

Matter of Thought Festivals embrace eco-friendly shift

This year's Anant Chaturdashi was marked by a significant collective effort towards environmental protection. The movement, aptly symbolized by the phrase "Saathi Haath Badhana," has been steadily gaining momentum, signaling society's growing awareness of ecological concerns. In recent years, festivals have become platforms for spreading awareness about the environment. What started as small-scale initiatives by dedicated social organizations has blossomed into a broader movement, engaging even common citizens in the pursuit of sustainability. While the process of change has been gradual, the persistent and tireless efforts are finally yielding visible results. At both collective and individual levels, people are becoming active participants in this green revolution. One noteworthy shift is the adoption of eco-friendly practices during the Ganesh festival. Many households have begun installing metal idols, while others have embraced the concept of Ankur Ganesha -- a unique, biodegradable idol made from red clay with seeds embedded inside. Upon immersion in a home pond, the seeds take root and eventually grow into trees, vines, or leafy vegetables, symbolizing the cycle of life and environmental regeneration. The rise in the use of Shadu clay idols -- a traditional and eco-friendly alternative -- has been another positive trend. Over the past two to three years, this practice has evolved into a larger movement, where idols made of Shadu clay are immersed at home and later collected for recycling. Social organizations have taken the initiative in organizing these collections, and the public response has been overwhelmingly positive. One of the most heartening aspects of this change has been the widespread participation in practices like 'Donate Ganapati Idol' and the use of Nirmalya collection vehicles to gather the floral offerings and other biodegradable materials used in worship. Rather than throwing Nirmalya into rivers, as was once the custom, people are now more mindful of the need to protect our water bodies. This simple act of keeping the river basins clean helps prevent pollution and preserves aquatic ecosystems. In the past, immersed idols would often settle at the bottom of stagnant rivers, where the accumulated Shadu clay would contribute to river pollution. However, the growing awareness of water conservation and pollution control has helped curb these practices. Today, more and more people are recognizing their responsibility to safeguard natural resources, especially water bodies. The effects of climate change are becoming increasingly apparent, and people are beginning to realize that no season follows its predictable course anymore. This shift in perception has spurred a broader understanding of the importance of sustainability. Festivals like Ganeshotsav are gradually transforming into eco-conscious celebrations, where nature conservation takes center stage. This movement towards an eco-friendly mindset extends beyond Ganeshotsav. Festivals of all kinds are now being seen as opportunities to promote environmental stewardship. Social and cultural initiatives that promote sustainable practices are not only necessary but also welcome in today's world. By embracing these changes, we are laying the foundation for a future where festivals and environmental responsibility go hand in hand. The message is clear: as we celebrate our traditions, we must also take care of the environment that sustains us. The actions taken today -- whether through Ankur Ganesha, Shadu clay idols, or Nirmalya collection -- will have a lasting impact on our natural world, ensuring that the beauty of our festivals is matched by the health of our planet.

Ayushman coverage for childhood cancer?

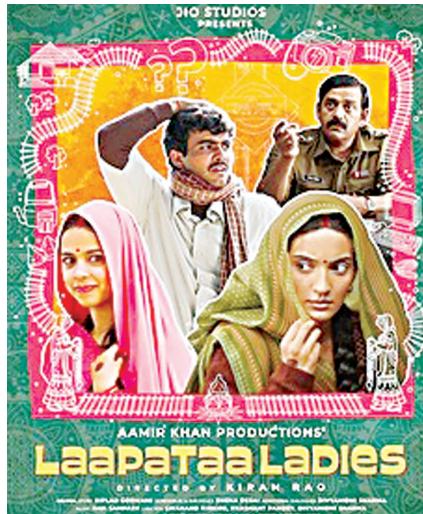
NEWDELHI: Emphasizing the Narendra Modi government's "children first" policy, Niti Aayog's member health Dr Vinod Paul has said the centre is open to considering suggestions for Ayushman Bharat insurance coverage for treatment of childhood cancer under the PMJAY to mitigate financial hardship. Dr Paul said decision makers would like to know areas where patients of childhood cancer need enhanced insurance coverage.

Laapataa Ladies shoot at Yeola picked for Oscars

DELHI: Kiran Rao's piquant Laapataa Ladies has been selected as India's official submission to Oscars 2025. The announcement was made by the jury of the Film Federation of India (FFI), the apex body that annually selects the Indian official entry for the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film, on Monday, September 23.

This year, a total of 29 films, including Payal Kapadia's Cannes-winning All We Imagine as Light and the acclaimed Malayalam drama Aattam, were in the running for Oscars selection. The 97th Academy Awards are scheduled for 2025 in Hollywood, Los Angeles, US.

"I am deeply honored and delighted that our film 'Laapataa Ladies' has been chosen as India's official entry to the Academy Awards," Rao said in a statement. "We shot the village parts in Madhya Pradesh, in the small villages. However, all the train sequences have been shot in the Nashik district of Maharashtra. There are two places in Nashik, one is Yeola and Talegaon. The stations there are still old. The movie period set in the time frame of 2001 demanded old, under-



developed railway stations," Rao could be heard saying.

The satirical comedy-drama tells the story of a young man whose bride gets accidentally swapped with someone else's. The film stars Sparsh Shrivastava along with Nitanshi Goel, Pratibha Ranta, Chhaya Kadam and Ravi Kishan. It is based on

Biplab Goswami's prize-winning screenplay, Two Brides.

In its citation, the FFI jury said, "Indian women are a strange mixture of submission and dominance. Well-defined, powerful characters in one world, Laapataa Ladies (Hindi) captures this diversity perfectly, though in a semi-idyllic world and in a tongue-and-cheek way. It shows you that women can happily desire to be home makers as well as rebel and be entrepreneurially inclined."

One notable film to highlight today is Laapataa Ladies by Ekdant Films, directed by Aamir Khan and Kiran Rao, which was filmed at Yeola Railway Station in January 2022. The production received substantial support from various individuals in Nashik. This film is being remembered today for its selection in the Oscars race for Best International Feature Film, competing among 12 Hindi, 6 Tamil, and 4 Malayalam films.
- Amit Kulkarni

'Bajirao' loses battle for territory



Raja T-9, also known as Bajirao, a dominant tiger of Nagzira forest, passed away at the age of 12 following a territorial battle. Originally from the Coal Forest Range of the Tadoba Tiger Reserve, this male tiger migrated naturally to the Nagzira forest within the Navegaon Nagzira Tiger Reserve in December 2016. For nearly nine years, he ruled over this territory. However, yesterday, on September 23, his reign came to an end as he succumbed to injuries sustained in a fight with another male tiger.

Yashwant Mandai Tenants refuse to vacate shops

NASHIK: The tenants of Yashwant Mandai commercial complex in Ravivar Karanja have refused to vacate their shops, despite a court order. They are demanding a written assurance from Nashik Municipal Commissioner Dr. Karanjkar, guaranteeing them new shops in the proposed commercial complex to be built at the same location. Adding to the complexities, 15 of the tenants owe a cumulative rent of Rs 5 crore to the Nashik Municipal Corporation (NMC), which has delayed the demolition of the decades-old structure. The Nashik West Department has been unable to proceed with the demolition due to the outstanding dues.

The 40-year-old Yash-

want Mandai building has been declared structurally dangerous and could collapse at any moment. The tenants had earlier approached the court to halt the demolition, but after reviewing the structural audit report submitted by both the NMC and the tenants, the court ruled in favor of the corporation, confirming that the building is indeed unsafe.

Following the court's decision, the Municipal Tax Collection Department forwarded a file to the Nashik West Division for the building's demolition. However, the 15 tenants are not only refusing to vacate but are also withholding their rent payments, which amount to Rs 5-6 crore.

Rain continues to batter city

NASHIK: The city and surrounding areas witnessed moderate to heavy rainfall, accompanied by thunderstorms, for the third day in a row on Monday, disrupting daily life and causing waterlogging in several parts.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) had earlier predicted this spell of rainfall, forecasting light to moderate showers with thunderstorms and lightning across various parts of the district. According to the Weather Department, Nashik recorded 2.8 mm of rain between 8:30 AM and 5:30 PM. The IMD also reported that the maximum temperature for the day was 30.3°C, while the minimum stood at 23.4°C.

As the rain intensified in the evening, it brought temporary relief from the muggy weather. However, the rain led to waterlogging on major roads, causing traffic snarls at key junctions such as Upnagar Naka, Mumbai Naka, Tarwala Nagar, Hirawadi service road, Shivam Nagar, Adgaon Naka, Dwaraka, and Sarda Circle. Potholes, many of which had been recently repaired, reappeared and filled with rainwater, making



them invisible to motorists and exacerbating the challenges faced by commuters.

Meanwhile, the rainfall has contributed to a rise in water levels at district dams. On Monday morning, Gangapur Dam recorded 96.82% storage, while the Gangapur Dam Complex stood at 96.97%. Water was also being discharged from Alandi Dam at 30 cusecs, and Kashyapi Dam reached full capacity at 100%. Other district dams recorded significant storage levels, including Waghad (96.90%, with 154 cusecs discharge), Darna (1000

cusecs), Valdevi (15 cusecs), and Chanakapur, Haranbari, and Kelzar, with discharges of 151 cusecs, 95 cusecs, and 30 cusecs respectively.

While the rainfall provided some relief from the sweltering heat, it also underscored the city's ongoing infrastructure challenges. Waterlogged roads and hidden potholes have become a source of frustration for drivers, despite recent efforts to repair road damage. As the city braces for continued rain, residents are hoping for improved road conditions and drainage systems to mitigate further disruption.

Over 50 lakh voters registered in Nashik district



NASHIK: The total number of registered voters in Nashik district has surged to 50.03 lakh, marking an increase of 1.67 lakh voters in the four and a half months since the Lok Sabha elections. This growth reflects heightened electoral participation, with Nashik district witnessing enthusiastic voter turnout in the general elections, much to the relief of the administration.

Following the Lok Sabha elections, the state government launched the 'Ladki Bahin' scheme, contributing to a significant rise in female voter registration. Out of the 1.67 lakh new voters, 96,538 are women, while 70,944 are men. Additionally, 118 transgender voters have also been registered. This rapid registration activity has pushed the total voter count in

the district to 50,03,000.

Among Nashik's constituencies, Nashik West, East, and Central now hold the highest number of voters. However, Malegaon city has seen the largest increase in new registrations, with 37,619 voters added in the Malegaon Central constituency alone, influencing the Dhule Lok Sabha results. Meanwhile, Malegaon Outer constituency recorded 14,341 new voters.

The district now comprises 25.89 lakh male and 24.14 lakh female voters.

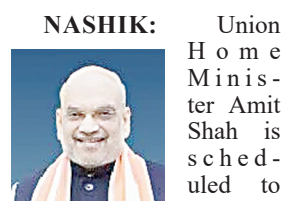
In the recent Lok Sabha elections, 48.36 lakh voters from Nashik district exercised their franchise, with Malegaon Central, Malegaon Outer, and Baglan constituencies casting their votes for the Dhule Lok Sabha seat.

The Chief Commissioner of the Central Election Commission, Rajiv Kumar, is set to embark on a three-day visit to the state to review election administration, which has prompted speculation that the election code of conduct could be announced shortly thereafter. This has accelerated administrative preparations.

"The rise in registrations is due to the concerted efforts of public representatives and individual voters. Registration will remain open until the Assembly elections."
- Dr Shashikant Mangarule

TOTAL ELECTORATE	
Nandgaon:	3,37,992
Malegaon Central:	3,40,010
Malegaon Outer:	3,75,156
Baglan:	2,96,159
Kalwan:	2,99,273
Chandwad:	3,05,744
Yeola:	3,21,979
Sinnar:	3,17,859
Niphad:	2,95,939
Dindori:	3,27,200
Nashik East:	4,04,193
Nashik Central:	3,42,413
Nashik West:	4,76,946
Deolali:	2,85,708
Igatpuri:	2,77,322
Total:	50,03,893

Amit Shah in city tomorrow



NASHIK: Union Home Minister Amit Shah is scheduled to visit Nashik on Wednesday, September 25, for a crucial meeting with the BJP's North Maharashtra cadre in the Satpur area. In preparation for this event, Police Commissioner Sandeep Karnik, along with police officers and event organizers, conducted a site inspection of the meeting venue.

Amit Shah, who also serves as the Cooperation Minister and is a senior BJP leader, will address the gathering, which holds significant importance in light of the upcoming assembly elections.

On Monday afternoon, Commissioner Karnik, along with Deputy Commissioner of Crime Branch Prashant Bachhav and Deputy Commissioner of Circle II Monika Raut, reviewed the security arrangements in collaboration with senior police inspectors from the Satpur and Ambad areas, as well as officers from various police branches.

Ambulance service for stray animals

NASHIK: In a bid to provide timely care for injured stray animals, the Nashik Municipal Corporation is set to launch an ambulance service next week. This initiative will help manage the increasing number of stray and domestic animals within municipal limits, ensuring that injured animals receive prompt medical attention.

Municipal Veterinary Officer Dr. Pramod Sonawane shared that the ambulance service will focus on rescuing and treating animals injured due to accidents or natural causes. Currently, many injured animals are left unattended, but with the new service, the municipal corporation aims to change that.

The ambulance will also be used for rabies vaccination campaigns and other animal health initiatives conducted by the Animal Husbandry Department.

"Citizens are encouraged to contact the Veterinary Department if they spot injured animals. A toll-free number will be provided for the animal ambulance service."
- Dr Pramod Sonawane, Veterinary Officer

Toll-free number
The toll-free number, to be introduced soon, will allow citizens to report injured animals. The ambulance will be staffed by two employees, and animals will be transported to the veterinary hospital for treatment. Additionally, rabies vaccinations and other campaigns will be facilitated through this service.