

# 5 Naxalites killed in encounter with police in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli

**NEW DELHI:** At least five Naxalites were killed in an encounter with police in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district on Monday. The exchange of fire broke out in the area bordering Narayanpur in Chhattisgarh.

A C60 commando team of Gadchiroli police and a CRPF team carried out the operation, an official told news agency PTI.

In May this year, three Maoists, including two females, were killed in an encounter.

A month later, at least 12 members of outlawed Maoist outfit People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) were shot dead in Gadchiroli in a six-hour operation, involving 200 police commandos airdropped into the dense Wandoli forests near the Chhattisgarh border amid torrential rain.

The forces fired more than 2,000 rounds during the gunfight - one of the most intense in recent



decades against Maoist insurgents. PLGA in north Gadchiroli as its divisional committee member and

Tippargarh dalam chief Laxman Atam, the commander of PLGA in the region, was killed. Sarita Parasa, a woman Maoist and Chatgaon committee member, was among the deceased.

The commandos faced severe weather conditions, including five flooded nullahs, to reach the PLGA camp. The operation, led by DSP Vishal Nagargoje, was crucial as anti-mine combat vehicles were rendered immobile due to the floods.

In the past 10 years, 85 per cent of Left-wing extremists' strength in Chhattisgarh and 14 top CPI (Maoist) leaders across the country have been eliminated, home minister Amit Shah said on October 7, enlisting the support of Naxal-hit states for a final blow to end Left-wing extremism (LWE) by March 2026 and enable locals to taste the fruits of development blocked by ultras.

# SP nominates Arjun Arya from Budhni seat against INDIA bloc ally Congress

**BHOPAL:** The Samajwadi Party on Monday nominated Arjun Arya as its nominee for the Budhni bypoll in Madhya Pradesh against the Congress candidate, claiming the Grand Old Party ignored Akhilesh Yadav-led party's efforts to forge an alliance.

Notably, Arya had parted ways with SP before the 2018 assembly polls and subsequently joined the SP after resigning from Congress, the Samajwadi Party said.

The Congress has fielded former minister Rajkumar Patel from the Budhni constituency in Sehore district against ex-MP Ramakant Bhargava of BJP.

The byelection was necessitated after ex-chief

minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan resigned as an MLA from Budhni to contest the Lok Sabha elections from Vidisha.

The SP, however, won't contest the bypoll from the Vijaypur constituency, a party leader said.

Akhilesh Yadav has nominated Arjun Arya to contest the November 13 by-election from Budhni seat, a party release stated on Monday evening.

The Congress on Sunday night announced the candidature of tribal leader Mukesh Malhotra from the Vijaypur segment, who will face off against Congress-turned-BJP politician and state forests minister Ramniwas Rawat.

The bypoll to Vijaypur seat is being held due to Rawat's switch.

When contacted over the phone, SP national spokesman Yash Bhartiya admitted that MP state unit president Manoj Yadav had met his Congress counterpart Jitu Patwari at the latter's residence four days back but failed to get a satisfactory response on alliance for four days.

"We wanted an electoral alliance for one of two seats for the bypoll," he said.

Notably, SP candidate Mirchi Baba had lost his deposit from Budhni constituency in the last assembly elections after he secured around 150 votes.

This is the third time SP and Congress could not stitch an electoral alliance. Efforts to forge electoral trucks in the 2018 and 2023 assembly polls in MP too came unstuck.

# Delhi-NCR enforces stage II GRAP measures as air quality deteriorates

**NEW DELHI:** To mitigate the worsening air quality, the Sub-Committee constituted by Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has resolved to implement all measures outlined under Stage II of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) amid 'Very Poor' air quality (AQI ranging between 301-400) in the Delhi-NCR region.

These actions will be enforced in addition to the Stage-I measures already in place, effective from October 22, 8:00 am.

The decision aims to address the deteriorating air quality and prevent further degradation by ensuring strict adherence to the GRAP guidelines.

According to the issued order, the Sub-Committee,

which was formed to initiate actions under the GRAP, convened on October 21, to thoroughly assess the air quality situation in the region. They also examined the predictions for meteorological conditions and the air quality index of Delhi provided by IMD/IITM. Since morning, Delhi's AQI has been fluctuating around 300, and at 4:00 P.M., it was recorded at 310.

According to IMD/IITM forecasts, Delhi's AQI is expected to remain in the "very poor" category in the upcoming days due to unfavorable meteorological and climatic conditions, as well as calm winds. Thus, "in an effort to prevent further deterioration of the air quality, the Sub-Committee decided that ALL actions as envisaged

under Stage II of the GRAP - 'Very Poor' Air Quality (DELHI AQI ranging between 301-400) be implemented in right earnest by all the agencies concerned in the NCR, in addition to the Stage-I actions already in force, from 8:00 A.M. of 22.10.2024 in the National Capital Region (NCR)."

Further, residents are also urged to follow the citizen charter and support the effective implementation of GRAP measures to improve regional air quality. This includes using public transport, minimising personal vehicle use, opting for less congested routes, regularly replacing car air filters, avoiding dust-generating construction from October to January, and refraining from open burning of solid waste and biomass.

# UP man dies after wife poisons his Karwa Chauth dinner, accused detained

**KAUSAMBI:** A woman has been taken into custody by the police here for allegedly killing her husband by poisoning his food, officials said on Monday. Srirathu Circle Officer Awadhesh Kumar Vishwakarma said Shailesh (32), a resident of Ismailpur village in the Kada Dham area, suddenly fell ill on Sunday night after having dinner prepared on the occasion of Karwa Chauth festival. He was admitted to the local community health centre where he died during treatment, the officer said. Shailesh's family filed a complaint accusing his wife Savita (30) of poisoning his food, Vishwakarma said. Based on the complaint, a case was registered against Savita under Section 105 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) and 123 (poisoning) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the CO said.

# SC refuses to stay Grade-1 posts exam in Telangana, says it will lead to chaos

**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court on Monday refused to stay the examination being conducted by the Telangana Public Service Commission (TGpsc) to fill up 563 Grade-1 posts in various government departments, saying such an order will lead to "chaos".

"The examination will commence at 2 pm... There will be chaos if we stay the exam at this stage," a bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, had said during the hearing earlier when senior lawyer Kapil Sibal, appearing for a petitioner, pressed for an interim stay.

"Students have already entered the exam centres," the bench underlined.

The bench noted in its



order, "Any interim order would lead to the substantial dislocation of the conduct of the examination which we are disinclined to do." Sibal submitted the aspirants would lose out on the chance to appear in the exam being conducted for the first time in the state.

Sibal, at the outset, sought an interim stay on holding of the examinations.

The examination is being held after 14 years, he said, adding that the reorganisation took place in 2014.

"These are Group-1 posts and they will never be filled again. I am only asking for postponement," the senior

lawyer urged the bench.

The CJI, however, said, "How can we postpone? It will be extraordinary for us to do that." The bench, however, asked the high court to consider the matter before the declaration of results and said the results will be subject to the final outcome of the challenge.

"The high court has specified that any selection made for Group 1 services shall abide by the final outcome of the proceedings. The proceedings are listed before the High Court for November 20," ordered the top court.

Group-1 mains examination conducted by the TGpsc commenced on Monday and will continue till October 27 for the 563 vacancies.

# Delhi Bomb Blast: Delhi Police writes to Telegram

**NEW DELHI:** Delhi Police have contacted Telegram following a blast outside a CRPF school in the city. The officials wrote to the messaging app seeking information about a channel that shared CCTV footage of the incident. The channel, named 'Justice League India,' posted the footage shortly after the blast occurred on Sunday (October 20). According to a report by the news agency PTI, Delhi Police is probing a possible Khalistani link in the blast and have asked Telegram for details about the channel.

The police have also reached out to other social media platforms for information related to the incident. However, Telegram



has yet to respond to the request.

Investigations of the bomb blast that ripped through a wall of the CRPF school in Rohini's Prashant Vihar area are ongoing. However, No one was hurt in the blast but a signboard, hoardings of nearby shops and window panes of vehi-

cles parked near the spot were damaged in the incident. The authorities are exploring all possible angles.

According to the FIR filed by the police (seen by PTI), as revealed the presence of a "white powder" at the blast site. The explosion, caused by an "unknown explosive substance," is now

being investigated further. Apart from this, police sources have also confirmed recovering CCTV footage showing a suspect near the school the night before the incident. This footage may provide crucial leads in identifying those responsible for the blast.

A Telegram post claiming responsibility for the blast also surfaced on social media. The post, allegedly from pro-Khalistan separatists, claims the attack was in retaliation for the targeting of their members by Indian agents.

Authorities are currently verifying the authenticity of the post and investigating the potential involvement of pro-Khalistani separatist groups.

# Work on 10 more nuclear reactors underway in country, parliamentary panel told

**NEW DELHI:** At least 10 nuclear reactors are being installed in the country while two reactors in Gujarat's Kakrapar have started generating power commercially, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology was informed on Monday.

According to sources, the new nuclear reactors coming up in states like Gujarat, Rajasthan and Haryana are of 700 MW capacity and will start operating in the next few years.

The details of the new nuclear reactors were provided to the members of the Standing Committee of Parliament on Science and Technology, Environment, Forests and Climate

Change during a meeting here.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, who is a member of the committee as well as its former chairman, said members of the panel were informed during the meeting that the Kakrapar-3 and Kakrapar-4 nuclear reactors in Gujarat have been fully synchronised with the grid and are generating power commercially.

"This is a major accomplishment since these are indigenously designed 700-megawatt reactors that were approved in 2007. Construction had begun in 2010. More such reactors are being installed at different locations," he said in a post on X.

# AIADMK gives party posts to Gautami, 'Tada' Periyasamy

**CHENNAI:** AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami on Monday appointed actor Gautami Tadamilla, 'Tada' D Periyasamy and Fathima Ali to key party positions.

The appointments come after these leaders, formerly associated with BJP, joined AIADMK ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Gautami Tadamilla, an actor-turned-politician, was appointed deputy secretary of the party's propaganda wing. Tadamilla quit BJP in October last after a 25-year association, citing lack of support and accusing BJP senior members of enabling a person, who allegedly betrayed her trust and misappropriated her life sav-

ings. She had alleged that a promise by BJP to give her a ticket to contest in Rajapalayam had been rescinded at the last minute. Periyasamy was appointed as deputy secretary of Anaithulaga MGR Mandram. He was formerly BJP's SC morcha state president and joined AIADMK earlier this year. Periyasamy, who contested in 1999 and 2004 LS polls under VCK and BJP, expressed his commitment to the new role. "I'll strengthen the hands of EPS and help AIADMK win in 2026," Periyasamy said. Fathima Ali was appointed as deputy secretary of the party's minority wing. Palaniswami urged party members to support the new appointees.

# Jharkhand polls being held ahead of schedule as part of BJP's conspiracy: Kalpana Soren

**GIRIDIH:** Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) MLA Kalpana Soren on Monday alleged that the assembly elections in the state are being held ahead of schedule as part of a well-planned "conspiracy" by the BJP.

Kalpana, wife of Chief Minister Hemant Soren, raised concerns about poll timings in both urban and rural areas, as well as the reduction of phases from five to two.

Speaking at an election rally in Giridih, she claimed that the BJP is strengthening its influence over election agencies.

"The election is being conducted ahead of schedule. While Maharashtra is holding it on time, Jharkhand has been included unexpectedly. Interestingly, polls that traditionally occurred in five phases are now being held in just two, all under a BJP conspiracy," she alleged.

Kalpana also criticised the decision to reduce polling hours in rural areas by an hour compared to urban areas, asserting that this change would hinder rural voters—particularly the



poor, labourers, farmers, and women, who generally support Hemant Soren.

"Polling hours in rural areas have been cut by an hour. Many rural voters face challenges in reaching voting centres. This is an attempt to disenfranchise the poor, farmers, labourers, and women who stand with Hemant Soren," she added.

Further attacking the BJP, she accused the party of attempting to imprison Hemant Soren during his tenure as chief minister.

"While they may not have succeeded in jailing Soren, they have attacked the self-esteem of our state. The people of Jharkhand are ready to give the BJP a fitting reply in the 2024 as-

sembly polls," she added. Polling in Jharkhand is scheduled for November 13 and November 20, with votes set to be counted on November 23.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission dismissed JMM's allegations regarding the reduced voting hours in rural areas as "baseless" and "without facts." According to the commission, there are 29,562 polling stations in the state, with 24,520 located in rural areas and 5,042 in urban areas.

"Voting time at 23:59 polling stations, both rural and urban, is from 7 am to 5 pm, except for 981 polling stations in Naxal-affected areas," Jharkhand Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) posted on X.

He noted that during the 2014 and 2019 assembly elections, voting times were 7 am to 3 pm at 89 per cent (22,132) and 63 per cent (18,555) of polling stations, respectively.

"This time, the voting hours have been set from 7 am to 4 pm at only 3 per cent (981) of polling stations, thanks to the commission's special efforts.

# BJP, two Shiv Senas hold sway in Mumbai amid a 4% drop in electorate since 2014

**MUMBAI:** Despite a decline in registered voters and a near-proportionate drop in polled votes between 2014 and 2024, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Shiv Sena have largely maintained their stronghold over 30 of Mumbai's 36 assembly segments, as shown by voting patterns in the Lok Sabha polls earlier this year.

Data analysed by TOI shows that this holds despite a shift in the city's political dynamics, with new alliances and party splits altering the electoral scene. The 2014 assembly election was a point of departure in the city's political history as BJP and Shiv Sena, despite not being in alliance, snatched many seats from the long-dominant Congress and NCP, which too went to the polls unaligned. There was, of course, a saffron surge in the late 90s, but that was short-lived. The 2014 election also laid the foundation for BJP and Sena dominance in the state, as the parties formed a coalition govt under Devendra Fadnavis.

In Mumbai, the parties won 15 and 14 seats, respectively, and thereon never lost



their grip on their strongholds, as also revealed by voting patterns in the 2024 parliamentary polls despite subtle shifts in the pattern where there was a Sena vs Sena fight.

In the next assembly election in 2019, the revised voters list showed a drop in the electorate from 2014 (see graphic), giving rise to allegations from the opposition that the exercise was conducted to favour demographic shifts.

The result: BJP increased its seat count to 16, while Sena retained 14 seats, in an election where the parties fought in alliance, pitted against Congress-NCP as a combine.

But the saffron alliance,

which increased its victory margin in most of the constituencies, collapsed under the weight of competitive power-sharing expectations and Sena went on to join Congress-NCP to form MVA, with Uddhav Thackeray as chief minister. The alliances shifted again in 2022 and 2023 with splits in Sena and NCP. It was in this revised configuration, with the splinter groups siding with BJP and Congress, that the 2024 Lok Sabha polls were contested. In Mumbai's six parliamentary constituencies, Sena vs Sena battles raged in Mumbai South, South Central, and North West; though the battles were neck-and-neck in most assembly segments, at only a few places

did Sena (UBT) candidates take the lead, including Worli, which Aditya Thackeray won in the 2019 assembly polls with a huge margin but which his party candidate led by just 7,000 votes in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

In the Magathane assembly segment, where MLA Prakash Surve sided with Shinde Sena, alliance partner BJP's candidate got more votes than the Congress's in 2024.

While BJP managed to retain its dominance in strongholds, in many assembly segments, its leads reduced compared to 2019.

In Dahisar, Borivali, Charkop, Kandivali East, Vile Parle, Ghatkopar East, and Mulund, the party widened its leads in the 2024 LS polls over the 2019 assembly election. But interestingly, in Goregaon, Andheri West, Versova and Sion Koliwada, which saw Sena vs Sena fights, the BJP-supported Shinde Sena polled more votes in 2024 than what BJP got in 2019. And in Ghatkopar West, Vandre West, and Malabar Hill, BJP or alliance partner Shinde Sena got fewer votes than in 2019.

As for Congress, it has held its ground in just two assembly constituencies since 2014 - Malad and Dharavi - although in Malad, the lead over BJP narrowed in 2024. Similarly, Samajwadi Party has retained Mankhurd Shivajinagar, won by Abu Asim Azmi since 2014. In the 2024 LS polls, the segment gave a huge lead to his party's alliance candidate, helping Sena (UBT)'s Sanjay Patil defeat BJP in Mumbai North East.

Only seven assembly constituencies in the city changed their party preference: Mulund, Chandivalli, Vandre East, Anushakti Nagar, Wadala, Byculla, and Mumbaidevi. In these, Sena (UBT) and Congress candidates received huge or at least decent leads in the LS polls. In Wadala, the constituency changed its party preferences in the last two assembly elections, but the MLA remained the same: Kalidas Kolambkar (first in Congress, then BJP); in the 2024 LS polls, the Shinde Sena-BJP candidate lead only in this segment among the seven where party preferences changed from 2014 to 2019.