

# Serbia's students blockade bridges, hold protest to mark 3 months since deadly canopy collapse

**PTI, NOVI SAD:** Serbia's students led a mass street protest and blocked bridges over the River Danube in the northern city of Novi Sad on Saturday to mark three months since a concrete canopy crashed down at a train station there, killing 15 people.

The collapse on November 1 of the huge concrete construction has sparked a wide anti-corruption movement and months of student-led street protests against the populist authorities in the Balkan country.

Many in Serbia believe that the collapse was essentially caused by government corruption in a large infrastructure project with Chinese state companies.

Critics believe graft led to a sloppy job during the reconstruction of the Novi Sad train station, poor oversight and disrespect of existing safety regulations. The issue has come to sym-



A man holds up his mobile phone light during a minute of silence ceremony as he protests over the collapse of a concrete canopy that killed 15 people more than two months ago, in Novi Sad, Serbia

bolise a wider discontent over the rule of law in Serbia.

Tens of thousands of people converged on Novi Sad for the blockades, dubbed Three Months Three Bridges. One of the blockades is set to extend until Sunday.

As the blockades started, entire bridges and the streets around them were flooded with people, while many more stood on the riverbanks below. Many people came with their children or pets on a sunny day. Roads leading into the



People light up flares as they gather for a protest over the collapse of a concrete canopy that killed 15 people more than two months ago, in Novi Sad, Serbia

city were clogged with cars ahead of the rally as people were trying to reach Novi Sad from Belgrade and other Serbian towns.

Tractors rolled through the city streets as farmers drove in front of three separate student columns heading toward the three

bridges and thousands of residents cheered them along the way. Many carried Serbian flags in the crowd or banners reading "Three Months" or "We are defending freedom." University students have taken a leading role in the protests that have developed into

the most serious challenge in years to the country's powerful populist leader, President Aleksandar Vucic. Vucic has accused students and other protesters of working for foreign intelligence services to oust him from power, while at the same time offering concessions and talks and issuing veiled threats by saying that his supporters' patience is running out.

Today we offer talks and today we offer dialogue, Vucic said on Saturday. The second someone thinks that they will use violence to seize power, the state will act like a state, just like everywhere else in the world." Persistent demonstrations forced the resignation of Prime Minister Milos Vucevic earlier this week and various concessions from the populist government as it seeks to quell growing resistance.

# At least 56 killed as fighting grips Sudan's capital

**AFP, PORT SUDAN:** Artillery shelling and air strikes killed at least 56 people across greater Khartoum on Saturday, according to a medical source and activists, the latest bloodshed in Sudan's devastating war.

Sudan's regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have been locked in a battle for power since April 2023 that has intensified this month with the army fighting to take back control of the capital.

RSF shelling killed 54 and injured 158 people at a busy market in army-controlled Omdurman, part of greater Khartoum, overwhelming the city's Al-Nao Hospital, according to a medical source and the health ministry.

"The shells hit in the middle of the vegetable market, that's why the victims and the wounded are so many," one survivor told AFP.

The RSF denied carrying out the attack, which

French medical charity Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said caused "utter carnage" at the hospital.

Across the Nile in Khartoum proper, two civilians were killed and dozens wounded in an air strike on an RSF-controlled area, said the local Emergency Response Room, one of hundreds of volunteer groups coordinating emergency care across Sudan.

Although the RSF has used drones in attacks, including on Saturday, the fighter jets of the regular armed forces maintain a monopoly on air strikes.

Both the RSF and the army have been repeatedly accused of targeting civilians and indiscriminately shelling residential areas.

In addition to killing tens of thousands of people, the war has uprooted more than 12 million and decimated Sudan's fragile infrastructure, forcing most health facilities out of service.

# Russia, Ukraine trade blame over attack on boarding school in Russia's Kursk region

**AP, KYIV:** Competing claims emerged over a deadly attack on a boarding school in Sudzha, a city in Russia's Kursk region that has been under Ukrainian control for five months, with Ukraine and Russia accusing each other of carrying out the strike.

The General Staff of Ukraine's Armed Forces said Saturday night that four people were killed and a further four seriously wounded in the strike, with 84 people rescued by Ukrainian servicemen from the rubble of the building. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Moscow had bombed the boarding school where civilians were sheltering and preparing to evacuate.

The General Staff said those in need of additional medical assistance were evacuated to medical facilities in Ukraine.

The Russian Ministry of Defense claimed in the early hours of Sunday that it was Ukrainian forces that had launched a missile strike on the school, saying that the missiles were launched from Ukraine's Sumy region.



Firefighters putting out a fire in Eastern Ukraine Sumy region following a Russian strike

Meanwhile, the death toll from a Russian missile strike on an apartment block in the Ukrainian city of Poltava on Saturday rose to 12, including two children, Ukraine's State Emergency Service said Sunday. Seventeen people were injured in the attack on the five-story building, it said.

Moscow sent 55 drones into Ukraine overnight into Sunday, Ukrainian officials said. According to Ukraine's Air Force, 40 drones were destroyed during the overnight attacks. A further 13 drones were "lost", likely hav-

ing been electronically jammed.

Two people were wounded in a drone attack in the Kharkiv region, regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said Sunday.

In Russia, the Defense Ministry said that five Ukrainian drones were shot down overnight in five regions of western Russia: three over the Kursk region, and one each over the Belgorod and Bryansk regions.

A man was killed in a drone strike in the Belgorod region, regional Gov Vyacheslav Gladkov said.

# Girl, 11, stabbed to death in the Netherlands

**AFP, THE HAGUE:** Police on Saturday said they had arrested a man suspected of fatally stabbing an 11-year-girl in the Dutch town of Nieuwegein.

The girl was attacked in the street at 3:00 pm local time (1400 GMT) and medics were unable to save her life, police said.

"In the immediate vicinity, the police arrested a 29-year-old suspect based on information from bystanders and others," a statement from the Utrecht regional police said.

The authorities gave no indication of the motives for the attack.

ANP news agency reported that police had confirmed that the suspect was originally from Syria.

The agency cited police as saying they were investigating reports that the suspect had been acting "confused" in the week prior to the attack.

# MUSIC AND DEVOTION



People celebrate Sufi Basant on occasion of Basant Panchami at Hazrat Nizamuddin Dargah in New Delhi

# ISRO's NVS-02 satellite suffers setback, thrusters fail to fire

**PTI, NEW DELHI:** ISRO's attempts to place the NVS-02 satellite in the desired orbit suffered a setback after the thrusters on board the spacecraft failed to fire, the space agency said on Sunday. The NVS-02 satel-

lite, which was crucial for India's own space-based navigation system, was launched on January 29 on board the GSLV-Mk 2 rocket which was ISRO's 100th launch from the spaceport at Sriharikota. "But the

orbit raising operations towards positioning the satellite to the designated orbital slot could not be carried out as the valves for admitting the oxidizer to fire the thrusters for orbit raising did not open," the space

agency said in an update to the GSLV-F15 mission on its website.

The satellite is orbiting the Earth in an elliptical Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) which is not suitable for the navigation system.

"The satellite systems are healthy and the satellite is currently in elliptical orbit. Alternate mission strategies for utilising the satellite for navigation in an elliptical orbit are being worked out," ISRO said.

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## WATER PIPELINE BURSTS, FLOODS HOUSES IN BHATLEM

Nasira Makandar, another affected resident said, "I work in the Corporation of the City of Panaji (CCP). I received a call from my children stating that water has entered our house. I rushed home and saw that water had entered the kitchen, which destroyed my washing machine."

Reshma Makandar, another affected resident, said, "We were sleeping when, suddenly, wastewater gushed into our house. Our kitchen, our furniture and everything was ruined. Worse, this water entered from the sewer line! Now we're scared of falling sick, but no one from the administration has even bothered to check on us."

Former CCP Mayor Uday Madkaikar said, "Initially I thought that the water leakage was from a sewer line, but I was told that water started leaking from the pipeline maintained by the PWD."

"Smart City work is underway in the area, but nowhere Smart City officials are present. They only sit in the air conditioned office and enjoy themselves. The work is being carried out in a most irresponsible manner and nobody cares about that. They are least bothered about the people and their problems," Madkaikar said.

"The cost of Smart City work is around Rs 1,200 crore. The quality should be such that the roads will not require maintenance for next 30-40 years, but the work carried out is of substandard quality. There is no guarantee that these works will last even for four or five years," he added.

PWD sources said the water pipeline which supplies water to Taleigao and Dona Paula areas developed cracks, which caused the water leakage. However, they said that it was yet to be ascertained whether it was due to Smart City work or something else. The repair work continued till late night and there was information as to when it would be completed. If the pipeline was not repaired at night, then there was every possibility that Taleigao and Dona Paula areas would go without water.

In the process, the axe fell on a coconut tree for reasons best known to the authorities carrying out the works.

Meanwhile, Imagine Panaji Smart City Development Ltd (IPSCDL) clarified that the recent water pipeline burst at Bhatlem, which led to water wastage and temporary flooding in low-lying areas, was not caused by any Smart City-related works.

"The issue originated due to an internal pipeline end

cap breakage inside Dhanlaxmi Colony, an entirely unrelated matter. IPSCDL has not undertaken any activities in the affected zone that could have led to this incident," IPSCDL said in a statement.

## MAYEM LOCALS GIVE THUMBS DOWN TO INTERNATIONAL LAW COLLEGE PROJECT

The locals said they were facing hardship to avail various government benefits. The further called upon the government to appoint a deputy collector to exclusively settle or solve the problem of evacuee property.

When Mayem Sarpanch Krishna Chodankar asked the large gathering of gram sabha members to give their suggestions, the locals said many houses have not yet received numbers, while someone has challenged the evacuee property law passed by the government in court.

The villagers said, "The government wants to take up the issue of cashew orchards and agricultural land. When all these issues related to the people are pending with the government, where does the question of bringing such a big project in this property arise?"

Santosh Kumar Sawant, a villager said, "Around 2,50,000 square metres are to be acquired for the college. We suspect that some land dealings will happen because the decisions are being taken without taking locals into confidence. That is why we have passed a resolution that this project should not come up in the village."

Rajesh Kalangutkar, another local, said, "People of Mayem are protesting because lakhs of square metres of land will be acquired for the project. The villagers will not allow any project to come up till they get their rights. We will not even give an inch of land on lease if we do not benefit from the project."

The villagers said the government should first take up the villagers' matter and give them their land rights. They also pointed out that the government has chosen a lush green field for the project.

## GOAN KILLED IN RANDOM SHOOTING AT CALIFORNIA DRAG RACING EVENT

Videos of the incident show people running for cover as gunshots rang out, followed by the arrival of police patrols.

Authorities later found evidence of a shooting, but no immediate victims at the scene.

Ethan and two others were also shot and were rushed to the hospital in a vehicle. Tragically, despite their best efforts, Ethan succumbed to injuries and was declared dead at the hospital.

On January 31, Oakland Police confirmed that the victim was Ethan Pereira after matching the body with a tattoo that was identified.

Sources have shared that Ethan had moved to the US with his family more than a decade ago. Before relocating to the US, he had attended Manovikas School in Margao. His parents are originally from Quepem and Paroda.

The funeral is scheduled for February 10 in California, as the community prepares to say goodbye to a young life tragically cut short.

Ethan's grandparents are travelling to the US for the funeral.

The California Goan community has expressed deep sorrow over the loss, with numerous messages of condolences being sent to the grieving family. The death of innocent Ethan has left many shaken, especially given the senseless nature of the violence.

## TRUMP'S TRADE WAR AMONG ALLIES TRIGGERS RETALIATION FROM CANADA, MEXICO

Unlike Mexico, whose president only announced it will impose retaliatory tariffs without mentioning any rate nor products, Trudeau announced Canada will respond with 25 per cent tariffs against USD 155 billion worth of American goods, including alcohol, furniture and orange juice, and he even suggested Canadians should not buy US products or vacation in the US.

Canada and Mexico ordered the tariffs late Saturday despite Trump's further threat to increase the duties charged if retaliatory levies are placed on American goods.

"We don't want to be here. We didn't ask for this. But we will not back down," Trudeau said late Saturday. "We're certainly not looking to escalate but we will stand up for Canada."

At the local level, some authorities in provinces like Ontario, British Columbia and Nova Scotia will remove American liquor brands from government store shelves. Ontario Premier Doug Ford said Sunday every year, the Liquor

Control Board of Ontario sells nearly USD 1 bil-lion worth of American wine, beer, spirits and seltzers.

"Not anymore," Ford said in a statement. "Starting Tuesday, we're removing American products from LCBO shelves. As the only wholesaler of alcohol in the province, LCBO will also remove American products from its catalogue so other Ontario-based restaurants and retailers can't order or restock US products."

And besides the official responses, people are already thinking on their own ways to face Trump's decision, and one of the initial reactions has been to share in social media lists with alternatives to American products.

Trudeau, in fact, addressed Americans directly, saying they the tariffs "will have real consequences for you."

"Careful Trudeau. The Texas economy is larger than Canada's. And we're not afraid to use it," Texas Republican Governor Greg Abbott posted on X after Trudeau spoke.

Canadians are feeling an undeniable sense of betrayal from their one-time closest allies and friends. Trudeau reminded Americans that Canadian troops fought alongside them in Afghanistan and helped respond to myriad crises from wildfires in California to Hurricane Katrina.

Canadian hockey fans booed the American national anthem at two National Hockey League games on Saturday night.

In Mexico, the official public approach to Trump's tariff threat has been different , limiting public statements to saying the government was prepared for whatever was coming and that it would ensure the country was respected.

Recalling how in 2019 Mexico was ultimately able to avoid Trump's tariff threat by adding immigration control to the responsibilities of its newly formed National Guard, Mexico was hoping to dodge the tariffs again or at least find a way to get them lifted quickly.

But the accusation of criminal alliances with Sheinbaum's administration pushed her to punch back. She called on the US to clean up its own problems with drugs and guns and keep its nose out of Mexico. Trump said he was imposing the tariffs to stop the flow of illegal immigrants and drugs across both the southern and northern US borders.

Beyond the tariffs, academics and diplomats in Mexico harshly criticised the "retaliation clause" Trump included that threatened to raise tariff levels even higher if the targets hit back.