stretch, and support smoother movement

of vehicles and metro services in the future. This modern, automated, and eco-friendly system is being introduced as a pilot project to provide efficient last-mile connectivity and help reduce road congestion in high-density areas. These initiatives are expected to significantly boost public transport in Mumbai and its suburbs, ease chronic traffic problems, and offer better commuting options to lakhs of residents.

War affects onion exports; Gulf markets fall by 45 percent

Coffee Table
News Network

The ongoing war between the US, Israel and Iran has directly affected the country's onion exports and it has been reported that the export of onions to the Gulf countries has decreased by about 45 percent. Onion exporters exported onions to Gulf countries in March 2026 through approximately 350 containers at a time when exports slowed down due to steep increase in container transportation costs due to war-induced situation. However, in March 2025, the same exports were up to about 600 containers. Globally, onion exports have also declined by



about 35 per cent, informed Vice President of the Agricultural Exporters Association The fare for container transportation has increased by a whopping ten times. Earlier, the container fare for the Gulf countries was between \$600 and \$700. Now that it has reached about \$ 6500, exports have become expensive. The demand for Indian onions has

come down as onions are reaching the Gulf market at lower prices. The central government should control the increase in container fares. Pravin Kadam, Traders Traders of Onions, Lasalgaon Market Committee, has demanded a minimum subsidy of 10 per cent for onion exports. Unseasonal rains and hailstorms in Lasalgaon district The cost of production is also not recovered from

the current market price of onion. It has become difficult to meet the children's education and household expenses. The central government should explore new markets including Gulf countries and take measures to increase onion exports.- Nivrutti Nyaharkar, onion grower web title: Latest news War's impact on onion exports 45 percent drop in Gulf market, read in Get Latest Marathi News , Maharashtra News and Live Marathi News Headlines from Politics, Sports, Entertainment, Business and hyperlocal news from all cities of Maharashtra.

Major Stalemate in Rafale Deal! France Refuses to Provide Source Code to India Due to Fear of Russia?

Coffee Table
News Network

Paris/New Delhi: A major hurdle has currently arisen in the agreement between India and France for the purchase of 114 Rafale aircraft. The United Arab Emirates has recently withdrawn from this project. This decision was

taken after France refused to provide the source code for the Rafale. A dispute regarding this matter is also currently underway between India and France. Ukrainian media outlets have claimed that France is refusing to provide the source code to India out of fear of

Russia. This claim has caused a global stir. India and France have entered into a \$35-40 billion agreement for the purchase of 114 Rafale fighter jets. However, this deal is currently stalled over the issue of the aircraft's source code. India is seeking complete control over the

aircraft's software, along with the independent authority to modify it. France, citing technical security concerns, has refused to provide the source code. International media reports suggest that Russia is the underlying reason for this stance.

Coffee Table

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Direct Contest Between Akshay Kardile and Govind Mokate Praja Tanpure Bows Out Citing Development Assurance

Coffee Table
News Network

Ahilyanagar: The Rahuri Assembly by-election, necessitated by the demise of BJP MLA Shivajirao Kardile, has now turned into a straight contest between Akshay Shivajirao Kardile of the Bharatiya Janata Party and Govind Mokate of the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar group). On the final day of filing nominations, Akshay Kardile submitted his nomination in the presence of senior BJP leaders and party workers. His candidature comes as the BJP seeks to retain the seat following the passing



of Shivajirao Kardile. In a significant political development, former minister Praja Tanpure, who was being considered a strong contender, announced that she would not contest the by-election. Speaking to the media, Tanpure stated that BJP leaders had assured comprehensive development of the Rahuri constituency,



which influenced his decision to stay out of the race. Meanwhile, the Sharad Pawar-led group of the NCP has fielded Govind Mokate as its official candidate. Mokate also filed his nomination on the last day, setting the stage for a direct electoral battle. Tanpure further highlighted that assurances were given regarding resolving key pending

issues in the constituency, including efforts to revive the financially stressed Rahuri co-operative Sugar factory and address broader public concerns. With Tanpure stepping aside, the electoral contest has now clearly narrowed down to BJP's Akshay Kardile versus NCP (Sharad Pawar faction)'s Govind Mokate. However, political circles remain keenly watchful of Tanpure's next move — particularly whom she chooses to support during the campaign. The Rahuri by-election is thus poised to be a closely watched contest with significant local and

Sharad Pawar in wheelchair, Jyoti Waghmare in Savitrimai's attire; 19 newly elected Rajya Sabha MPs take oath in Rajya Sabha

Coffee Table
News Network

Rajya Sabha: 19 new members of the Rajya Sabha, including NCP-SC Congress leader Sharad Pawar and Union Minister Ramdas Athawale, took oath as MPs. The oath-taking ceremony was held in the presence of Rajya Sabha Chairman C. P. Radhakrishnan. Deputy Chairman Harivansh and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju were also present at the ceremony. NCP Sharad Chandra Pawar Party President Sharad Pawar took oath from a wheelchair. Jyoti Waghmare arrived in the guise of Savitribai to take oath as MPs.



The newly elected members include five from Maharashtra in the Rajya Sabha. Manmohan Samal (BJP), Samridhi Mishra (BJD) and Dilip Kumar Rai (Independent) took oath as members from Odisha, while Constantine Ravindran (DMK), Christopher Manickam (Congress), L. K. Sudheesh (DMDK), M. Thambidurai

representing Maharashtra in the Rajya Sabha. Babul Supriyo Baral (AITC), Biswajit Sinha (BJP), Maneka Guruswamy (AITC), Rajeev Kumar (AITC) and Rukmini Malik (AITC) took oath from West Bengal. Most of the members took oath in their respective regional languages.

(AIADMK), Tiruchi Siva (DMK) and Anbumani Ramdas (PMK) took oath as members to represent Tamil Nadu. Most of the members took oath in their respective regional languages.

Elderly Couple Heading to Farm on Moped Crushed by Speeding Car; Only Daughter Left Orphaned

Coffee Table
News Network

Satara: An elderly couple was killed on the spot in a horrific accident that occurred on Sunday afternoon within the limits of Kalaj village (Phaltan Taluka) on the Lonand-Pandharpur Palkhi route. The couple was traveling to their farm on a moped. While they were crossing the road, a speeding car approaching from behind crashed into their two-wheeler. Both the husband and wife died instantly in the collision. The deceased have been identified as Balu Tukaram Gadhve and Pushpa Balu Gadhve. The impact of the car was so severe that the wife, who was seated on the back of the two-wheeler, was flung nearly 50 feet away and died on the spot. According to information provided by the Lonand Police, Balu Tukaram Gadhve and Pushpa Balu Gadhve—a farming couple from Kalaj village—had set out for their farm on a Luna moped on Sunday. As they were



crossing the road at the old Dombalwadi junction on the Lonand-Phaltan route, a speeding Tata Nexon car approaching from behind slammed violently into their two-wheeler. The collision was so fierce that Balu Gadhve was thrown from the vehicle and died instantly upon hitting the ground, while his wife, Pushpa—who was seated behind him—was flung approximately 50 feet away and also died on the spot. The Gadhve couple, who perished in the accident, were small-scale farmers. They are survived by one married daughter. As they did not have a

son, the couple managed their farming activities themselves. Fate struck them down precisely while they were on their way to the fields. This tragic incident has cast a pall of grief over the residents of Kalaj village. Upon receiving news of this horrific accident, Lonand Assistant Police Inspector Shivaji Jaypatre immediately rushed to the scene. Following the completion of the accident inquest, a case was registered against the car driver, Jindas Zhimal (a resident of Gangoti, Taluka Man, District Satara). Sub-Inspector

of Police Vishal Jagtap is conducting further investigations into this incident. In recent days, several horrific accidents have occurred on the Lonand-Phaltan Palkhi route. Tragically, some individuals have lost their lives in these incidents, causing this Palkhi route to become a death trap. The widening of the road has led to increased vehicle speeds; Furthermore, the fact that heavy vehicles are also speeding recklessly along the route has resulted in a surge in the number of accidents.

Driven by Anger, He Went to the Farm; 9th-Grade Wrestler Ends His Life

Coffee Table
News Network

Solapur: A shocking incident has occurred in Ule Kasegaon, located in the South Solapur taluka. On the day of the village fair, a 16-year-old boy—a budding wrestler—committed suicide by hanging himself in the fields after being asked to irrigate the crops while in a fit of rage. The incident has left the entire village in deep sorrow and shock. The deceased 16-year-old youth has been identified as Haridas Ashok More. The incident came to light around 8:00 AM on Sunday. Haridas was training in wrestling at the local "Talim" (training center) and aspired to become a professional wrestler in the future. He was a student in the ninth grade. On Sunday, as it was the day of the village fair, Haridas was eager to attend the festivities; however, his father suddenly



instructed him to go to the farm and water the crops instead. Angered by his father's directive, Haridas reluctantly headed to the farm to carry out the task. Yet, upon reaching the location, he hanged himself inside a corrugated metal shed situated within the fields. It is currently the summer season, and the intense heat poses a significant risk of crop damage. For this very reason, Haridas's father had told him to water the crops first and then proceed to the fair.

However, given that it was the day of the fair, Haridas initially refused to go to the farm. Eventually, yielding to his father's insistence, he rode to the farm on a friend's vehicle. Observing his anger and agitation, his family members grew suspicious. Consequently, his father sent Haridas's brother to check on him a short while later. However, by the time his brother arrived, Haridas was already found hanging—suspended by a rope from an iron angle inside the

metal shed on the farm. Upon discovering Haridas hanging, his brother immediately cut the rope and brought him down. The brother promptly summoned their father, and Haridas was rushed to the government hospital; however, the doctors pronounced him dead upon arrival. The incident has been officially recorded at the Civil Police Outpost. Haridas is survived by his parents and two brothers—one younger and one older.

We will defeat the Congress with no place to show its face; BJP warns of fielding candidates in Baramati bypoll

Coffee Table
News Network

In the wake of the Baramati by-election, BJP state president Chandrashekhar Bawankule took a strong attack on the Congress. "The Congress should not contest the elections in Baramati. If they fight, we will defeat them in such a way that they will have no place to show their face," he said. Bawankule made an emotional appeal to the Congress referring to Ajit Pawar's political journey. "Most of Ajit Dada's political life has been with the Congress. Their relationship, association and work history are linked to the Congress. Therefore, if the Congress wants to preserve some political values, then it should not contest elections in Baramati and stand with Sunetra Pawar," he said. He made a big claim about the victory in Baramati. "We will go to Baramati and file our nomination papers for Sunetra Pawar. We



will win in Baramati with more than 75 per cent votes. The Congress will face such a big defeat here as it has never been," he said. Talking about Sharad Pawar's role, he said, "He should clarify his stand. But the BJP's stand is very firm. The Congress should not contest elections in Baramati," he said. Meanwhile, on the occasion of the foundation day of the BJP today, he also made important statements about the party organization. "Expansion and

strengthening of the party is our main objective. In Pune and in the state, the BJP has pledged to take its organisation to more than 51 per cent across the country. We will connect the youth with the party on a large scale. We are constantly striving to strengthen the organisation across the state," he explained. He took a cautious stand on the Ashok Kharat case. "This matter is sensitive. It is not right for activists like me to comment on

this in front of the media. Action will be taken according to the findings of the SIT. If the officers are found guilty, they will be dismissed," he said. Meanwhile, on the demand of the Congress to file a case in Ajit Pawar's accident, he said, "Such demands are being made keeping the elections in mind. But the people of Baramati will win Sunetra Pawar with a huge margin and the Congress will get a big blow," Bawankule claimed.

12 'Missing Link' projects in Pune set in motion, Baner-Pashan Link Road to be completed

Coffee Table
News Network

PUNE: The Baner-Pashan link road is likely to be completed soon to ease traffic congestion in Baner-Balewadi and Pashan areas. Only a 200m stretch of the project which has been pending for three decades has been stalled. The BMC has started the process of appointing a contractor to complete it. While most of the work on the 1.2-kilometre-long road has been completed, the central stretch was stalled due to land acquisition issues. The road was sanctioned in 1992 and the actual work started in 2014. However, the pace of the project slowed down due to increasing complexities in land acquisition. This road is included in the 'Missing Link'



scheme of the BMC. Municipal Commissioner Naval Kishore Ram had said that the target is to complete 12 of the 33 missing link roads in the current year. At the same time, Ram had also said that necessary funds have been made available for land acquisition. In 2021, the Baner-Pashan Link Road Welfare Trust had approached the high court in this case. In April 2025, the BMC took a strict stand and directed to acquire land in two

months and complete the road in four months due to delay in the work despite the court's order to submit a time-bound programme. The BMC has collected Rs 25 crore from the district administration for land acquisition and preparations have been made to start the work immediately after getting the land acquisition. For this, the process of appointing a contractor has been started. Azad Hind

Express (Kolhapur), Gondia Maharashtra Express, Pune-Ahmedabad Express, Veraval Express, Bhagat Ki Kothi Express, Pune-Bhuj Express, Ernakulam Express, Purna Express, Darbhanga Express, Nagpur Express, Gorakhpur Express, Dhanbad Express, Hazrat Nizamuddin Express, Ahmedabad-Kolhapur Express, Nagpur-Kolhapur Express, Kolhapur-Mumbai Special.

Ahmednagar Merchants Co-op Bank Continues Strong Financial Performance Tradition : Hastimalji Munot

Gross Profit at ₹26.78 Cr; Deposits Reach ₹1,622.32 Cr

Coffee Table

News Network

Ahilyanagar: The Board of Directors of Ahmednagar Merchants Co-operative Bank Ltd., Ahmednagar has approved the unaudited financial results for the year ending March 31, 2026. Continuing its tradition of excellence, the bank has demonstrated steady growth, transparent operations, strong financial discipline, and a robust financial foundation. During the financial year,

the bank prioritized customer welfare by reducing interest rates on loans, providing significant relief to borrowers and boosting customer satisfaction. The bank was also accorded Scheduled Bank status by the Reserve Bank of India, informed Founder and Chairman Hastimalji Munot. Despite offering interest concessions worth 25.39 crore to customers, the bank recorded a gross profit of 26.78 crore, reflecting its balanced and

customer-centric approach. After making all necessary provisions as per income tax and RBI norms, the bank achieved a net profit of 7.44 crore. The bank reported significant growth in its business operations this year. Total deposits rose to 1,622.32 crore, marking an increase of 160 crore compared to the previous year. Total loan disbursement stood at 1,049.12 crore, with an increase of 81 crore. CASA deposits also registered a notable rise of 66



crore. Asset quality improved considerably, with Net NPA reduced to around 0.63 percent. Adequate and strong provisioning has been made against NPA accounts. The bank's solid

financial position is further reinforced by reserves of 271.81 crore (currently around 287.65 crore), strengthening depositor confidence. Chairman Hastimalji Munot stated, "While safeguarding

customer interests, the bank has achieved strong profitability, robust reserves, and near-zero NPAs. We remain committed to delivering secure, transparent, and reliable services with technological advancement. The contribution of directors, officers, and employees has been invaluable in this success." Director CA Ajay Mutha highlighted the bank's focus on technological upgrades. Plans are underway to introduce modern

digital banking services such as new core banking software, UPI direct membership, contactless card services, cardless cash withdrawal, and e-mandates, aiming to provide faster, safer, and more convenient services to customers. Vice Chairman Amit Mutha noted that the bank has started offering corporate banking services in line with changing times. Expansion of the main branch is also in progress, with a spacious 'Head Office Annex'

being developed at Daalmandai. He added that the bank remains committed to sustainable growth, modern services, superior customer experience, and financial inclusion. The bank's consistent performance, transparent governance, and customer-focused policies continue to strengthen the trust of depositors, customers, and members, taking it to new heights of progress.

Akshay Kardile Files Nomination for Rahuri By-Election; Emotional Tribute to Late Shivajirao Kardile

Coffee Table

News Network

Ahilyanagar: Following the demise of senior BJP leader and former MLA Shivajirao Kardile, the Rahuri Assembly by-election has gained momentum with his son, young leader Akshay Kardile, filing his nomination as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate. Several prominent leaders were present on the occasion, including Legislative Council Chairman Prof. Ram Shinde, BJP State President Ravindra Chavan, Guardian Minister Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil, Mayor Jyotitai Gade, former Minister Babanrao Pachpute, MLAs Suresh Dhas and Monika Rajale, along with senior leaders Subhash Patil, Kashinath Lawande, Alkatatai Kardile, Mahendra Gandhi, Sandeep Kardile, and Uday Singh Patil. Before



filing his nomination, Akshay Kardile paid tribute to his late father Shivajirao Kardile by offering respects to his portrait. In an emotional moment, his mother Alkatatai Kardile performed a traditional ritual and blessed him. Akshay Kardile was visibly moved as he embraced his mother, a moment that left many present emotional. Party workers raised slogans

of "Shivajirao Kardile Amar Rahe," energizing the atmosphere. Speaking on the occasion, Akshay Kardile said, "I am filing my nomination for the Rahuri Assembly by-election from my father's seat. Over the past 30-35 years, my father built a deep, familial bond with the people. Today, that entire responsibility rests on me. This is the first election of my

life, and the biggest pain is that my father is not with me. However, I am determined to carry forward his legacy and work tirelessly to serve the common people." The nomination filing event has intensified the political atmosphere in the Rahuri by-election, with BJP workers showing strong enthusiasm and support for their candidate.

Ensure Accurate Completion of Census Work District Collector Dr. Pankaj Ashiya

Coffee Table

News Network

Ahilyanagar, April 6: Preparations for the upcoming Census 2027 have gained momentum in the district, with authorities gearing up for a fully paperless and digital enumeration process. District Collector Dr. Pankaj Ashiya has directed all appointed officers and staff to thoroughly understand the technical aspects through training and ensure that the census work is completed accurately and within the stipulated time. A district-level training program for the census is currently underway at the Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology. Dr.



Ashiya visited the training centre to review the preparedness and interacted directly with trainee officers, offering guidance and clarifying operational aspects. He emphasized that there should be no errors in the census process and that transparency must be strictly maintained. Officials were instructed to effectively use digital tools and gain a clear

understanding of data collection methods. He also advised them to promptly address challenges faced during fieldwork and ensure smooth execution through coordination and accountability. Under this initiative, intensive training is being conducted in three phases from April 6 to April 15, 2026. A total of 142 field trainers will be trained by four master trainers, with practical demonstrations forming a key part

of the program. Senior officials present on the occasion included Municipal Commissioner Yashwant Dange, Resident Deputy Collector Dadasaheb Gite, Tehsildar Nagesh Gaikwad, and Chief Officer of Jamkhed Municipal Council Ajay Mahadev Salve, along with officials from various departments, master trainers, and a large number of trainees.

Government Assures Full Support to Acid Attack Survivor: Minister Aditi Tatkare

Coffee Table

News Network

Shirdi : Maharashtra's Women and Child Development Minister Aditi Tatkare visited the acid attack survivor from Vadgaonpan in Sangamner taluka at Pravara Rural Hospital on Sunday and interacted with her and her family members. Condemning the heinous incident, the minister assured that the state government stands firmly behind the victim and will bear the entire cost of her medical treatment. According to doctors, the girl's condition is currently stable. However, due to her young age and sensitive skin, she



will require further treatment and a surgical procedure in the coming days. Special counseling sessions have already been initiated to support her mental well-being, and discussions were held to continue this support with the help of local medical professionals. Guardian Minister Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil has also assured that no

financial burden of treatment will fall on the victim's family. Under the Women and Child Development Department's Manodhairya Scheme, immediate financial assistance of 1 lakh will be provided to the victim. Additionally, 3 lakh has already been granted to the family as interim relief under the Victim

Compensation Scheme 2022. Minister Tatkare stated that she has been in constant touch with the police administration since the day of the incident. Efforts to trace the accused are underway at a fast pace with the help of multiple agencies. She also appealed to the family to share any additional information with the police and communicate any further expectations they may have. Family members of the victim, along with local representatives and senior police officials, were present during the visit.

Adv. Akash More Files Nomination as Congress-RSP-VBA Joint Candidate from Baramati

Coffee Table

News Network

Mumbai / Baramati : Adv. Akash Vijayrao More has officially filed his nomination for the Baramati Assembly by-election as the joint candidate of the Congress, Rashtriya Samaj Paksha (RSP), and Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA). More, who serves as Secretary of the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Party, submitted his nomination in the presence of several senior leaders and party workers. Prominent attendees included Pune Rural District Congress Committee President Srirang Chavan, Working President Lahu Anna Nivangune, Baramati City Congress President



Ashok Ingule, General Secretary Rahul Wable, Kamalakar Satav, Govind Mirge, Pune District Youth Congress President Veerdhaval Gade, RSP District President Kiran Gopane, Corporator Amol Satkar, along with a large number of office-bearers from Congress, RSP, and VBA across Pune district. The Congress party had earlier announced that it would contest the

Baramati by-election if the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar faction) chose not to field a candidate. Following this stance, state Congress President Harshvardhan Sapkal held discussions with RSP leader and former minister Mahadev Jankar and VBA leader, former MP Prakash Ambedkar. Subsequently, the Rashtriya Samaj Paksha extended its

support to Congress, while the Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi also joined the alliance for the by-election. The Congress has fielded Adv. Akash More under its guiding principle of "Fight for Democracy, Path of the Constitution." A practicing lawyer by profession, More also carries a political legacy—his father, Vijayrao More, previously served as a Member of the Legislative Council from the Congress party. The Baramati by-election is now expected to witness a multi-cornered contest, with the Congress-led alliance aiming to consolidate its position in the constituency.

A Treasure Trove of Digital Portraits

Pranav Satbhai's Art Exhibition Draws Enthusiastic Response in Pune

Coffee Table

News Network

Pune: The seventh portrait exhibition by young Nashik-based artist Pranav Satbhai concluded in Pune with an overwhelming response from art lovers and dignitaries. The five-day exhibition was held at the Raja Ravi Varma Art Gallery, located opposite the Mahatma Phule Museum. Around 80

remarkable portraits were showcased, captivating visitors with their realism and emotional depth. Pranav's signature style—marked by intricate detailing, lifelike expressions, and a strong emotional connect—received high appreciation. Visitors noted that the exhibition attracted true art connoisseurs, making it a case of "quality over

crowd." The exhibition was inaugurated in the presence of notable personalities including Vaibhav Joshi, Mamta Sapkal, Ramesh Pardeshi, Aniket Amte, Dr. Dhananjay Deshpande, Rashmita Shahapurkar, and Rutuja Shirode, along with the artist's family members who extended constant support throughout



the event. Pranav Satbhai holds two world records for his extraordinary work—creating 1,000 portraits in a year,

and then surpassing his own record by producing 1,500 portraits the following year. His achievements have

earned him accolades such as the Asian Youth Icon Award and the India Talent Award. A special highlight of the exhibition was a dedicated section in memory of Ajit Pawar, where his portrait and moments from past interactions were showcased, adding an emotional dimension to the event. Several prominent personalities from

various fields visited the exhibition and appreciated the artist's work. Among them were Yajuvendra Mahajan, Rachana Ranade, Pravin Tarde, Raj Deshmukh, Raju Kaje, Sanmita Dhapte Shinde, Neelima Deshpande, Mangesh Chivate, Amar Oak, Someshwar Choughule, Sharad Tandale, Meghraj Bhosale, and Shefali Vaidya. The

exhibition has left a significant mark on Pune's art scene, with the enthusiastic response providing fresh momentum to Pranav Satbhai's artistic journey. The closing ceremony was marked by the presence of health ambassador Mangesh Chivate, bringing the successful event to a memorable conclusion.

Editorial...

The debt burden on democracy

Electoral populism is reducing the ability of states to meet their financial commitments. Indian politics is a polarised space, but only in the social realm. While political parties often trade charges with each other on questions of religion and caste, there is one area where they have been near unanimous in the last decade or so: The growing use of cash transfers of all varieties to generate tailwinds for their campaign. This strategy is almost ubiquitous at the level of state governments. It has created problems both in the present, and more worryingly, the future. The former is seen in the deteriorating fiscal ability of states to meet their current commitments. Bihar, which implemented a large cash transfer to women scheme before the November 2025 elections, is now struggling to pay salaries and pensions. Maharashtra also suffered large-scale fiscal turbulence after its 2024 elections, which were preceded by the roll-out of a cash transfer scheme for women. None of this has stopped states, or parties, from promising more or higher cash transfers in the current election cycle. States' debt burden is growing as they are borrowing more to finance a lot of such schemes. This debt will have to be paid eventually. Essentially speaking, this amounts to burdening future generations for

profligacy of the present one. The present and the future part of the problem is connected by the bridge of bond markets. As state governments raise more and more debt, bond yields are rising. The situation has become worse thanks to the ongoing geopolitical crisis where the war in West Asia has triggered an unprecedented oil shock. Rising bond yields squeeze monetary policy's ability to keep overall interest rates low. Higher interest rates generate headwinds for near-term growth, which will worsen incomes, and generate more demand for economic palliatives. The fact that all government borrowing in India is treated as sovereign means that there is no incentive for states to observe prudence in matters of borrowing. All of this put together has created a vicious circle of political economy and fiscal hangover. Every economic disruption worsens matters. As India loses its demographic advantage of a higher share of the working population, things will become even more difficult. Solving the problem will not be easy. Political parties are most interested in retaining power. The cash transfer model promises them maximum attribution. But not resolving the problem is tantamount to making democracy a ponzi scheme. A key focus. Let it begin from Gadchiroli.

Better compensatory afforestation needed

The approval granted to a compensatory afforestation proposal against the clearing of forest land in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district underlines much that is wrong with the policy. The proposal is to offset the destruction of a 937-hectare, unbroken block of dry deciduous forests in the district through an afforestation effort involving 23 patches of land about 1,000 kilometres away from the Gadchiroli site, in another considerably forested region (though with very different vegetation) on the Konkan coast. Compensatory afforestation in India remains blinkered in practice. In focusing primarily on the carbon-sink role of forests, it loses sight of several ecological realities that define the natural biological assemblage within a region, their impact on the biome, and the role their continued presence plays in the region's natural health. For decades, compensatory afforestation in India was associated with plantation monoculture, often

with tree species unsuitable for the ecology across large swathes of the country. The effects of such afforestation in terms of biodiversity loss and collapsing ecological systems have been documented. That has started to change, following grassroots activism and growing realisation within policy circles about the long-term harm of monoculture. But the Gadchiroli example underscores a persisting myopia — even if the afforestation effort considered the ecological realities of the replacement sites in the Konkan region, the nature of the vegetation (wet deciduous to near-evergreen) varies significantly from what will be lost at the Gadchiroli site. So, in practice, the compensatory effort will focus on acreage rather than the ecological side of the forest loss. Policy must find an honest balance between ecological and developmental imperatives. For that, compensatory afforestation as a policy will need serious refining, making the ecological non-equivalence problem

The founding vision of India's democracy and Bengal SIR

Coffee Table
News Network

To have millions of people not know whether they'll be allowed to elect their representative would have been unimaginable to the founders of the Republic. It threatens to mark these Bengal elections with a permanent asterisk. When India stepped into freedom in the autumn of 1947, democracy was deemed by many to be a doomed project — nowhere had such an impoverished country managed to even feed its own people and staved off external aggressors. Yet, that anxiety didn't stop India's founding fathers and mothers from bestowing on the country an extraordinary promise of universal adult franchise. The renders of the young nation became voters before they became citizens. Beginning November 1947, bureaucrats in the Constituent Assembly Secretariat (CAS) worked under the guidance of BN Rau to realise the dream of universal suffrage. It was an audacious experiment. Britain took nearly three centuries to extend the vote to all its adult citizens. The US still didn't have every citizen as equal. In anticipation of a Constituent Assembly election two years away, a small group of

officials pushed the frontiers of democratic imagination in a country wounded by Partition, and harbouring 82% illiteracy. In the face of the killing of nearly two million people, the displacement of another 15 million, and the ongoing integration of 552 princely states, India's still-nascent governmental machinery succeeded in breathing life into philosophy by building the country's first voter roll. As noted by historian Ornit Shani in *How India Became Democratic*, it was a fraught exercise, but officials and governments showed imagination and flexibility, moving away from colonial prerogatives of keeping the voting rolls small and manageable. Especially the question of refugees and women officials built an expansive idea of a voter, focusing on inclusion over inadvertent exclusion. Governments asked officials to go out and register voters to inform people in the villages of their democratic rights days beforehand, and to come at a time people were likely to be home. They discarded previously institutionalised attempts at restricting women and poor people, lowering qualification requirements to broaden the base. Especially on the

question of refugees who sat on the knife's edge of statelessness, the CAS devised ingenious modes of inclusion. It engaged with civic associations, working against state governments reluctant to register migrants, and allowed registration

wrote. Eventually, when the elections began in 1951, the rolls had stood the test of time, been republished and refined, and went on to serve as a model for other young democracies in Asia and Africa. For a country that navigated such treacherous terrain

out, no clear reasoning has been given to individuals whose inclusion decisions have been pending even as reports have blamed faulty software and translation gaps from Bengali to English. The reversal of the burden of proof, putting the onus of proving

prerogative to clean and update its rolls — just as it has done since Independence. There is also no evidence to back claims that SIR helps identify dubious voters in the system. But the urgency of the SIR so close to the polls — despite the world's largest general elections being held on an older roll two years ago — remains unexplained. Since Shyam Saran Negi walked to his booth in the autumn of 1951 in the mountain village of Kalpa in Himachal Pradesh, being India's first voter, elections have been both a festival and a sacrament in India. At the heart of the process is the voter. The first roll — prepared in waiting for a republic yet to emerge — not only forged a national unity but also turned citizenship and voting into something material, an article of faith. It deepened equality below law and among people, and refused to let either the wrongs of history or the anxieties of the present sully the promise of its future. To have millions of people not know whether they'll be allowed to elect their representative would have been unimaginable to India's founders. It threatens to mark these Bengal elections with a permanent asterisk.



on a mere declaration of intent to stay in their constituency. Assam government slowed the registration, in the face of court orders, and strict informal checks and a deadline, the CAS responded to hundreds of letters and sent instructions to state authorities. When the government of Central Provinces and Berar refused to accept self-declarations or the government of Madras refused to register refugees from Hyderabad, the CAS intervened and ordered corrective action. Across the country, the CAS responded to complaints of abuse and overreach by summoning senior officials, Shani

seven decades ago, it is indeed strange to witness a major state headed to elections with a shadow looming over the voting rights of millions of people. Yet, that is what the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls has unfortunately done in West Bengal. Of the six million people put under a nebulous 'logical discrepancy category', the fates of five million people have been decided. There are no consolidated numbers of how many are in and how many out amid complaints of technical glitches and error-strewn rolls; there is no road map for when the rest of the adjudications will be

citizenship on the most vulnerable, is part of a worldwide phenomenon where any move to widen the franchise is seen with suspicion. Problems as mundane as faulty spellings of names or letter mismatches in a country where government documents are ubiquitous tools for such discrepancies. It now seems reasonable to assume that millions of people who would otherwise be at the polling booths this month, and had voted just two years ago in general elections, will be deprived of their right. This is not by design. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has the

A little bit of Japan in the lives of Indians

Coffee Table
News Network

'Let's go to Japan,' I casually asked the missus a few months ago, with some guilt that husbands typically carry — some residual shame for performing poorly in one of the roles assigned to you. Hence, you make up for it by popping such proposals. Mine was received well. The next step was to produce 37 kgs of documentation to prove my intentions of visiting Japan are purely touristic, and there are no plans to establish a new caliphate on the outskirts of Kyoto. After a few anxious business days, we were granted a multiple entry visa, valid for five years — a baton to beat fellow Japan-visa applicants in my peer group. For Indians, Japan is a unique country to visit. Almost unknowingly, we have prepared all our lives for that Japan trip. It started with watching *The Jungle Book* on Doordarshan — an anime recreation of

the Rudyard Kipling original by Fumio Kurokawa that was dubbed so well that it felt like it was made in Noida. For the kids of the next generation, Doraemon or Shinchan were the familiar manga characters based in the Greater Tokyo area. Growing up in the 1990s, when you graduated from using pencils to pen, the most coveted pen was the Pilot pen — a treasure of your pencil box, a veritable status symbol. It is a wonder how a pen created by Ryouzuke Namiki in 1918 remained a hi-tech product in the classroom of the 1990s. After school and during the summer holidays, you would visit the video game parlour to play that legendary video game, *Super Mario Bros* — designed by Shigeru Miyamoto and Takashi Tezuka for Nintendo. And when you were done playing, your father would come to pick you up on his Hero Honda or a Maruti Suzuki 800 — a bit late, because of the Kaizen training

session at his workplace, which earned him a certificate he still treasures. No school function would be complete without that one kid playing a tune on his Casio — a brand that

numbers. Times changed, and you got a Honda Activa to pick "her" or "him" up from their coaching classes, and go try sushi at this new place. Decades have passed, yet Japan's

seven-hour flight, when coupled with free wi-fi, feels like a train journey. Time seems to run faster if there is internet. I realised, almost everyone around me was making that

in each city, with a Nozomi Bullet train ride thrown into the mix. We landed in Tokyo; our hotel room was in the Shinjuku district, which feels like a giant arcade game console. I got the famous egg sandwich from the airport 7-11, and also opted for a cup of coffee. Once done, I had to walk four kilometres looking for a dustbin to dispose of the coffee cup. And that's why Japan is super clean. There are no dustbins in public places. "Please put the cup in your pant pocket, and go to your hotel room," someone kindly suggested. And I complied. Japan barely allowed foreigners between 1603 and 1868 — the isolationist foreign policy called *sakoku*. This was also a time when India saw many invasions. There is a reason why India and Japan both having barely any dustbins on their streets, get diametrically opposite outcomes in terms of cleanliness.



became synonymous with its category of music synthesizers, proudly made in Shibuya. You took a Sony Walkman to college in a distant state — on those afternoons and evenings in your hostel room, those long train journeys, with no mobile internet, it was your best friend, playing all your favourite Kumar Sanu

influence has been a constant in our lives. Imagine the parents who grew up on Fumio Kurosawa's *The Jungle Book*, their kids now swear by buying a Hayabusa. All these thoughts were swirling in my head, as I was polishing off the meal served by the cheerful attendants of the Japan Airlines flight from Delhi to Tokyo. A

pilgrimage, like an Indian-origin West Indian making a trip to UP-Bihar. I was finally visiting the country of the animated *Jungle Book*, the Casio and the Pilot pen — hence, the Tokyo-Kyoto-Osaka itinerary. All three cities have served as the capital of Japan at some point in time in history. We were to spend three nights

Israel strikes 3 airports across Iran

Coffee Table
News Network

US Israel Iran War News: US President Donald Trump is set to address the media at 10:30 pm (IST) on Monday regarding the ongoing Middle East conflict, which began with coordinated US-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28. During the briefing, Trump is expected to share further details about the rescue of two American pilots in Iran after their F-15E was shot down by Tehran's air defence systems on Friday. One pilot was recovered shortly after ejecting, while the weapon systems officer (WSO)—identified by Trump as a US Air Force colonel—was rescued in a separate operation carried out by US special forces. Meanwhile, the US president also warned Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, which Tehran has effectively blockaded in retaliation. The Strait of Hormuz is a

vital global shipping corridor, with roughly 20% of the world's crude oil supply passing through it, making any disruption a major concern for global energy markets. In a strongly worded post on his Truth Social platform on Sunday, Trump issued a direct warning to Iran, threatening military action if it failed to return to negotiations. "Tuesday will be 'Power Plant Day' and 'Bridge Day' in Iran—unlike anything seen before. Open the Strait, or face severe consequences," he wrote, in a message that also included unusually harsh language and rhetoric. Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said Monday that Israel attacked the South Pars petrochemical plant at Asaluyeh in Iran. He made the announcement after Iran said the facility had been attacked. An Israeli attack in March on South Pars facilities sparked



major Iranian attacks targeting oil and gas infrastructure across the Gulf Arab states. Also, the head of intelligence for Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, Maj. Gen. Majid Khademi, was killed, according to Iranian state media. Israel claimed the killing Monday. Meanwhile, Israel and the United States carried out a wave of attacks on Iran on Monday, killing more than 25 people. Iran responded with

missile fire on Israel and its Gulf Arab neighbors. And U.S. President Donald Trump's deadline for Tehran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz loomed. Trump gave Tehran a deadline that expires Monday night Washington time, saying if no deal was reached to reopen the strait, the U.S. would hit Iran's power plants and other infrastructure targets and set the country "back to the stone ages." Following Trump's explosive-laced threat on Easter

Sunday, Iran's parliamentary Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf called the threats of targeting Iran's infrastructure "reckless." Israel's military says it struck three Tehran airports overnight. The military says the strikes hit dozens of helicopters and aircraft it said belonged to the Iranian Air Force. It said the strikes targeted Bahram airport, Mehrabad airport and Azmayesh airport. A

resident of central Tehran has described living with "anxiety and fear" as U.S.-Israeli strikes pummel the capital. "Constantly, there is the sound of bombs, air defenses, drones," she said, speaking on condition of anonymity for her safety. In a statement released Monday, Mirjana Spoljaric, the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, raised alarm about destruction of civilian

infrastructure and nuclear facilities in the Iran war. "Across the Middle East, our teams are seeing the destruction of infrastructure essential for civilian life," including hospitals, schools, power plants, water systems and more, Spoljaric wrote. Israel's military says it struck three Tehran airports overnight. The military says the strikes hit dozens of helicopters and aircraft it said belonged to the Iranian Air Force. It said the strikes targeted Bahram airport, Mehrabad airport and Azmayesh airport. S-Israeli assault brings 'destruction and bloodshed' to Iran's capital, resident says. A resident of central Tehran has described living with "anxiety and fear" as U.S.-Israeli strikes pummel the capital. "Constantly, there is the sound of bombs, air defenses, drones," she said, speaking on condition of anonymity for her

safety. At least one strike hit near her home, waking her on Wednesday, she said. Rushing into the neighboring street, she saw it "filled with people in pajamas, some of them wrapped in blankets, some of them crying with fear." She also described her anger at the popular satellite channel, Iran International, which is based abroad. She said its coverage had amplified exiled Iranian voices supporting strikes on the Islamic Republic. "Some people thought war might bring good things, but war doesn't bring anything but destruction and bloodshed." Iranian authorities have moved to ban any contact with several Persian-language satellite channels based abroad. Many viewers inside Iran say the frequencies are often disrupted. — Amir-Hussein Radjy

Maharashtra ATS and Delhi Police leads to arrest of two terror suspects in Mumbai

Coffee Table
News Network

The Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad and Delhi police's Special Cell, in a joint operation, arrested two members allegedly linked to a terror group involved in online radicalisation of youths, an official said on Sunday. As reported by news agency PTI, the two accused were held from Khadavali in Thane and Kurla in central Mumbai on specific intelligence inputs. Officials, while briefing about the joint operation, said that incriminating documents as well as electronic gadgets, including mobile phones, were recovered from them. The officials highlighted, "The operation was conducted two days ago, and the accused persons have been



taken to Delhi. The two are part of a module being operated from Odisha. The handlers are also on the radar of security agencies," as cited by PTI. Officials further added that the Delhi police's Special Cell has registered a case of criminal conspiracy against the accused as well as the group and is probing further, as per PTI. Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad raids four locations in Mumbai. Earlier last month, the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) raided four locations in the suburbs of Mumbai

over suspected links to a Pakistan-based terror outfit, an official said, reported the PTI. The ATS, while acting on specific intelligence, raided three premises in the eastern suburbs of Govandi and one in Kurla. The official, while further briefing about the operation, said that four suspects have been taken in for questioning. He further added that the suspects were in contact with a Pakistani-based terror organisation banned in India under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), reported by PTI.

The ATS has seized incriminating evidence from the suspects, who are being interrogated for their alleged connections with the banned organisation, the official said. DRI Mumbai foils courier gold smuggling. In a different scenario, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), Mumbai, in March foiled a novel attempt to illegally import gold into the country through an international courier channel. Acting on specific intelligence, DRI officers seized 1.815 kg of foreign-origin gold valued at approximately Rs 2.89 crore from a courier consignment that arrived at the International Courier Terminal (ICT), Mumbai, from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, reported news agency ANI.

Iran rejects temporary truce; sets condition for talks

Coffee Table
News Network

Iran said on Monday it has formulated its positions and demands in response to recent ceasefire proposals conveyed through intermediaries, while rejecting a temporary truce in the war with the United States and Israel. The remarks came amid reports of renewed diplomatic efforts to halt the fighting. Reuters reported Monday that Iran and the US had received a proposal to end hostilities that could take effect on Monday. Axios also reported that the US, Iran and regional

mediators were discussing a possible 45-day ceasefire as part of a two-phase agreement aimed at ending the war permanently. Foreign ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said Tehran had already conveyed its own requirements through intermediary channels and made clear that earlier US proposals had been rejected. Speaking at a press conference, Baghaei said earlier US demands, including a 15-point plan conveyed through Pakistan, were unacceptable. The proposal was "extremely excessive and unusual and



illogical," Baghaei said, adding that Iran has a "very bitter experience of negotiating with the US." "Iran does not hesitate to clearly express what it considers its legitimate demands and doing so should not be interpreted as a sign of compromise, but rather as a reflection of its

confidence in defending its positions," Baghaei said. "We have formulated our own responses" and will announce details in due time, he added in response to an Iranian journalist's question regarding ongoing efforts to bring about a ceasefire between Iran and the US.

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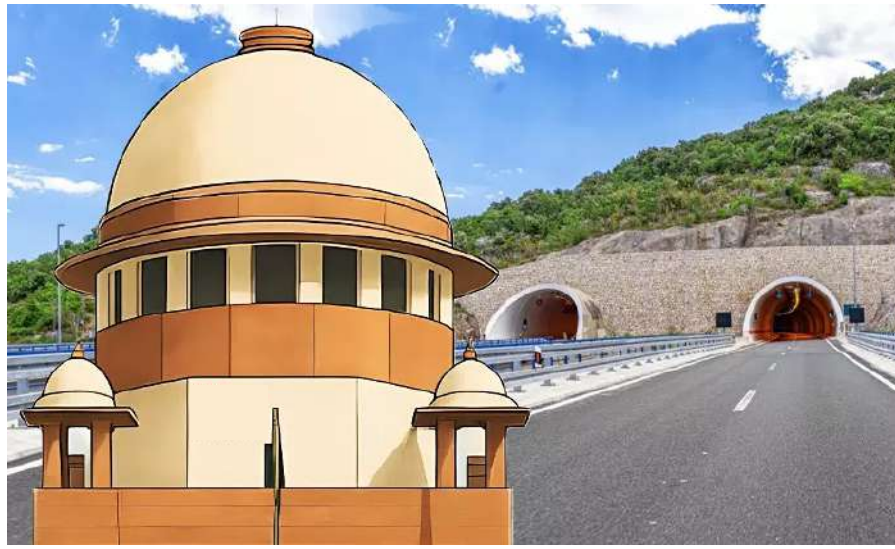
Project Will Be Lifeline For Kerala' : Supreme Court Rejects Challenge To EC For Wayanad Tunnel Construction

Coffee Table News Network

The Supreme Court on Monday dismissed a petition challenging the Environmental Clearance (EC) granted for the Kozhikode-Wayanad tunnel construction in Kerala. Granting liberty to the petitioner to approach the National Green Tribunal if there was any violation of the conditions of the EC during the construction of the tunnel, the Court rejected the challenge. During the hearing, the Court observed that the project was of "national importance" and would give a new "lifeline" to the people of Kerala, where there is immense congestion in roads due to high population density and difficulty in procuring. The bench also observed that the domain experts have considered the matter and have adopted safeguards to address environmental concerns. A bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi dismissed the petition filed by Wayanad

Prakrithi Samrakshana Samiti challenging Environmental clearance granted by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to the Public Works Department of the Government of Kerala for construction of Twin Tube Unidirectional Tunnel Road (2+2 Lane) with Four Lane Approach (from existing roads) for providing direct connectivity between Anakkampoyil - Kalladi - Meppadi in Kozhikode and Wayanad Districts of Kerala. The project involves the construction of an 8.735 km twin-tube tunnel road connecting Kozhikode and Wayanad through the Western Ghats. The organisation approached the Supreme Court against the judgment delivered by the Kerala High Court in December 2025, by which the petitioner's challenge was repelled. Senior Advocate Shyam Divan, for the petitioners, submitted that Wayanad is a highly eco-sensitive area, which is prone to

landslides, and is home to various rare species of animals, birds and plants. He argued that the project ought to have been



treated as 'Category A' in terms of the EIA notification, instead of Category B. He argued that the appraisal ought to have been done by the Central Government, whereas it was done at the State level, by the SEIAA, which was a grave illegality. The Nilgiris biosphere reserve falls within a 10-kilometre radius and witnessed a deadly landslide in

July 2024, killing hundreds of people. He underscored that the High Court itself had taken a suo motu case over the Wayanad

by treating it as a Category 'A' project as mandated by the General Conditions appended to the EIA notification." Divan

Then at least, the technical procedure must be followed. That has not been done. If the law prescribes that something has to be done in a particular manner, then it has to be done in that manner only," Divan argued. The Chief Justice however observed that the project was of national importance, and the experts have addressed the concerns. "Precautions have been taken. It is a project of national importance after all. See the kind of congestion on road and highways. Because the state has its own limitation in terms of available land, and therefore they are going for a tunnel," CJI Kant observed. "We are not against the tunnels. But it is in an ecologically sensitive area, landslide-prone, where 400 people have died," Divan submitted. "Scientists and engineers will take care of that. They are in the field, they know everything. They are the actual decision makers," CJI replied. "If the project is executed without any

hurdle, it will become the lifeline for the people. Tunnel system is the best to protect wildlife. Look at the hardship faced by the people in the area," CJI added. Divan said that the petitioners also belong to the same area who have suffered tremendous loss. Pointing out that rigorous conditions have been imposed, the CJI said: "It is not a case where any mechanical decision has been taken. The conditions are very rigorous. Once you follow all these things we see no reason that this project can have any adverse impact. The only thing is somebody will have to watch the compliance. For that you have an entire bench (NGT) in the nearby area." The bench said that the Central Government was also a party before the High Court, and they have also approved the project. Divan claimed that there was no independent application of mind by the Central authority. However, the bench disagreed, pointing out that various conditions have been imposed by

the Central authority represented the Union. The bench disposed of the petition, observing: "We find not only from para 12 and 13 of the impugned judgment of the High Court but also from the report of the Central Expert Appraisal Committee that the approval was accorded to the project subject to various conditions. What is more important is that, while executing the project, the project proponent must meticulously comply with the conditions. The High Court rightly felt that if any condition is not followed, in that event, the petitioners can approach the National Green Tribunal, as such a violation can amount to accrual of a fresh cause of action. In view of the liberty granted by the High Court, we see no reason to interfere with the judgment of the High Court. The petitioners will be at liberty to approach the NGT during the execution of the project, if so needed, in terms of the liberty granted by the High Court."

Delhi High Court Directs Immediate Restoration Of X Accounts 'Dr Nimo Yadav', 'Nehr Who

Coffee Table News Network

The Delhi High Court on Monday (April 06) ordered immediate restoration of the parody account "Dr. Nimo Yadav", operated by petitioner Prateek Sharma on X. Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav passed the order while hearing a plea filed by Prateek Sharma against blocking of his parody account "Dr. Nimo Yadav". The court also passed similar direction with respect to a petition filed by Kumar Nayan, who operates the account Nehr Who— one of the 12 X accounts blocked under MeITy's directives. The Court issued the direction after a brief exchange between advocate Vrinda Grover appearing for the petitioner and ASG Chetan Sharma appearing for the Union of India, as the Court examined the blocking orders issued under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act. After hearing the matter for some time the court directed that while the petitioner's entire account must be restored immediately, the specific allegedly objectionable tweets mentioned in the blocking order will remain under temporary block. The court further directed the petitioner to appear before Review Committee, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and MeITy shall demonstrate whether tweets are correctly blocked or not as per Section 69A IT Act. The court further directed that principles of natural justice shall be



followed before the Review Committee. A detailed copy of the order is awaited. Earlier in the hearing, Grover argued that the petitioner had moved the high court on March 25 after receiving a platform notification (X) that there was an order passed that the petitioner's account is to be withheld on March 19. She submitted that petitioner received no communication at all from the Union Government. She said that the communication from Union had come after the petitioner had filed a petition before the high court. "What is the legal scheme? The legal scheme cannot be that you violate my fundamental rights, when I move a constitutional court then in order to avoid judicial scrutiny you quickly send me...that can never be the scheme in this country...Reasons have to be in the order, and blocking is of information. Blocking order passed by Respondent No.1 (UOI) is to withhold my entire account, not information...This is a totally illegal arbitrary order. To ask me now, after you have blocked my account (not url) on March 19, you say now that 'you come to the Review Committee,'" Grover submitted adding that the petitioner's account be re-

opened. She added that the order was not within the domain of Section 69A IT Act. ASG Chetan Sharma had submitted that emails had been sent to the petitioner with respect to appearing before the review committee, MeITy. He relied on Rule 14 of the Blocking Rules, insisting that the petitioner could appear immediately before the Committee. "Let her appear today, because we sent another email on 4th (April)...that exercise is necessary...there are three things, her March 19 communication states that till date no government authority has contacted me issued notice or provided opportunity to be heard, so this basically on pnj (principles of natural justice). Rule 14 is on PNJ," the ASG said. The Court was also hearing a fresh plea filed by Kumar Nayan, who operates the account Nehr Who, also one of the 12 accounts blocked under MeITy's directives. Earlier, X Corp had informed the Court that the account has been blocked on the orders of Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) for controversial posts and defaming Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In an affidavit filed before the High Court, the blocking order said that the X account contains

"defamatory posts" wherein photographs, videos and AI manipulated content have been used to create controversial posts questioning the Government and defaming the PM. X had also asked the Central Government to review the order directing to block 12 Twitter accounts, including "Dr. Nimo Yadav's", calling the blocking order disproportionate. On March 19, X wrote an objection letter to the Union Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, saying that the blocking order issued on March 18 fails to comply with Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000. In its objection letter, X has said that the vast majority of the content in each of the X accounts does not appear to fall within the grounds specified under Section 69A and thus the Blocking Order issued is not proportionate. It had further added that no opportunity of hearing has been granted to any of the account holders and that the blocking order does not demonstrate that reasonable efforts are to be made for identifying the person whose content is ordered to be blocked. Advocates Vrinda Grover, Soutik Banerjee, Nakul Gandhi, Apar Gupta, Devika Tulsiani, Siddhi Sahoo, Gurdeep Singh and Indumugi C appeared for Sharma. Advocates Apar Gupta, Nakul Gandhi Naman Kumar, Avanti Deshpande and Indumugi C appeared for Nayan.

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'Swear on Bhagavad Gita': Gogoi dares Assam CM Himanta to deny wife's multiple passports, assets

Coffee Table
News Network

NAGAON: Hours after Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma denied Congress allegations regarding his wife allegedly holding multiple passports and properties abroad, Lok Sabha MP Gaurav Gogoi on Monday challenged the BJP leader to deny the claims under oath on the Bhagavad Gita. Speaking to reporters after an election rally in Raha, the Assam Congress president questioned Sarma and asked whether he was hiding assets and business interests abroad while spreading "falsehoods" about political rivals. A day after Congress leaders Pawan Khera and Gogoi sought to know whether Sarma's wife has three foreign passports, owns property in Dubai, has companies in the US, or has placed assets in shell companies, the chief minister on Monday morning claimed the opposition party had concocted



the charges using false information from a Pakistani social media group. "I told this yesterday, and I am again repeating it now -- I can say under an oath on the Bhagavad Gita that I don't have any property in London as alleged by Sarma. Can he do that? I challenge him to come to a common place and to do the same under an oath on the Bhagavad Gita," Gogoi said. He asserted that if such properties were not declared in the election affidavit, Sarma could not now accept their existence, as it would lead to the cancellation of his candidature. "The questions are simple -- does your wife possess

a Golden Visa for Dubai? Do you or any family member own property there? Is the Golden visa on an Indian passport? Does any family member of Himanta Biswa Sarma operate a business in a foreign country? Has Himanta Biswa Sarma disclosed his or his family's wealth and properties abroad in his election affidavit? Sarma should welcome an investigation if he has nothing to hide. He asserted that if the Congress comes to power in Assam, it would pursue investigations into Sarma's alleged undisclosed foreign holdings and business operations. "Legal action will be taken against all illegal

properties, businesses and networks linked to him," the Deputy Leader of Congress in Lok Sabha said. At a press conference in Guwahati in the morning, Sarma said these charges have been made to influence the poll results, which is "punishable under the law". He also alleged that the documents the Congress used to make the allegations against his wife were sourced from a social media group "Pakistanis in Ajman", and her photo was morphed on a lost passport of a person from that country. The CM said his wife Riniki Bhuyan Sharma has filed a police complaint against Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera against the allegations. Khera on Sunday alleged that Sarma's wife has three passports of the UAE, Egypt and Antigua-Barbuda, two properties in Dubai and assets in shell companies in the US. Gogoi said.

FIR lodged against TMC Behala Paschim candidate, six others over alleged vandalism

Coffee Table
News Network

KOLKATA: Kolkata Police has lodged an FIR against TMC candidate from Behala Paschim Assembly constituency, Ratna Chattopadhyay, and six others in connection with alleged vandalism in Parnasree area of south Kolkata, officials said on Monday. The case was registered on April 5, following complaints of disturbances in the locality amid campaigning for the upcoming Assembly polls. Six persons have so far been arrested in this connection, including one of those named in the FIR, for their "direct involvement" in the vandalism, a police officer said. "Chattopadhyay was found indulging in vandalism at Parnasree on Sunday, following which an FIR was lodged. An investigation has been initiated to ascertain



the sequence of events and the role of those named in the FIR," a police officer said. "The case was registered after BJP leader Manoj Halder lodged a complaint against Chattopadhyay and six others. In the complaint, he alleged that seven TMC workers wrongfully restrained him and others, physically assaulted one of his associates, and stole laptops and other materials from their party office," the officer said. "Halder

claimed that the accused persons also vandalised the area in front of the party office by damaging flags and banners," the officer added. BJP's Behala Paschim candidate Indranil Khan also lodged a complaint at Parnasree police station, alleging that TMC workers vandalised the party's election office. An official of the Election Commission said it has sought a report from the district authorities. "We have

asked for a detailed report. Any violation of the election Model Code of Conduct will invite appropriate action in accordance with the law," the official said. There was no immediate reaction from Chattopadhyay or the TMC on the allegations. Polling in the Behala Paschim constituency, located in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district, is scheduled on April 29.

CM Chandrababu Naidu to launch 100-day water security drive on April 6

Coffee Table
News Network

VIJAYAWADA: Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has announced the launch of a 100-day campaign on water security, positioning it as both a government initiative and a public movement. The programme titled "Water Security – Responsibility of Irrigation Associations" will commence at Yadiki in Anantapur district on April 6 with an aim to strengthen water conservation, enhance groundwater reserves, and ensure sustainable usage of water resources across Andhra Pradesh. In a teleconference with irrigation association members, ministers, and senior officials, Naidu stressed that water security cannot be left to the government alone and people's participation in it is a must. He urged irrigation associations to take responsibility for conserving every drop of water, preparing water budgets,



conducting water audits, and adopting micro-irrigation to prevent wastage. The campaign will run from April 6 to July 14 in four phases. Identification of works from April 6 to 15, administrative approvals from April 16 to 20, execution of works from April 21 to July 9, and submission of completion reports from July 10 to 14. Various departments, including Irrigation, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Forest, and Panchayat Raj will coordinate to implement the plan. Naidu emphasised repairing canals, desilting tanks, clearing feeder channels, and strengthening check dams to maximise storage and prevent flooding during the monsoon. The Chief

Minister directed that groundwater levels, currently at 8.7 metres, should be raised by at least 1.5 metres, with water availability ensured at 6 metres depth by summer and 3 metres by the end of the monsoon. Naidu highlighted Annamayya district's "Jaladhara" initiative as a model, where tanks were filled and groundwater levels rose significantly, urging other districts to replicate such efforts. He also called for scientific mapping of tanks using satellite imagery, hydrology analysis, and feeder channel clearance to ensure effective water conservation. Stressing that water security is the foundation for growth in agriculture, industry and other sectors, he said effective conservation

would make Andhra Pradesh drought-free. He recalled earlier irrigation projects such as Handri-Neeva, Galeru-Nagari and Telugu Ganga initiated during NTR's tenure, and reaffirmed the government's commitment to completing ongoing projects, including Polavaram at the earliest. Security beefed up for CM's visit to Anantapur district. The campaign will be formally launched in Tadipatri constituency, with Naidu's itinerary including a public meeting in Yadiki, a visit to the Pendekal reservoir, and a review meeting with local leaders in Vemulapadu. Elaborate security arrangements have been made for the Chief Minister's visit, with police and district administration coordinating traffic management and crowd control. Naidu criticised the previous regime for neglecting water conservation.

JP Nadda accuses Congress of exploiting 'tea tribes as vote bank' in Assam; vows action against infiltrators

Coffee Table
News Network

TINSUKIA: Union Minister J P Nadda on Monday accused the Congress of treating the tea tribes as a "vote-bank" that it "harvested" every five years while not working for their welfare. Tea Tribes in Assam are the descendants of the labourers brought to the region during the colonial period from the present-day Jharkhand, Odisha and Bihar tribal belts in the nineteenth century. Addressing a rally in support of the BJP's Doomdooma candidate Rupesh Gowala, the former party chief also claimed the Congress had rolled out the red carpet for infiltrators during its rule in this northeastern state. "The Congress treated the tea tribes as a vote bank to be



harvested every five years. It pushed the future of the community into darkness," he said. The former BJP national president alleged that the Congress "invited infiltrators into Assam, and sheltered them here, providing them with Aadhaar and Ayushman Bharat cards for appeasement politics". "These people are grabbing the land of the Adivasis and the poor," Nadda said while asserting that the BJP would take back this land and drive the illegal immigrants

out. "Their names are being deleted from the voter list, and those remaining will also be struck off," he added. Nadda lauded the tea tribes, a majority in this eastern Assam constituency, for their "stance against infiltrators". "I salute the people of the tea tribes for not allowing the infiltrators to settle here, thereby saving the future of Bharat Mata," he said. The Union minister also hit out at the Congress for the "violence, killings, strikes, unrest and

curfew" during its tenures in the state. He maintained that it was the BJP-led government that had ensured peace, stability and development in Assam in the past decade. Listing various welfare initiatives being undertaken in the state, Nadda promised the BJP-led NDA would expand these measures once it returns to power. The Union health minister urged the people to vote for the BJP-led-NDA in the April 9 elections.

Bengal polls: Election Commission directs withdrawal of security cover for politicians with criminal cases

Coffee Table
News Network

KOLKATA: The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Friday sought a status report in connection with its directives to withdraw government-provided security cover for political leaders with criminal antecedents from West Bengal police administration as the state is all set to go for polling on April 23 and 29. The ECI, in its directives to the nodal officers of West Bengal Police (WBP), has asked to send

compliance report by noon, following the expiry of its deadline—Thursday midnight—for withdrawing such security cover. Leaders, who have been granted bails or are out of jails on parole cutting across their political affiliations, won't be given security coverage by the state government from now. The ECI had directed the district magistrates (DMs) cum district election officers (DEOs) and superintendents of police across districts in the state to lift the existing 'unnecessary'

security coverage for these leaders facing criminal cases. It had also directed that security cover would also be withdrawn for leaders who have been enjoying such privileges considering their portfolios and so-called threat perceptions. Besides these directives, the Commission has also asked police administrations in the state to nab those persons who are accused in non-bailable cases within 10 days. Alongside, the ECI has directed both the state police and Kolkata Police



to expedite disposal of poll-related criminal cases from previous elections. Senior field officers—including sub-division police officers (SDPOs) and

deputy superintendents of police (DSPs) — have been tasked with preparing lists of absconding accused and launching targeted raids to apprehend

them. Station-level officers have been instructed to identify crime-prone pockets, track history-sheets, and curb potential poll-related violence. The

Commission has also sought clarifications from the state director general of police (DGP) Siddh Nath Gupta on so many leaders and workers belonging to the ruling Trinamool Congress get state-provided security cover. Gupta has been asked to submit report in this regard within two or three days, ECI sources said. Around 2,185 policemen are engaged for security cover for around 832 Trinamool Congress leaders and workers and nearly 140 supporters of the

ruling party much the poll dates in Bengal are announced. "Why do the ruling party leaders require so many state police personnel for the security? DGP has been asked to submit report considering the issue impartially and professionally," sources said requesting anonymity. The commission has also emphasised the need to ensure security for all political campaign activities, regardless of party, and to safeguard personnel engaged in election duties.

Easter massacre in Nigeria: 26 killed across three states over the weekend

Coffee Table
News Network

At least 26 people were killed in three separate attacks over the Easter weekend in northern Nigeria, according to the Nigerian military and local officials. The deadliest attack took place on Saturday in the Mbalom community in the Gwer West area of Benue State, where at least 17 people were killed, reported AP. Governor Hyacinth Alia confirmed the attack on Sunday, although he did not give a casualty figure. In a separate attack early Saturday morning, four police officers were killed after gunmen attacked a police headquarters in Borno State in northeastern Nigeria. Police spokesperson Kenneth Daso said the attackers belonged to an



Islamic State-affiliated group and that the assault ended after an extended exchange of gunfire. A third attack happened on Sunday in Ariko village in Kaduna State, where five people were killed after gunmen opened fire during an Easter service, according to the army. The attackers have not been identified. The army said soldiers moved in after receiving a distress call and prevented the abduction of 31 people. "Regrettably, the remains of five victims already killed by the terrorists were also recovered at the

scene," the army said, as quoted by AP. "The fleeing terrorists are believed to have sustained significant casualties, as evidenced by blood trails along their escape routes." Kaduna has continued to witness church attacks and repeated kidnappings. In January, more than 150 worshippers were abducted in Kurmin Wali, a village in the Kajuru area, around 60 kilometres from where Sunday's attack took place. The violence in Benue reflects a

broader pattern of insecurity in north-central Nigeria, where conflicts over land and grazing often turn deadly. These clashes frequently involve mostly Muslim Fulani herders and largely Christian farming communities. Criminal gangs also operate in the area. US President Donald Trump and some American lawmakers have accused that Christians are being persecuted in Nigeria, an allegation the Nigerian government has rejected. It has also dismissed claims describing the country's worsening insecurity as a "Christian genocide." On December 25, US carried out military strikes in Sokoto, reportedly targeting an Islamic State group operating in the region.

Ukraine launched 7,347 drones at Russia in March, outpaces Moscow for first time since 2022

Coffee Table
News Network

Ukraine launched more cross-border attack drones than Russia in March, marking the first month since the war began in 2022 that Kyiv appears to have outpaced Moscow in long-range drone attacks, according to daily military data analysed. The figures point to a possible shift in one of the most important fronts of the war: the battle of long-range strikes, where both sides are trying to damage infrastructure, weaken military capacity and raise the cost of continuing the conflict. Russia's defense ministry said it shot down 7,347 Ukrainian drones during March, the highest monthly total it has ever reported and an average of 237 drones a day. The ministry only publishes figures for Ukrainian drones it says were intercepted. Ukraine's air force, meanwhile, said the country came under attack from 6,462 Russian drones and 138 missiles during the month. According to Kyiv, 5,833 drones and 102 missiles were intercepted or suppressed — around 90% of drones and just under 74% of missiles. That means Ukraine faced a daily average of just over 208 drones and four missiles during March. Even so, the total number of Russian drones and missiles reported by Ukraine — 6,600 in all — set a new monthly record for Moscow's long-range attacks, showing that Russia continues to sustain a heavy aerial assault even as Ukraine expands its own strike capabilities. But the significance of Ukraine's growing drone campaign lies not only in the



numbers, but in what it is targeting. Over the past year, Ukraine has placed special emphasis on striking Russian oil refining and transport infrastructure, aiming to disrupt a major source of revenue used to support Moscow's military campaign. Among the most high-profile attacks in March were strikes on the Baltic Sea ports of Ust-Luga and Primorsk, two key oil export hubs. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov denounced the strikes as "terrorist attacks." Zelenskyy defended such operations in February, saying Russia's energy sector is "a legitimate target" because oil revenues help finance attacks on Ukraine. "We do not have to choose whether we strike a military target or energy," Zelenskyy said while addressing students at the National Aviation University in Kyiv. "He sells oil, takes the money, invests it in weapons. And with those weapons, he kills Ukrainians," Zelenskyy said of Russian President Vladimir Putin. Russian officials have largely sought to play down the impact of Ukrainian attacks, often attributing damage and casualties to falling debris from intercepted drones rather than direct hits. When they do acknowledge damage, they frequently describe the strikes

as "terrorist attacks." Still, publicly available videos and photographs suggest that a significant number of Ukrainian drones are getting through Russian air defenses and hitting sensitive military and industrial sites. The attacks have continued despite the resumption of U.S.-brokered peace talks, with drones and missiles remaining a central tool for both Kyiv and Moscow as they seek to erode each other's ability to fight and fund the war. At the same time, both sides' official numbers should be treated with caution. Experts have suggested that Moscow and Kyiv may each have an interest in overstating the success of their air defenses or highlighting the scale of incoming attacks to support wider political and military messaging. The March data suggests that while Russia still launches more long-range weapons overall, Ukraine's campaign is becoming broader and more sustained as domestic production ramps up. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has repeatedly emphasized the importance of expanding Ukraine's long-range strike arsenal. "Our production potential for drones and missiles alone will reach \$35 billion next year," Zelenskyy said in October. "Despite all the difficulties, Ukrainians are creating their national defense

product that, in certain parameters, already surpasses many others in the world." "Never before in history has Ukrainian defense been so long-range and so felt by Russia," Zelenskyy added. "We must make the cost of war absolutely unacceptable for the aggressor -- and we will." Most Ukrainian attacks are believed to be carried out using relatively cheap, domestically produced drones. Ukraine is also increasingly using interceptor drones designed and built by Ukrainian companies to shoot down incoming Russian strike drones. Kyiv is now producing its own cruise missiles as well, including the Flamingo, which it says has a range of more than 1,800 miles. But drones still make up the overwhelming majority of projectiles cited in Russia's daily reports. Ukraine's air force publishes daily figures on Russian drone and missile attacks, including how many were intercepted and how many hit their targets. According to those figures, Russia carried out the single largest 24-hour strike by either side during the month, launching 948 drones and 34 missiles on March 24. The growing use of long-range drones has also increased concern that the war could spill beyond Russia and Ukraine. Drone incursions into neighboring countries have added to those fears, particularly near NATO territory. NATO aircraft are regularly scrambled in countries such as Poland and Romania in response to Russian drone attacks near Ukraine's western borders.

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