

TEMPERATURE

Maximum 31.8°C Minimum 22.4°C

Matter of Thought

Safeguarding the integrity of elections

College-level elections have always been a point of interest for students. These elections once fostered a healthy sense of competition and allowed young minds to experience the democratic process firsthand. However, over the years, they have been marred by increasing controversies, violence, and bitterness, leading to their temporary suspension in many institutions. Despite their return, the question remains: should organizing these elections be such a burden? Must the Supreme Court continually step in to suggest solutions? The recent Delhi University student union election has once again brought college elections into the spotlight, particularly due to reports of public property defacement and misuse of funds during campaigns. The court was prompted to intervene, stating that "those responsible must be identified and strict action should be taken," adding that such behavior would only cease if culprits understood that there would be consequences. This has reignited a conversation about the nature and purpose of student elections. Moreover, the court emphasized that electoral processes should not serve to corrupt the youth, but rather as a formative experience in democracy. Why then, have student organizations and their political backers forgotten this essential principle? How did college campuses, which should be centers of learning and intellectual development, turn into battlegrounds for political agendas? In truth, college elections should be viewed as an educational tool, a crucial step in the process of nurturing democratic values among young people. From their earliest school years, students are taught about civics, democracy, elections, voting rights, and the responsibilities of citizenship. These concepts are foundational in creating informed and active citizens. The practice of elections at the college level, if conducted properly, serves as the practical application of these lessons, making them more tangible and meaningful. When students participate in a democratic process they gain firsthand experience in the mechanics of democracy. Ideally, this should help instill a sense of responsibility and respect for the electoral process, preparing them for their roles as informed citizens. Unfortunately, this ideal vision is often far from reality. Many older generations, particularly those now in their sixties, may recall college elections as being held in a relatively peaceful and constructive environment. But over time, student unions became aligned with political parties, and the influence of these parties began to seep into college elections. This not only altered the nature of student elections but also eroded their original purpose. The interference of political parties, which often comes with financial backing, has transformed these once-educational exercises into miniature replicas of national politics, complete with power struggles and corruption. The court's intervention is timely and relevant. It highlights the need for reforms that return college elections to their intended function -- as a learning experience for students, not a platform for political manipulation. In the end, the responsibility for safeguarding the integrity of college elections falls not just on the courts but also on educational institutions, student bodies, and political entities.

District dams 100% full

NASHIK: Recent rainfall in the catchment areas has resulted in the district's irrigation department releasing water from 18 dams, including the Gangapur Dam, which is now at full capacity. The Gangapur Dam was discharging water at a rate of 1,169 cusecs as of last morning. Overall, the water storage in the district, which consists of 17 medium and 7 large projects, has reached a total of 65,034 million cubic feet (MCFT), filling it to 99.04% of its capacity. As the retreating rains give way to clear skies and bright sunshine, markets are bustling with preparations for the upcoming Navratri festival, which begins on Thursday. Stalls are adorned with flowers, attractive idols of goddesses, and puja materials. Due to unfavorable conditions for rainfall, the intensity of rain in the state has reduced. Most parts of Maharashtra are expected to experience clear skies until Saturday (October 5th), with only light rain possible in isolated areas. There is no forecast for heavy rainfall or downpours. It is understood that the city's municipal water supply department requires 6,300 MCFT from the Gangapur, Darna, and Mukne dams to meet the city's annual water demand. A decision regarding water reservations is expected to be made in October 15 meeting.



Deshdoot Media House Chairman Vikram Sarda receiving the Nashik Icon of Excellence award, instituted by Lokmat, from Lokmat Media Group Chairman Vijaybabuji Darda. Also present are Deepak Chande of Deepak Builders and Developers, District Collector Jalaj Sharma, and NMRDA Commissioner Manisha Khatri.

BJP's dinner diplomacy to track mood of voters

NASHIK: K K Upadhyay, an observer for the BJP's national media, engaged with journalists in Nashik yesterday through an in-house dinner diplomacy event. This initiative follows recent statements from BJP leadership indicating that 16 constituencies across five districts in the Nashik division are currently considered fragile for the grand alliance (Mahayuti). These assembly segments have been classified into Group 'B' based on polling performance and various criteria, particularly after the party's setbacks in the Lok Sabha elections. With the upcoming assembly elections on the horizon, the Mahayuti coalition has set an ambi-

tionous target of securing 42 seats, prompting the BJP's steering committee to gather insights on strategies to strengthen its position in weaker constituencies. Last week, a meeting of the BJP's North Maharashtra steering committee took place in Nashik, attended by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, where 30 members from Nashik, Dhule, Jalgaon, Nandurbar, and Ahmednagar districts participated in discussions. Currently, the Mahayuti controls 34 out of 47 assembly constituencies in the Nashik division, with aspirations to raise this number to 42. The constituencies have been categorized based on their electoral strength,

with those where the Mahayuti performed well in the Lok Sabha elections classified as Group 'A' (strong), while those where the opposition gained an advantage are in Group 'B' (weak). During the discussions, Upadhyay, alongside Chief Spokesperson Keshav Upadhyay, Laxman Savji, Pradeep Peshkar, and city president Prashant Jadhav, explored the challenges posed by the upcoming elections. Upadhyay emphasized the significant differences between Lok Sabha and assembly elections. He cited the potential losses in the Madhya Pradesh elections, noting how the 'Ladli Bahna' scheme had significantly bolstered the BJP's position.

Nashik's medical college, hospital under Govt authority

NASHIK: In a significant development for Nashik's education and healthcare sectors, the Medical Degree College and Hospital in the city will now come under the authority of the Government of Maharashtra's Medical Education Department. The decision was made during a state cabinet meeting held at Mantralaya under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. A total of 38 decisions were taken during the meeting, covering various departments. These crucial decisions come ahead of the expected announcement of the code of conduct for the upcoming assembly elections. Among the key decisions were

the transfer of Nashik's medical college and hospital to government control, as well as amendments to retirement gratuity policies, increasing the death gratuity limit to Rs 20 lakh, and a 10% increase in the remuneration of Kotwals. With assembly elections set to be announced in the first week of October, the state government is making efforts to implement policies that benefit the public before the model code of conduct is enforced. As a new government is expected to take office after the elections, the current administration is fast-tracking key decisions in a flurry of pre-election activity.

Salher fort

Shramdaan drive ahead of UNESCO inspection



NASHIK: Salher Fort, located in the Baglan region of Nashik and standing as the highest fort in Maharashtra's Sahyadri range, is currently under consideration for inclusion in the prestigious UNESCO World Heritage Sites list. In anticipation of this, a major cleanliness and conservation drive was organized by volunteers from the Salher Fort Conservation Movement. The initiative saw the active participation of nine fort conservation organizations from across the district, along with the Sakal Maratha Parivar, in collaboration with the Archaeology Department of Nashik. Despite the heavy monsoon rains, the volunteers worked diligently to clear and realign scattered stones along the fort's steps. The effort was carried out systematically and scientifically to prevent soil erosion and improve water drainage from the top of the fort. In addition,

the litter scattered around the fort was collected, and stones in the open space near the Mahadwar (main entrance) were carved. Over 110 volunteers took part in the day-long cleanliness and conservation drive,

Salher Fort, the highest in Maharashtra's Sahyadri range, is under consideration for inclusion in the prestigious UNESCO World Heritage Sites list. A UNESCO delegation is expected to visit Nashik district to assess the fort. Earlier in preparation for this significant visit, District Collector Jalaj Sharma had conducted an inspection of Salher Fort recently, reviewing the ongoing efforts for cleanliness and beautification in the area. The Centre has put forth a proposal to UNESCO, recommending the inclusion of 11 forts in Maharashtra and Gingee Fort in Tamil Nadu. Among them is Nashik's Salher Fort. With the potential visit from UNESCO, district authorities are diligently reviewing and enhancing the fort's conditions.

showcasing their commitment to preserving this historical treasure. An upcoming aerial inspection of Salher by the UNESCO World Heritage team prompted this conservation campaign. With the inspection on the horizon, the fortification efforts are seen

zations to enhance their knowledge in fort and heritage conservation. This community-driven effort underscores the dedication to preserving the historical significance of Salher Fort and fortifying its position as a potential UNESCO World Heritage Site.



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