

PM Modi, Malaysian counterpart receive rousing welcome at Indian diaspora event

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 7: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Malaysian counterpart Anwar Ibrahim received a rousing welcome at the Indian diaspora event here on Saturday to dance performances by over 800 participants.

Over 800 dancers showcased a tapestry of Indian classical and folk dances, including Bharatnatyam, Kathak, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, Yakshagana, Lavani and Odissi.

Modi and Ibrahim, who travelled to the venue in the same car, arrived on the stage amid slogans of 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' and chants of 'Modi, Modi'.



An announcement was made that the dance performance had entered the Malaysian Book of Records for the most number of performers in an Indian dance performance.

"I am personally excited to have a great friend from India joining us in Malaysia," Ibrahim told the gathering.

The Malaysian prime minister recalled ancient ties between the two nations "long before embassies and trade agreements" came in vogue.

"India or Bharat is among Malaysia's top trading partners. It is not only goods that move between us, but in

2025 over 1.5 million Indian visitors came to Malaysia," Ibrahim said. "I am proud to be a personal friend of Modi ji and India," the Malaysian prime minister said.

Modi on Saturday arrived here on a two-day visit where he was received by his Malaysian counterpart Ibrahim.

"Landed in Kuala Lumpur. Deeply touched by the warm welcome extended by my friend, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim at the airport. I look forward to our conversations and to further strengthening the bonds of friendship between India and Malaysia," Modi said in a post on X.

Norwegian crown princess issues apology to those 'disappointed' by her Epstein contacts

OSLO, FEB 6 : Norway's crown princess issued an apology on Friday to those she has "disappointed" following days of scrutiny of her contacts with the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, and said she was sorry for the situation she had put the royal family in.

Crown Princess Mette-Marit's communications and contacts with Epstein have put her in the spotlight in recent days, adding to the embarrassment to the royals just as her son went to trial this week for multiple offences including charges of rape. The Epstein files contained several hundred mentions of the crown princess, who said in 2019 that she regretted having had contact with Epstein, Norwegian media reported.

The documents, which include email exchanges, showed that Mette-Marit borrowed an Epstein-owned property in Palm Beach, Florida, for several days in



2013. Broadcaster NRK reported that the stay was arranged through a mutual friend, which was later confirmed by the royal household. The royal palace said Friday that Mette-Marit wants to talk about what happened and explain herself in more detail, but is unable to at present. It added that she is in a very difficult situation and "hopes for understanding that she needs time to gather her thoughts."

It also issued a statement from the crown princess herself, her second in a week, in which she reiterated her deep regret for her past friendship with Epstein.

"It is important for me to apologize to all of you whom I have disappointed," she said. "Some of the content of the messages between Epstein and me does not represent the person I want to be. I also

apologize for the situation I have put the Royal Family in, especially the King and Queen."

Mette-Marit said in a statement issued shortly after the latest Epstein files were released that she "must take responsibility for not having investigated Epstein's background more thoroughly, and for not realising sooner what kind of person he was."

Bihar to form milk producers' committees in all villages in 2 yrs to boost dairy production: Nitish

PATNA, Feb 7: The Bihar Government has decided to form milk producers' committees in all 39,073 villages to boost dairy production, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said on Saturday.

Kumar said such committees have already been formed in 25,593 villages, and those will be set up in the remaining 13,480 villages in the next two years.

The Dairy, Fisheries and Animal Resource Department has been given instructions in this regard, he said.

Kumar said directions have also been given to open Sudha Milk outlets in all panchayat areas by the end of the 2026-27 fiscal.

"This will enhance milk production as well as ensure a



fair price for livestock rearers for their milk," he said in a post on X.

"Under the Saat Nischay-2 scheme, Sudha Milk outlets have already been opened in all blocks of the state.

Now, under Saat Nischay-3, a decision has been taken to open Sudha Milk outlets in

JEEViKA 'didis' are women associated with the Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society (BRLPS), which is spearheading the World Bank-funded Bihar Rural Livelihoods Project (BRLP).

The 'Saat Nischay-3' programme is aimed at taking Bihar to be among the most developed states in the country by 2030.

Kumar said that when the dairy business grows, new employment opportunities will be created for people in their own villages.

"At the same time, the availability of milk and milk products will be ensured. This will strengthen the rural economy and bring prosperity," he said. (PTI)

BJP Names Ritu Tawde As Mumbai Mayor Candidate, Shiv Sena Picks Sanjay Ghadi For Dy Mayor Post

MUMBAI, FEB 7: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Saturday nominated corporator Ritu Tawde for the Mumbai mayor election, while its ally Shiv Sena declared Sanjay Ghadi as its candidate for the deputy mayor's post.

BJP leader Amit Satam declared Tawde's name, while Shiv Sena leader Rahul Shevale announced Ghadi's candidature at the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) headquarters.

Tawde is a corporator from Ward 132, while Ghadi was elected from Ward 5 in the January 15 civic election.

Ghadi will serve as deputy mayor for 15 months, Shiv Sena secretary Sanjay More has said in a statement.

He was one of the senior



former Shiv Sena (UBT) corporators who switched sides to join the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena.

In the polls to the 227-member Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, the BJP emerged as the single largest party with 89 seats, while Shiv Sena won 29 seats. The ruling alliance,

with a combined strength of 118 corporators, is past the halfway mark of 114 and is well placed to secure the mayor's post.

The Shiv Sena (UBT), which ruled the civic body for 25 years since 1997, won 65 seats, while its allies, the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) and the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar), won six and one seat, respectively.

Among other parties, the Congress won 24 seats, AIMIM eight, the NCP (Ajit Pawar faction) three, and the Samajwadi Party two. Two independent candidates also won in the high-stakes election, held after a nine-year gap.

The BMC commissioner has been serving as the state government-appointed administrator since March 7, 2022, following the end of the previous term.

The BMC is the country's richest civic body, with its budget for the 2025-26 pegged at Rs 74,450 crore, which is higher than that of some smaller states. (Agencies)

Debate, discussion part of democratic process, but decorum must be maintained: Birla

PATNA, FEB 7: Maintaining that debate and discussion are part of the democratic process, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Saturday said the decorum of the House must be maintained at any cost.

Birla was addressing a function on the foundation day of the Bihar assembly, where he unveiled the National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA), aimed at creating paperless legislative processes.



"Elected representatives must maintain the decorum of the House. Members of the assemblies and Parliament have the privilege to express their views. They should share their opinions. But they must maintain dignity while sharing their views," he said.

"Debate and discussion are all part of the democratic process, but decorum of the House must be maintained at any cost. They should also learn the rules of legislative functioning," he added.

Birla said empowered legislators are the foundation of a strong democracy.

He said that public representatives empowered by the trust of the people energise democracy by taking issues to their resolution and by making law-making meaningful.

"Today we are witnessing a decline in the decorum of legislative chambers," he

said, appealing to members to avoid sloganeering, disruptions, and entering the Well of the House, and instead present their views through dialogue and reasoned debate.

"The true strength of a legislator comes from moral values, a sense of responsibility, and knowledge of constitutional procedures. A capable legislator makes governance more transparent, accountable, and people-centric," he said.

Birla said Bihar has been the birthplace of democratic traditions, and its heritage has provided the ideological foundation for the country's parliamentary system.

NeVA is a workflow system deployed on the NIC cloud to help conduct legislative business in a paperless manner. It equips members to handle diverse businesses

smartly by putting information regarding rules of procedures, the list of businesses, notices, bulletins, bills, questions and answers, and committee reports, among others, in their hand-held devices, officials said.

The aim of the project is to bring all the legislatures of the country together, thereby creating a massive data depository, they said.

Speaking at the programme, Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh Narayan Singh said, "Bihar is rapidly growing. The Rs 3.47 lakh crore state budget shows that Bihar's progress is remarkable and commendable".

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Leader of the Opposition Tejashwi Yadav remained conspicuous by their absence from the programme, which was also at-

tended by Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju.

"The CM was supposed to attend the function, but because of his already scheduled engagements, he did not attend it with permission of the assembly speaker," state Parliamentary Affairs Minister Vijay Kumar Choudhary said.

Addressing the gathering, Rijiju said Bihar is the land of Buddha and knowledge.

"Elected representatives from the state speak well in the assembly as well as in Parliament. We must remember that if elected representatives are strong in terms of knowledge and competence, democracy will certainly be strong. Here, elected representatives have a lot of work to do as compared to the developed nations." (Agencies)

Interstate Drug Cartel Busted By Delhi Police; 7 Held, Illicit Substances Worth Over Rs 50 Crore Seized

NEW DELHI, FEB 7: The Delhi Police has arrested seven suspects linked with an alleged drug trafficking network spanning across five states and recovered around 48 kg of psychotropic substances valued at over Rs 50 crore in the black market, an officer said on Saturday.

Police said the syndicate allegedly procured raw materials used for manufacturing psychotropic medicines and supplied the banned drugs for repackaging and illegal sale without prescriptions across multiple states.

A series of operations in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Haryana, dismantled a supply chain extending from local distributors to interstate traffickers, police said.

The investigation began in September last year after police received specific inputs



about the movement of a large consignment of psychotropic substances.

Acting on the information, police intercepted a suspect, identified as Anirudh Rai, from Delhi's Lajpat Nagar and recovered around 2 kg of powdered Tramadol, an opioid substance highly regulated under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, leading to the registration of a case.

Subsequent technical and human intelligence-based investigations revealed the involvement of a larger syndicate, following which multiple coordinated raids were conducted across several states, the senior officer said.

During the probe, police arrested Manoj Rai from Uttar Pradesh, whose interrogation led to the arrest of Kishan Pal alias Bhullar from Delhi.

A search of Bhullar's resi-

dence resulted in the recovery of 503 grams of Alprazolam (anti-anxiety drug), police said.

Further investigation led to the arrest of Krishan Tanwar, while another accused, Manoj Kumar from Haryana, was apprehended following a brief chase after his vehicle was intercepted near the Singhu border. Police recovered around 5.012 kg of Tramadol from his car, he said.

Subsequent raids in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand resulted in the arrest of two more accused, Parshant and Amit, along with the seizure of several kilograms of powdered psychotropic substances used in the manufacture of banned medicines. Further investigation is underway to trace additional members of the network and identify the suppliers. (Agencies)

Spate of fires in Karachi raises concern, authorities probe possible foul play

KARACHI, FEB 7: A spate of fire incidents in Pakistan's largest city of Karachi, following last month's deadly Gul Plaza shopping mall blaze, has raised alarm among authorities, who are also examining the possibility of foul play, officials said on Saturday.

At least five fire outbreaks were reported from different parts of the city on Friday, while an explosion damaged a pipeline of a main water pumping station in Dhabeji, disrupting water supply to millions of residents.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Zubair Nazir Sheikh said law enforcement agencies and fire service officials were closely monitoring the situation and probing the causes of the fires, including the possibility of foul play.



The renewed concern follows the January 17 inferno at the Gul Plaza shopping mall in the Saddar commercial area, which completely gutted the building and claimed at least 79 lives. It

took two days to bring the blaze under control, while a week-long rescue operation led to the recovery of dozens of bodies from the debris.

On Friday, a fire broke out at a plastic factory in the Landhi export processing zone.

Chief Fire Officer Humayun Khan said 12 fire tenders and two snorkels were deployed to douse the blaze,

which rapidly spread to nearby godowns and factories.

"There was no loss of life because after the Gul Plaza incident, people have become more alert and awareness about fire safety drills in commercial buildings and factories has increased," he said.

The fire was brought under control overnight. Other

incidents were reported from the PAF Museum, a sessions court in Malir and an office building, but Khan said these were contained quickly.

Since the Gul Plaza tragedy, Karachi has witnessed reports of fires almost daily, heightening concern among residents and prompting authorities to step up vigilance and safety measures, officials said.