

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

Hindu population falls by...

The papers said it is not surprising, therefore, minority populations from across the neighbourhood come to India during times of duress. It pointed out that all the Muslim majority countries witnessed an increase in the share of the majority religious denomination except Maldives, where the share of the majority group (Shafi'i Sunnis) declined by 1.47 per cent.

In Bangladesh, there was an 18 per cent increase in the share of the majority religious group which is the largest such increase in the Indian subcontinent. Pakistan witnessed an increase of 3.75 per cent in the share of the majority religious denomination (Hanafi Muslim) and a 10 per cent increase in the share of total Muslim population despite the creation of Bangladesh in 1971.

According to the report, among non-Muslim majority countries, Myanmar, India and Nepal saw a decline in the share of the majority reli-

gious denomination.

The paper noted that the year 1950 is important as a baseline year for two major reasons.

This was around the time that the international human rights framework under the aegis of the newly created United Nations began to take shape with minority rights and state responsibility for protection of minorities being mainstreamed in international law, the paper said.

The paper is a detailed cross-country descriptive analysis of the status of minorities around the world measured in terms of their changing share in a country's population over 65 years between 1950 and 2015. For the 167 countries analysed, the average value for the share of the majority religious denomination in the baseline year of 1950 is 75 per cent, while the mean of the distribution capturing the change in majority religious denomination between 1950 and 2015 is 21.9.

Establishing open prisons can be solution to decongest jails: SC

NEW DELHI, May 9 (PTI)

THE Supreme Court on Thursday said establishing open jails can be one of the solutions to overcrowding and also address the issue of rehabilitation of prisoners.

Semi-open or open prisons allow convicts to work outside the premises during the day to help them earn a livelihood and return in the evening. The concept was brought in to assimilate the convicts with the society and reduce their psychological pressure as they faced difficulties in leading normal lives outside.

While hearing a plea on jails and prisoners, a bench of Justices BR Gavai and Sandeep Mehta said it wants to expand the presence of open prisons across the country.

"One of the solutions for overcrowding of the prisons



can be establishing open prisons/camps. The said system is efficiently working in the state of Rajasthan. Apart from addressing the issue of congestion in prison, it also addresses the issue of rehabilitation of prisoners," the bench said. The bench made clear that it would not touch upon issues related to jails and prison

reforms which are already pending adjudication before its coordinate benches in some other petitions.

The counsel appearing for the National Legal Services Authority (NLSA) told the court it had sought responses from states on open prisons and 24 of them have responded.



Miss Universe 2023 Shynnis Palacios poses for pictures at the Taj Mahal in Agra on Thursday. (PTI)

ED in SC opposes interim bail to Arvind Kejriwal

NEW DELHI, May 9 (PTI)

THE right to campaign in an election is neither a fundamental nor a constitutional right, the Enforcement Directorate told the Supreme Court on Thursday, a day ahead of the scheduled pronouncement of the court's order on grant of interim bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a money laundering case.

In a fresh affidavit filed in the top court to thwart the release of the embattled Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener, the central probe agency said there were numerous examples where politicians contested elections while in judicial custody, and some even won, but were never granted interim bail for campaigning.

"No political leader has been granted interim bail for cam-

paigning even though he is not the contesting candidate. Even a contesting candidate is not granted interim bail if he is in custody for his own campaigning.

"It is relevant to note that the right to campaign for an election is neither a fundamental right nor a constitutional right and not even a legal right," the ED said.

On Wednesday, Justice Sanjay Khanna, who headed the bench that heard Kejriwal's petition against his arrest in the case, said, "We will pronounce the interim order on bail on Friday. The main matter related to the challenge to arrest will also be taken up on the same day."

The AAP leader was arrested on March 21 and is currently lodged in Tihar Jail under judicial custody.

8 killed in firecracker blast in TN

VRUDHUNAGAR, May 9 (PTI)

THE toll in a blaze at a fireworks-manufacturing unit in Sivakasi on Thursday rose to eight, with one more worker succumbing to his burns, police said.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, who expressed condolences over the incident, directed the district authorities to provide appropriate medical care to the injured and sustained.

Eight workers, including five women and three men, were killed in the accident at a fireworks-manufacturing unit near Sengamalapati in Sivakasi in the district.

The firecrackers were completely gutted, police said. Police and fire service personnel rushed the injured to the Government hospital in Sivakasi.

The district police official said the cause of the fire was being



Flames billow out after a firecracker blast at a fireworks-manufacturing unit in Sivakasi, Virudhunagar district of Tamil Nadu on Thursday. (PTI)

ascertained and added that the unit is a licensed one.

Expressing grief over the death of the five women and three men in the explosion, Chief Minister Stalin said that immediately after receiving information about the accident, he directed the district

collector to promptly launch a rescue operation. It was learnt that more than 10 persons were injured and they required medical attention, he said.

"I have directed the officials to ensure appropriate life-saving treatment for the injured," Stalin said in a release here.

US trying to complicate India's LS polls: Russia

NEW DELHI, May 9 (IANS)

TARGETING the US for interfering in India's internal affairs, Russia has said that Washington is trying to "complicate" the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, including by making "regular unfounded accusations" on threats to religious freedom in the country.

Reacting strongly to the recent report released by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), Russian Foreign Ministry spokesper-

son Maria Zakharova said, "Washington not only groundlessly" accuses India, but also many other States.

"Regular unfounded accusations by the US against New Delhi - we see that they groundlessly accuse not only India, but also many other States - of violating religious freedoms are a reflection of the US' misunderstanding of the national mentality, the historical context of the development of the Indian State and disrespect for India as a State," Zakharova told media persons in Moscow.

Kerala temple boards discontinue oleander flowers in rituals over toxicity concerns

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, May 9 (PTI)

IN A significant decision, two major Devaswom Boards, which manage the majority of temples in Kerala, made a change to their offerings on Thursday by discontinuing the

use of Arali flowers (oleander) in their sacred rituals.

The Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) and Malabar Devaswom Board took the decision after concerns arose about the toxic nature of these flowers, which could harm humans and animals. P S

Prasanth, the president of the TDB, announced this decision regarding the temples under its jurisdiction after a meeting of the board here on Thursday.

"It has been decided to completely avoid using Arali flowers in the rituals and prasadam offerings in temples under the

TDB. Instead, other flowers like tulsi, thechi (kora), jasmine, jamanti (hibiscus), and rose will be used," Prasanth told reporters here.

The TDB is entrusted with the task of administering 1248 temples in the erstwhile princely state of Travancore, Malabar

Devaswom Board President M M Murali said the use of Arali flowers for rituals has been banned in over 1,400 temples under its jurisdiction.

"Although the Arali flower is not widely used in rituals in temples, its use has been considered for the safety of devotees."



All Express cabin crew to join duty; airline to withdraw termination letters



NEW DELHI, May 9 (PTI)

AIR India Express cabin crew on Thursday decided to withdraw their strike and the airline agreed to reinstate 25 staff who were terminated from service, according to sources. A section of the cabin crew started reporting sick from Tuesday night to protest against the alleged mismanagement at the airline, forcing cancellation of more than 170 flights and impacting thousands of passengers at various airports.

The decisions to end the strike and withdraw the termination letters were agreed upon during a conciliation meeting between the representatives of cabin crew and the airline management at the Office of the Chief Labour Commissioner (Central) in the national capital on

Thursday. The meeting, which went on for nearly five hours, was between representatives of Air India Express Employees Union (AIXEU) and airline management. The union is affiliated to the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), an associate of the RSS. After the meeting, Girish Chandra Arya, All India Secretary of the BMS, said the termination of 25 cabin crew of Air India Express has been withdrawn. Both parties will discuss the issues and there will be a meeting again on May 28, he said. After detailed discussion, persuasion and an appeal of the Conciliation Officer and the Chief Labour Commissioner, the union representatives agreed that "all the cabin crew members who have reported sick will report for duty with fitness certificate immediately, according to a document signed by the representatives of the union and the airline."

'India's exports rise'

NEW DELHI, May 9 (PTI)

INDIA'S exports have increased to as many as 115 countries out of the total 238 destinations during 2023-24 despite the global economic uncertainties, according to Commerce Ministry's data. These 115 export destinations, which account for 46.5 per cent

of India's export basket, include the US, UAE, Netherlands, China, UK, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Bangladesh, Germany and Italy. The country's merchandise exports dipped by 3 per cent to USD 437.1 billion in the last fiscal. However, services exports rose to USD 341.1 bn in 2023-24 as against 325.5 bn.

Sensex tumbles over 1,000 pts, Nifty falls below 22,000 level

MUMBAI, May 9 (PTI)

EQUITY benchmark Sensex on Thursday crashed over 1,000 points while the Nifty dipped below the 22,000 level due to across-the-board selloff amid general election uncertainties.

Besides, persistent foreign fund outflows and heavy selling pressure in HDFC Bank, Larsen & Toubro and Reliance Industries weighed on investor sentiment, traders said.

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