Kishida visit: Economic, defence ties on agenda

SHUBHAJIT ROY
New Delhi, March 19

EXACTLY A YEAR after Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida came to India in the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine war, he will be in Delhi on Monday for bilateral talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Sources said that defence, security, economic ties, skill development and clean energy partnership are among the top issues on the agenda.

Explaining the context of the visit, a source said: "This meeting is being held at a significant time when India and Japan are holding the presidencies of the G20 and G7, respectively. This visit, therefore, gives us an opportunity to cooperate and discuss how G20 and G7 can work together on converging our priorities on critical global issues including food and health security, energy transitions and economic security."

Modi is likely to travel to Hiroshima for the G7 leaders' summit in May as a guest country, and Kishida is expected to extend a formal invitation during the visit.

"The meeting gives us an opportunity to review the progress made in our bilateral ties since the last Summit meeting held in March 2022," said the source.

The Russia-Ukraine war and its impact on geopolitics will be an important area of discussion, since there are divergences in approach between Delhi and Tokyo. Tokyo is firmly with the Western bloc, led by the US, on this issue.

But his headline speech in Delhi will be the unveiling of his new plan for a free and open Indo-Pacific. This comes 16 years after Japan's then Prime Minister Shinzo Abe gave his seminal speech, "The Confluence of Two Seas" in the Indian Parliament, framing the Indo-Pacific concept in the context of China's aggressive behaviour in the region.

Kishida's plan is expected to include the provision of non-military equipment and infrastructure support for countries in the Indo-Pacific region that have been facing threats from Beijing's belligerence in the region, including the military buildup in the South China Sea.

By choosing Delhi to make his announcement, the Japanese PM is signalling the importance of New Delhi in the new plan for the Indo-Pacific.

India-Japan relations were elevated to a 'global partnership' in 2000, 'strategic and global partnership' in 2006, and 'special strategic and global partnership' in 2014. Regular annual summits have been held between the two countries since 2006 – the last one was held in New Delhi in March last year.

"Japan is a very close partner with which we have both an annual summit and a 2+2 foreign and defence ministerial meeting. Our partnership encompasses a wide range of areas, ranging from defence and security, trade and investment, S&T, education, healthcare, critical and emerging technologies and several others," said a source.

Modi and Kishida met three times last year – Kishida visited India for the 14th annual summit on March 19; Modi visited Tokyo in May for the Quad Summit and in September for Abe's state funeral.

According to sources, the key themes on the agenda during the visit will be:

■ **Defence and security:** Officials said defence and security cooperation has emerged as one of the most important pillars of the India-Japan partnership and an important factor in ensuring peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.


Japan PM to invite Modi to Hiroshima for G7 meet

"The successful conduct of the first fighter jet exercise 'Veer Guardian' in Japan in January 2023 between our two countries was a significant milestone," said the source. This was followed closely by the fourth 'Dharma Guardian' Army exercise, which was conducted for the first time in Japan.

Maritime security cooperation too has seen significant progress. In November last year, India took part in the International Fleet Review in Japan and the Malabar exercise off the coast of Japan. This was preceded by the JIMEX (Japan India Maritime Exercise) in September.

"We are also making steady progress under the Defence Equipment and Technology Agreement signed in 2015," said the source.

■ **Commercial and economic ties:** "Our bilateral trade stood at USD 20.75 billion last year, which was the largest ever," said the source.

The two countries have set up Japan Industrial Townships (JITs) to promote economic partnership, investment, industry and infrastructure development. These are integrated industrial parks with ready-made operational platforms, world class infrastructure facilities, plug-and-play factories; and investment incentives for Japanese companies. There are 11 functioning JITs spread across eight states at present.

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Japan is the fifth largest investor in India, with about 1,450 Japanese companies operating in India. Japan has also been extending bilateral loan and grant assistance to India since 1958, and is the largest bilateral donor to India.

■ **Skill development and movement of skilled workers:** Sources said this is an area where complementarities between the two economies exist. The two countries have signed memoranda of cooperation on Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) and Specified Skilled Worker (SSW).

■ **Clean energy partnership:** Launched during the annual summit last year, this aims to promote energy cooperation through diverse and realistic energy transitions utilising all energy sources and technologies to ensure energy security, carbon neutrality and economic growth.

Following his arrival on Monday morning, Kishida will pay tribute at Rajghat, hold bilateral talks with Modi, give a speech and visit the Buddha Jayanti Park where there is a 'Bal Bodhi Tree'. He will leave on Tuesday morning.

Share of pvt refiners in fuel exports to Europe almost 95% in Apr-Feb

SUKALP SHARMA
New Delhi, March 19

AS EUROPE SHUNS Russian crude oil and petroleum fuels, India's private sector refiners — Reliance Industries and Nayara Energy—have emerged as major beneficiaries, with a disproportionately high share in India's fuel exports to the European continent despite accounting for just around a third of India's refining capacity, as per an analysis of data shared by energy cargo tracker Vortexa.

Given the prevailing geopolitics, the two private sector refiners are seemingly playing an increasingly prominent role in the global crude oil and fuels supply map.

Both the public sector, as well as the private sector refiners in India ramped up imports of discounted Russian crude in the wake of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. However, data suggests that while public sector refiners have remained focussed on supplying fuel to the domestic market, private sector players have stepped up exports to Europe in a bid to partly bridge the fuel supply gap for the region.

According to analysts and industry insiders, Reliance Industries and Nayara Energy-have emerged as significant gainers from the West's punitive action against the Russian energy sector. This is because they are able to purchase Russian oil at a discount on the one hand, and earn robust margins on product supplies to Europe on the other.

In April-February, Indian refiners exported close to 2,24,900 barrels per day (bpd) of petroleum fuels to Europe, with private sector refiners accounting for a staggering 95 per cent, or over 2,13,300 bpd, Vortexa data showed. Public sector refiners like Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum, and Hindustan Petroleum exported just over 11,500 bpd of fuels to Europe.

In fact, in the four months leading up to the February 5 European Union ban on import of refined products from Russia, Indian public sector refiners did not export fuels to Europe at all in two months – November 2022 and January this year. In the same four-month period, private sector refiners supplied an average of around 2,45,500 bpd of petroleum fuels to Europe, around 22 per cent higher than their average export volumes to the continent in the preceding six months, the data shows.

During April-February, India imported a little over 9,40,600 bpd of crude oil from Russia, with private sector refiners accounting for about 45 per cent share, even though their cumulative refining capacity of around 88 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) accounts for just 35 per cent of the country's overall refining capacity of around 251 mtpa. This means that Reliance Industries and Nayara Energy together imported more Russian oil per mtpa of refining capacity than their rivals in the public sector.

Public sector refiners and fuel retailers have not revised retail prices of petrol and diesel since April last year due to high volatility in global energy prices. This forced them to book heavy losses. As public sector players control most of the fuel retail market, private sector refiners, too, have not been able to revise domestic fuel prices in line with global levels. These circumstances in the domestic market coupled with high fuel demand in Europe have clearly made fuel exports a lot more lucrative for private sector refiners.

In view of super-normal exports by private sector refiners, the government had imposed windfall gains tax on fuel exports from July.

"It is important to understand that for OMCs (public sector oil marketing companies), the top priority is to keep the domestic market well-supplied. That is not the case when it comes to private refiners. So, it makes sense for private refiners to prioritise fuel exports to earn higher margins," a senior executive with a public sector refiner told The Indian Express.

As per Vortexa data, India imported a record 1.62 million barrels per day of Russian oil in February, up 29 per cent from January's 1.26 million barrels a day, which was also a record. Russia, which used to be a marginal supplier of oil to India before the war in Ukraine, retained its new-found position as India's biggest source of crude in February as well. The data shows that India's oil imports from Russia in February were more than the cumulative volumes supplied by heavyweights Iraq and Saudi Arabia, the second and third-largest sources of crude for India.

While India, the world's third-largest consumer of crude oil, depends on imports to meet over 85 per cent of its oil requirement, the country is a net exporter of petroleum products as its refining capacity is higher than its domestic demand.

LAPPING UP OPPORTUNITY

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● SVB CRISIS

Banking sector MFs lose 6% in a week

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
new delhi, march 19

BANKING MUTUAL FUNDS have lost up to 6% in the last week following the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank that dented investors' sentiment in the banking and financial services space.

The failure of the two US-based banks sent shockwaves across the global financial system and weakened the sentiments in the banking sector in India too, wherein shares took a beating and declined in the range of 3-13% in the week under review. However, experts believe that the direct impact on the Indian banking sector was negligible to low.

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The incessant selling in the bank stocks is clearly reflected in the banking sector mutual funds, as evident from the short-term performance returns of the 16 schemes under the category.

Of the 16 banking sector mutual funds, all of them have given negative returns to investors in the range of 1.6 % to 6% in the week ended March 17, according to an analysis of data compiled by ACE MF Nxt.

So far this year, these funds have given negative returns ranging from 8% to 10%, the data showed.

The funds which have lost more than five per cent in the last week are Aditya Birla Sun Life Banking and Financial Services Fund, Tata Banking and Financial Services Fund, HDFC Banking and Financial Services Fund, LIC MF Banking and Financial Services Fund, and Nippon India Banking and Financial Services Fund.

However, on nine-month and 1-year time frames, the returns are positive, all the banking and financial services funds have given returns of up to 20% and up to 12%, respectively.

Amritpal still on the run

A Punjab Police team at the Central Jail in Dibrugarh, Assam. PTI

Four of his aides arrested, flown to Dibrugarh

ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA & KAMALDEEP S BRAR
Jalandhar/Amritsar, Mar 19

A 27-MEMBER Punjab police team flew four close aides of Waris Punjab De chief Amritpal Singh to Dibrugarh in Assam Sunday morning. Among those lodged in the Dibrugarh Central Jail is Daljit Singh Kalsi, learnt to be Amritpal's close aide and financier of Waris Punjab De. The other three are Bhagwant Singh, Gurmeet Singh and Pradhanmantri Bajeka.

Meanwhile, district police chiefs carried out flag marches in major towns in the state and the Punjab government extended the suspension of the internet. The hunt for Amritpal Singh continued for the second day. A lookout notice is likely to be issued against him soon, sources in the police said.

The 27-member team headed by Superintendent of Police Tejbir Singh Hundal flew to Assam from Amritsar on a special IAF flight Sunday morning. Authorities in Punjab refused to confirm if the four had been charged under the National Security Act. The Punjab police booked Amritpal and seven of his associates under the Arms Act Sunday after they claimed to have recovered six 12-bore rifles and 196 cartridges from them. Amritsar rural SSP Satinder Singh said more than 100 illegal cartridges were seized from an associate of Amritpal. Later, the seven persons arrested from Amritpal's cavalcade were remanded to police custody till March 23.

As several videos of Amritpal Singh and his aides were being shared in public, Inspector General of Police, Headquarters, Sukhchain Singh Gill, issued a video statement Sunday evening that Amritpal was still absconding and efforts were on to nab him. The Punjab police is acting within the ambit of law, he said. In a related development, Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Harpreet Singh issued a statement appealing for peace and harmony. Urging the authorities to not perpetuate an atmosphere of fear by unduly picking up youth, he called upon youngsters to avoid the path of confrontation.

Earlier, Jalandhar Police Commissioner Kuldeep Singh Chahal told mediapersons that Amritpal's vehicle was chased for around 25 kms on Saturday but his driver managed to escape through the narrow lanes of Malsian town in Jalandhar by hitting a police vehicle on the road. Amritpal was travelling with four persons including his uncle. DIG Jalandhar Range Swapan Sharma said the Mercedes in which Amritpal travels belongs to the brother of a drug smuggler Randeep who was earlier killed in a police encounter. He also said his links with Pakistani Agency ISI were being probed. The Punjab police had planned to arrest Amritpal at Mehatpur on the Jalandhar-Moga Road on Saturday. However, he was able to evade the police and sources said he left his vehicle and mobile phone near Nakodar. In a state-wide crackdown, the police had arrested 78 of his associates on Saturday.

Aide got ₹35 cr from abroad: Probe

A credit of at least ₹ 35 crore from foreign countries was received in the bank account of Daljit Kalsi, a close aide of Waris Punjab De chief Amritpal Singh, according to investigating agencies. Under scrutiny are also about two dozen mobile phone numbers from Pakistan from which calls were made or received in Kalsi's phone. Amritpal and his close aides were in the process of constituting an independent force of armed supporters in the name of Anandpur Khalsa Force (AKF), a senior official said.

Efficient processing key for strengthening millet value chain: Official

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, March 19

IMPROVED VARIETIES, better shelf life, efficient processing and access to markets are all vital for strengthening the millet value chain, a senior Agriculture Ministry official said on Sunday.

"We must carry out R&D in all areas of the value chain of millets and bring together the knowledge of production, processing and storage and make it available to the consumer," Joint Secretary in the Agriculture Ministry Vijaya Lakshmi Nadendla said addressing a plenary session at the Global Millets Conference.

The government is propagating millets cultivation and increasing demand, it is expected that more women will get engaged in the cultivation of millets, thereby leading to a need for skilling and capacity building, she said at another session at the conference.

She said the government is "exclusively promoting 100 per cent Women FPOs" and issued a guideline for the inclusion of "one woman on the Board of Directors of each FPO".

On the occasion, ITC Ltd Group Head (Agri & IT Businesses) Sivakumar S emphasised synchronisation of the millets value chain as a critical requirement for scaling millets, an official release said. In this regard, "Millets stakeholder partnerships are vital to creating such synchronisation", he said.

Manoj Juneja, Deputy Executive Director and CFO, World Food Programme (WFP), underlined that millet is crucial for food and nutritional security, promoting biodiversity and empowering farmers. "It's high time we revive the brand of millets and foster resilient food systems," he said.

Just Organik Founder and Managing Director Pankaj Agarwal called for "collaborative participation from all the stakeholders."

એલઆઇસીના વડા માટે પસંદગીની કાર્યવાહીને ટૂંક સમયમાં શરૂ કરાશે

પીટીઆઈ
નવી દિલ્હી, તા. ૧૯

સરકારી માલિકીની બેંકો અને નાણાંકીય સંસ્થાઓના ડિરેક્ટર્સના હેડહન્ટર ફાઇનાન્સિયલ સર્વિસીસ ઇન્સ્ટિટ્યૂશન્સ બ્યુરો (એફએસઆઇબી) આ મહિને વીમા કંપની એલઆઇસીના નવા ચેરમેનની પસંદગી કરી શકે છે. એલઆઇસી કંપનીના ચાર મેનેજિંગ ડિરેક્ટર્સમાંથી ચેરમેનની પસંદગી કરવામાં આવશે, તેમ સૂત્રોએ જણાવ્યું હતું. સૂત્રોના જણાવ્યા મુજબ જો કમિટીના તમામ સભ્યો ઉપલબ્ધ હશે તો બ્યુરો આગામી સપ્તાહના અંત સુધીમાં આ પદ માટે ઇન્ટરવ્યુ લઈ શકે છે. સંસદના બજેટ સત્રને કારણે સભ્યોની ઉપલબ્ધતાને આધિન એફએસઆઇબી આ મહિને પસંદગી કરે તેવી શક્યતા છે, એમ સૂત્રોએ જણાવ્યું હતું. નોંધનીય છે કે મેનેજિંગ ડિરેક્ટરમાંથી એક બીસી પટનાયક ૩૧ માર્ચે નિવૃત્ત થાય છે. સરકારે તત્લેશ પાંડેને તેમની બદલી તરીકે નિયુક્ત કરી દીધી છે. હાલમાં એલઆઇસીના મેનેજિંગ ડિરેક્ટર સિદ્ધાર્થ મોહંતી ૧૩ માર્ચ, ૨૦૨૩ના રોજ એમઆર કુમારની મુદત પૂર્ણ થયા પછી દેશની સૌથી મોટી જીવન વીમા કંપનીના કાર્યકારી અધ્યક્ષ છે.

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The failure of the two US-based banks sent shockwaves across the global financial system

The incessant selling in the bank stocks is clearly reflected in the banking sector mutual funds, as evident from the short-term performance returns of the 16 schemes under the category.

Of the 16 banking sector mutual funds, all of them have given negative returns to investors in the range of 1.6 % to 6% in the week ended March 17, according to an analysis of data compiled by ACE MF Nxt.

So far this year, these funds have given negative returns ranging from 8% to 10%, the data showed.

The funds which have lost more than five per cent in the last week are Aditya Birla Sun Life Banking and Financial Services Fund, Tata Banking and Financial Services Fund, HDFC Banking and Financial Services Fund, LIC MF Banking and Financial Services Fund, and Nippon India Banking and Financial Services Fund.

However, on nine-month and 1-year time frames, the returns are positive, all the banking and financial services funds have given returns of up to 20% and up to 12%, respectively.

Amritpal still on the run

A Punjab Police team at the Central Jail in Dibrugarh, Assam. PTI

Four of his aides arrested, flown to Dibrugarh

ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA & KAMALDEEP S BRAR
Jalandhar/Amritsar, Mar 19

A 27-MEMBER Punjab police team flew four close aides of Waris Punjab De chief Amritpal Singh to Dibrugarh in Assam Sunday morning. Among those lodged in the Dibrugarh Central Jail is Daljit Singh Kalsi, learnt to be Amritpal's close aide and financier of Waris Punjab De. The other three are Bhagwant Singh, Gurmeet Singh and Pradhanmantri Bajeka.

Meanwhile, district police chiefs carried out flag marches in major towns in the state and the Punjab government extended the suspension of the internet. The hunt for Amritpal Singh continued for the second day. A lookout notice is likely to be issued against him soon, sources in the police said.

The 27-member team headed by Superintendent of Police Tejbir Singh Hundal flew to Assam from Amritsar on a special IAF flight Sunday morning. Authorities in Punjab refused to confirm if the four had been charged under the National Security Act. The Punjab police booked Amritpal and seven of his associates under the Arms Act Sunday after they claimed to have recovered six 12-bore rifles and 196 cartridges from them. Amritsar rural SSP Satinder Singh said more than 100 illegal cartridges were seized from an associate of Amritpal. Later, the seven persons arrested from Amritpal's cavalcade were remanded to police custody till March 23.

As several videos of Amritpal Singh and his aides were being shared in public, Inspector General of Police, Headquarters, Sukhchain Singh Gill, issued a video statement Sunday evening that Amritpal was still absconding and efforts were on to nab him. The Punjab police is acting within the ambit of law, he said. In a related development, Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Harpreet Singh issued a statement appealing for peace and harmony. Urging the authorities to not perpetuate an atmosphere of fear by unduly picking up youth, he called upon youngsters to avoid the path of confrontation.

Earlier, Jalandhar Police Commissioner Kuldeep Singh Chahal told mediapersons that Amritpal's vehicle was chased for around 25 kms on Saturday but his driver managed to escape through the narrow lanes of Malsian town in Jalandhar by hitting a police vehicle on the road. Amritpal was travelling with four persons including his uncle. DIG Jalandhar Range Swapan Sharma said the Mercedes in which Amritpal travels belongs to the brother of a drug smuggler Randeep who was earlier killed in a police encounter. He also said his links with Pakistani Agency ISI were being probed. The Punjab police had planned to arrest Amritpal at Mehatpur on the Jalandhar-Moga Road on Saturday. However, he was able to evade the police and sources said he left his vehicle and mobile phone near Nakodar. In a state-wide crackdown, the police had arrested 78 of his associates on Saturday.

Aide got ₹35 cr from abroad: Probe

A credit of at least ₹ 35 crore from foreign countries was received in the bank account of Daljit Kalsi, a close aide of Waris Punjab De chief Amritpal Singh, according to investigating agencies. Under scrutiny are also about two dozen mobile phone numbers from Pakistan from which calls were made or received in Kalsi's phone. Amritpal and his close aides were in the process of constituting an independent force of armed supporters in the name of Anandpur Khalsa Force (AKF), a senior official said.

Efficient processing key for strengthening millet value chain: Official

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, March 19

IMPROVED VARIETIES, better shelf life, efficient processing and access to markets are all vital for strengthening the millet value chain, a senior Agriculture Ministry official said on Sunday.

"We must carry out R&D in all areas of the value chain of millets and bring together the knowledge of production, processing and storage and make it available to the consumer," Joint Secretary in the Agriculture Ministry Vijaya Lakshmi Nadendla said addressing a plenary session at the Global Millets Conference.

The government is propagating millets cultivation and increasing demand, it is expected that more women will get engaged in the cultivation of millets, thereby leading to a need for skilling and capacity building, she said at another session at the conference.

She said the government is "exclusively promoting 100 per cent Women FPOs" and issued a guideline for the inclusion of "one woman on the Board of Directors of each FPO".

On the occasion, ITC Ltd Group Head (Agri & IT Businesses) Sivakumar S emphasised synchronisation of the millets value chain as a critical requirement for scaling millets, an official release said. In this regard, "Millets stakeholder partnerships are vital to creating such synchronisation", he said.

Manoj Juneja, Deputy Executive Director and CFO, World Food Programme (WFP), underlined that millet is crucial for food and nutritional security, promoting biodiversity and empowering farmers. "It's high time we revive the brand of millets and foster resilient food systems," he said.

Just Organik Founder and Managing Director Pankaj Agarwal called for "collaborative participation from all the stakeholders.

आमचा शिंदे सरकारला पाठिंबा पण युती नाही! बच्चू कडूंचे वक्तव्य

■ अमरावती

भाजपचे प्रदेशाध्यक्ष चंद्रशेखर बावनकुळे यांनी आगामी निवडणुकीत भाजप २८८ पैकी २४० जागा लढवणार असल्याचे म्हटले आहे. त्यामुळे शिंदे गटाला केवळ विधानसभेच्या केवळ ४८ जागाच मिळणार असल्याचे दिसून येत आहे.

बावनकुळे यांच्या या विधानामुळे शिंदे गटात एकच चलबिचल सुरू झाली आहे. आता या मुद्यावर आमदार बच्चू कडू यांनीही प्रतिक्रिया दिली आहे. कडू म्हणाले की, आम्ही सध्या शिंदे सरकारला पाठिंबा दिला आहे. पुढील युतीचे काही ठरलेले नाही. अमरावती येथे ते पत्रकारांशी बोलत होते.

बच्चू कडू पुढे असेही म्हणाले की, भाजपने नुकताच युतीचा फॉर्म्युला जाहीर केला आहे. मात्र यात शिंदे आणि भाजप सरकारला पाठिंबा देणाऱ्या लहान पक्षांचा उल्लेख नाही. आम्ही सध्या शिंदे सरकारला पाठिंबा दिलेला आहे.

येणाऱ्या विधानसभेमध्ये युती करायची की, नाही करायची, आम्हाला किती जागा देणार त्याचे अजून काही ठरलेले नाही. तसेच कोणी किती जागा लढवायच्या हा शिवसेना आणि भाजपचा व्यक्तिगत प्रश्न आहे. आमची शिंदे गट आणि भाजपशी युती नाही. आमचा फक्त सरकारला पाठिंबा आहे. जेव्हा युती होईल तेव्हा पाहू. तसेच बावनकुळे यांनी केलेले वक्तव्य हे खरे आहे की, चुकून त्यांचे शब्द निघाले हे पण तपासले पाहिजे. पण आम्ही सध्या शिंदे सरकारला पाठिंबा दिलेला आहे.

युतीचे अजून काही आमचे ठरलेले नाही. ते येणारा काळ पाहून ठरवू, असे सुचक विधान बच्चू कडू यांनी केले आहे. दरम्यान, बच्चू कडू पुढे म्हणाले, पुढल्या दीड वर्षात काय होते त्याचे आता काहीच सांगता येत नाही, या पाच वर्षांत तीन मुख्यमंत्री बदलले, तीन वेळा शपथविधी झाले. पुढल्या दीड वर्षात काय होणार हे सांगता येत नाही असे सूचक वक्तव्य केले.

वाकोला मिठी नदीवरील पूल धोकादायक स्थितीत

■ मुंबई

वाकोला ब्रीजवर गेले तीन वर्षांपासून सुरू असलेल्या स्काय वॉकच्या बांधकामाचा फटका वाकोला मिठी नदीवरील पुलाला बसला आहे. हा पूल धोकादायक स्थितीत असल्याचा सूचना फलक पालिकेने येथे लावला आहे, अशी माहिती एच-पूर्व-कार्यालयातून देण्यात आली.

अंदाजे पन्नास वर्षे जुना असलेला वाकोला पुलाची लांबी ३६ मीटर तर रुंदी ३७ मीटर आहे. याच्या खाली पाणी वाहून नेणारे १२ मीटर रुंदीचे तीन गाळे आहेत, अशी माहिती देऊन एच-पूर्व-पालिका कार्यालयातून पुढे असे सांगण्यात आले की, नेहरू रोड या ठिकाणी पालिकेच्या स्काय वॉकचे काम सुरू आहे. रस्त्यावर पिलर खांब उभारण्यासाठी करण्यात आलेल्या खोदकामाच्या हादऱ्यामुळे पुलाच्या खालील भागांना तडे गेले आहेत. याचे स्ट्रक्चरल ऑडिट करण्यात आले आहे.

यानुसार पुलाची दुरुस्ती करणे गरजेचे आहे. सध्या या पुलावरून १६ टन पेक्षा जास्त जड वाहने ट्रेलर्स यांना ये-जा करण्यास मनाई करण्यात आली आहे. तसेच वाहनांची वेगमर्यादा ३० कि.मी. असावी, असा सूचना फलक पालिकेने पुलाजवळ लावला आहे.

पोलिसांची परवानगी नसतानाही सकल हिंदू समाजाचा जनगर्जना मोर्चा

धर्मांतर आणि लव्ह जिहादचा कायदा लागू करा....

■ छत्रपती संभाजीनगर

सकल हिंदू समाजाकडून नामांतरणाच्या समर्थनात आज 'हिंदू जनगर्जना मोर्चा' काढण्यात आला होता. पोलिसांकडून या मोर्चाला परवानगी नाकारली होती. पण तरी देखील हा मोर्चा काढण्यात आला होता. गोहत्या, धर्मांतर आणि लव्ह जिहादचा कायदा लागू करण्यात यावा, अशी मागणी या मोर्चाच्या माध्यमातून करण्यात आली.

या मोर्चाला हजारोंच्या संख्येने लोक उपस्थित राहिले होते. मोर्चात उपस्थित असलेल्या अनेकांच्या हातात भगवे झेंडे, डोक्यावर भगव्या टोप्या, श्रीरामाचे आणि छत्रपती शिवाजी महाराजांचे मोठे पोस्टर होते. आजच्या मोर्चाला क्रांती चौक येथून आरंभ झाला आणि शांततेच्या मार्गाने सभा घेत औरंगपुरा इथे समारोप करण्यात आला. औरंगाबाद जिल्ह्याचे नाव छत्रपती संभाजीनगर आणि उस्मानाबादचे नाव धाराशिव करण्याला केंद्राने परवानगी दिल्यानंतर राज्यात एकच जल्लोष करण्यात आला. पण औरंगाबादच्या नामांतरणाला एआईएमआईएम महाराष्ट्र प्रमुख इम्तियाज जलील यांनी विरोध करत साखळी उपोषण केले होते. यामुळे जिल्ह्यात तणावाचे वातावरण निर्माण झाले होते.

आता बीआरटी मार्गामधून गाडी चालवल्यास दंड भरावा लागेल

■ पिंपरी

फेब्रुवारी महिन्यापासून वाहतूक नियमांमधे वाढ झाली आहे. त्यानुसार आता बस रैपिड ट्रांझीस्ट मार्गामधून खाजगी वाहने चालविल्यास पीसीएमसी वाहतूक पोलिसांकडून ५०० दंड वसुल केला जाईल. फेब्रुवारी महिन्यात पीसीएमसी वाहतूक पोलिसांनी एकूण ६,३६,००० एवढा दंड जमा केला होता. तसेच ब्लैक फ्लिमिंग, प्रलंबित दंड इत्यादी कारणांसाठी सुद्धा दंड वसुल केला गेला. वाहतूक नियमांचे उल्लंघन केल्याने अपघातांचे प्रमाण वाढते, म्हणून पीसीएमसी वाहतूक विभागाने सर्व नागरिकांना वाहतूक नियम पाळण्याची विनंती केली आहे.

वांद्र्यातील शासकीय वसाहतीची डागडुजीच नाही

■ मुंबई

राज्य शासनाकडून इमारतींच्या डागडुजी कामांसाठी फंड येत नाही, साहित्य दिले जात नाही, कारागिर अपुरा, अशी कारणे देत सार्वजनिक बांधकाम विभागाने वांद्रे (पूर्व) च्या शासकीय वसाहतीची डागडुजी गेले आठ वर्षे रखडवली आहे. त्यामुळे तेथील रहिवासी विभागाच्या कारभारावर संताप व्यक्त करत आहेत.

दरवर्षी पावसाळ्यात अनेक खोल्यांमध्ये पाण्याची गळती असते. त्यामुळे छतांना प्लास्टिक कागद बांधावे लागतात. काही खोल्यांच्या खिडक्या असून नसल्यासारख्या आहेत. छतांचे अधूनमधून कोसळणारे प्लास्टर चिंतेचा विषय झाला आहे. त्यातच भिंतीतून लोखंडी गंजलेल्या सळ्या डोकावित आहेत. प्रत्येक इमारतीच्या पाठीमागील सांडपाणी व मलमूत्र वाहून नेणारे पाईप जागोजागी फुटले आहेत. छोट्या मोठ्या गटारांची व परिसराची न होणारी साफसफाई रोगराईला निमंत्रण ठरले आहे. येत्या काही महिन्यावर पावसाळा येत असून, सार्वजनिक बांधकाम विभागाला जाग येईल का?

महाड चवदार तळ्याच्या अभिवादनासाठी भीमसैनिक रवाना

■ सातारा

भारत देशात जातीय मानसिकतेतून गरीब व दलित- पददलित नागरिकांना पिण्याच्या पाण्यासाठी संघर्ष करावा लागतो. ही बाब इतिहासात नोंद घेणारी ठरली. महाडच्या चवदार तळ्याचा सत्याग्रह यशस्वी झाला. आज तळ्याला स्पर्श करून अभिवादन करण्यासाठी सातारा जिल्ह्यातील पाच हजार तर संपूर्ण देशातून दोन ते अडीच लाख आंबेडकर अनुयायी भेट देणार आहेत. त्यामुळे चवदार तळे परिसर गजबजून जाणार आहे. या डॉ. आंबेडकर अनुयायांना चवदार तळ्याच्या सत्याग्रहाच्या बाबतीत अनेक माहिती उपलब्ध झाली असल्यामुळे सोशल मीडियाच्या माध्यमातूनही मोठ्या संख्येने अभिवादन केले जात आहे. हा दिवस सामाजिक सबलीकरण व समता दिन म्हणून भारतात साजरा केला जातो.

सध्या महाड नगरपरिषद व राज्य शासनाने ही चवदार तळ्याच्या सुशोभीकरण करण्यासाठी मोठ्या प्रमाणात निधी उपलब्ध केलेला आहे. तसेच विशेष बाब म्हणजे फुले-शाहू-आंबेडकर चळवळीतील उद्योगपती दिवार यांनी डॉ. बाबासाहेब आंबेडकरांनी दि २० मार्च १९२७ रोजी महाड चवदार तळ्याचा सत्याग्रह केला होता. त्याचे स्मरण कायम व्हावे यासाठी ''२० मार्च'' ही शुध्द पिण्याच्या पाण्याची बाटली बंद उत्पादन सुरू केलेले आहे. त्याला भरघोस पाठिंबा मिळत आहे.

मुंबईतील बेस्टची जमीन विकण्याचा भाजप आमदार कोळंबकरांचा प्रस्ताव

■ मुंबई

मुंबईतील बेस्ट उपक्रमाच्या ७५ एकर निवासी संकुल जागेतील १५ एकर जमीन सध्या राहत असलेल्या बेस्ट कर्मचाऱ्यांना बाजारभावाने देऊन उर्वरित जागा विकून टाकावी. त्यामुळे बेस्टचा आर्थिक फायदा होऊन कर्मचाऱ्यांनाही ते लाभदायी ठरेल, अशा मागणीची लक्षवेधी सूचना भाजपचे आमदार कालिदास कोळंबकर यांनी विधान परिषदेत केली. यावर मुख्यमंत्री एकनाथ शिंदे यांनीही बेस्ट उपक्रमाबाबत काही महत्वपूर्ण माहिती सभागृहात दिली. यावेळी बेस्टच्या सेवानिवृत्त कर्मचाऱ्याच्या नावे सध्या राहत असलेली सदनिका करता येणार नसल्याचे मुख्यमंत्र्यांनी स्पष्ट केले.

भाजपचे आमदार कालिदास कोळंबकर यांनी लक्षवेधी सूचना मांडताना म्हटले की, मुंबईत बेस्ट उपक्रमाची ३५० एकर उद्योग संकुल आणि ७५ एकर निवासी जागा आहे. त्यापैकी निवासी संकुलाच्या १२ एकर जमिनीवर वसाहतीची जागा शासकीय भावाने विकून ५०० स्क्वेअर फुटांची घरे त्या वसाहतीत राहत असलेल्या बेस्ट कर्मचाऱ्यांना बाजारभावाने द्यावेत आणि अन्य जागा विकून टाकावी. त्यामुळे बेस्ट कर्मचारी आणि बेस्ट प्रशासन असा दोघांचाही फायदा होऊ शकेल. पण मुख्यमंत्री एकनाथ शिंदे यावर म्हणाले की, वीज ग्राहक व बस सेवा देणाऱ्या बेस्ट कर्मचाऱ्यांचे निवासस्थान कामाच्या ठिकाणापासून जवळ असणे गरजेचे आहे. त्यामुळे सेवानिवृत्त झालेल्या कर्मचाऱ्याची सदनिका दुसऱ्या नियुक्त कर्मचाऱ्याला मिळणे गरजेचे आहे.