

Some enthusiasts took flight to take a closer look at the sun; in contrast, people in villages took refuge in superstition

Scientists get air borne for special view of the eclipse

ADITYA ANAND
MUMBAI

A group of astrophysicists and space enthusiasts took to the skies for a special view of the solar eclipse on Thursday.

A six-seater Beechcraft C-90 aircraft flew at 21,000 feet with a clear view of the sun and the organisers dedicated this first eclipse flight to Narendra Dabholkar and Shreeram Lagoo, both of whom were associated with the anti-superstition movement.

Among those on the hour-long observational flight were Director of Nehru Planetarium Arvind Paranjape, Head of the Centre of Excellence for Astrobiology in Mumbai and Amity Space Centre, Delhi, Siddharth Pande, astronomer Ananda Hota, and Gateway House fellow of the Space and Ocean Studies Programme Chaitanya Giri.

The astro tourism event



Astro tourism: The six-seater Beechcraft C-90 aircraft that took to the skies to view the solar eclipse. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

was jointly organised by Space Geeks – a group that promotes space and astronomy – and private jet operator MAB Aviation.

To ensure that the eclipse was clearly visible, Space Geeks had provided pocket-sized telescopes with filters that were fitted to the mobile phones of those on board.

Mr. Paranjape, who termed the experience

‘amazing’, said: “The sun above, clouds and earth below made it an exciting sight. The hour-long journey also gave experts an opportunity to converse and have a mid-air dialogue on amalgamating aviation, science and technology.”

The flight landed at Juhu aerodrome and was welcomed by Ashok Kumar Verma, airport director, Juhu.

People perform ‘half burials’ of children

KARNATAKA BUREAU
KALABURAGI

Despite efforts to clear misconceptions surrounding the solar eclipse, people in parts of Karnataka continued to follow practices that are not founded in science. Among the bizarre were cases of children with disabilities being buried neck deep in compost pits during the eclipse in Kalaburagi, Vijayapura and Tumakuru districts, with the belief that it would cure them.

There were cases of three children being buried neck deep in Taj Sultanpur village on the outskirts of Kalaburagi by their parents till the solar eclipse ended.

A team of rationalists, including Shrishail Ghooli, Ravindra Shahabadi and Sarangdhar Deshikendra Swami of Sarang Mutt in Srisailam reached the spot and told the parents that such practices would only cause further health problems.



Unsound customs: Disabled children being buried in compost mud at a village in Karnataka on Thursday. ■ARUN KULKARNI

State president of the Indian Orthopaedic Association S.B. Kamareddy, who visited the spot, said that as the children suffered from congenital deformity, surgery was needed. He also offered to perform the surgery free of cost.

In similar incidents in Vijayapura district, a five-year-

old boy of Ainoli village and six-year-old girl of Gadilingadahalli village had to spend over two hours in compost pits during the solar eclipse. In Indi taluk, a 24-year-old physically challenged person was buried neck deep in compost.

Many locals gathered to see this ritual.

Closure of Aahar Kendras in Odisha invites criticism

STAFF REPORTER
BERHAMPUR

The decision to close down Aahar Kendras on Thursday in view of the annular solar eclipse has invited criticism from rationalists in Odisha, who said that the move only promoted superstitious beliefs regarding food intake during eclipses.

Aahar Kendras provide subsidised meal for ₹5 to the needy. There are 19 such centres in Ganjam district.

On Thursday morning, people, especially the poor who are the key beneficiaries

of the programme, were shocked to see notices at the Aahar Kendras in the State, stating that the centres were to remain closed for the solar eclipse.

According to authorities of Manna Trust, which manages Aahar Kendras in Ganjam district, the decision was taken as a large number of people do not eat during the day on a solar eclipse due to religious beliefs.

The authorities ordered closure of the centres fearing that there might be wastage of food.



No service: A closed Aahar Kendra at the Old Bus Stand area in Odisha's Berhampur. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The Humanist and Rationalist Organisation (HRO), which organises feasts for all

during eclipses to tackle superstitious beliefs regarding food intake, criticized this

decision. “Usually the poor and the needy depend on the meals provided at Aahar Kendras. For no logical reason, these poor people suffered as most small and cheap roadside restaurants were also closed for the eclipse,” said E.T. Rao, president, HRO.

‘Missed opportunity’

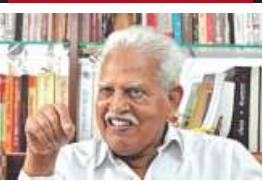
According to Mr. Rao, the administration could have used this event to eradicate superstitious beliefs regarding solar eclipses.

“Today, food could have

been provided early at these centers and the needy would have eaten it. By doing that, the downtrodden would have realized that their time of food intake should be as per the need of the body, instead of any superstitious belief,” he said.

“Seeing the poor eat openly at Aahar Kendras during the eclipse could have compelled the others to reconsider whether their superstitious beliefs of not having food during eclipse is a scientific decision or not,” Mr. Rao added.

IN BRIEF



Pune police to seek forensic aid from FBI

PUNE

The Pune police will seek forensic aid from the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to retrieve data from an allegedly damaged hard disk seized from the house of poet-activist P. Varavara Rao, one of the nine people arrested in the Elgar Parishad-Bhima Koregaon case.

ED attaches assets in MEGA scam case

NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached assets worth ₹36.12 crore of retired IAS official Sanjay Gupta and others for alleged misappropriation of funds meant for the Metro Link Express for Gandhinagar and Ahmedabad (MEGA) Company Limited. The action was taken based on an FIR filed by the Gandhinagar police.

Karat urges CMs not to cooperate on NPR

CHENNAI

CPI (M) Polit Bureau member Prakash Karat on Thursday called upon Chief Ministers of various States not to allow enumeration for the National Population Register (NPR), contending that it alone would prevent implementation of the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Stars booked for hurting religious sentiments

CHANDIGARH

The Punjab police have registered a case against actress Raveena Tandon, film director-choreographer Farah Khan and comedian Bharti Singh for allegedly hurting religious sentiments, police said on Thursday. The case has been registered on a complaint submitted by Sonu Jafar, president of the Christian Samaj Front of Ajnala block in Amritsar, for allegedly making fun of the word “Hallelujah” (word of praise to God).

Two soldiers killed during bridging exercise in Pune

The tower support collapsed, injuring several jawans

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUNE

Two jawans were killed and five others injured during a bridging exercise on the premises of the College of Military Engineering (CME) in the city's Dapodi area on Thursday.

Sources said that a unit was training on a mobile bridge used in surmounting obstacles in rough terrain when the mishap occurred, resulting in serious injuries to seven jawans, two of whom died later. The deceased were identified as lance havildar Sanjivan P.K. and Naik Waghmode B.K.

“During the training of bridge construction, the tower support collapsed



Major mishap: A Court of Inquiry has been ordered by the authorities into the incident. ■ADG PI-INDIAN ARMY/TWITTER

and six-seven troops were injured. They were immediately shifted to Military Hospital in Kirkee and the Command Hospital. A Court of Inquiry has been ordered for investigating the incident and the next of kin of

the deceased soldiers have been informed,” said an official statement issued later in the day.

The CME is a technical and tactical training institution of the Engineer Corps of the Indian Army.

SC outlines 3 conditions for stay orders

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has outlined three aspects it usually considers while granting a stay order.

A Bench of Justices Deepak Gupta and Aniruddha Bose, in a judgment in November, said the three include: the balance of convenience does not favour the alleged violator; the stay order does not cause irreparable harm or injury; and there should be a prima facie case for granting the stay order. The observation came while deciding on pleas filed by Mizoram against an HC order to keep in abeyance all paper lottery draws pursuant to the pending outcome of a writ petition filed by a lottery company.

Kiran Bedi questions recall plea

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUDUCHERRY

A day after the ruling Congress in Puducherry sought the intervention of President Ram Nath Kovind in seeking her recall, Lt. Governor Kiran Bedi on Thursday questioned the government's rationale in terming her opposition to the Cabinet move to set up casinos and breweries as “autocratic, illegal and irregular.”

In a message on WhatsApp to reporters, Ms. Bedi said differences with the government on policy matters and referring such disputes to the Centre could not be termed autocratic, irregular and illegal. Did being “sensitive to the social and spiritual fabric” of Puducherry reason enough to demand her recall, she asked.

Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy in a memorandum

to the President had sought the removal of Ms. Bedi alleging that she was “functioning in an autocratic manner and subverting the provisions of the Constitution.”

Ms. Bedi said the CM was duty bound to explain whether “opening of casinos, breweries and concurring with widespread lottery sale” was part of his development agenda for the UT.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Friday: Light to moderate rain likely in many parts of Maharashtra while scattered showers are expected in Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Gangetic West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Cold day conditions likely to continue in north-west India, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan and west Uttar Pradesh.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	23.0	15.0	Kozhikode	5.0	33.0	25.0
Ahmedabad	—	27.0	12.0	Kurnool	—	32.0	20.0
Aizawl	—	19.0	6.0	Lucknow	—	12.0	6.0
Allahabad	—	16.0	9.0	Madurai	0.4	30.0	23.0
Bengaluru	—	29.0	18.0	Mangaluru	—	37.0	24.0
Bhopal	—	23.0	10.0	Mumbai	—	29.0	22.0
Bhubaneswar	—	26.0	17.0	Mysuru	—	28.0	19.0
Chandigarh	—	10.0	7.0	New Delhi	—	14.0	5.8
Chennai	—	30.0	21.0	Patna	—	16.0	11.0
Coimbatore	6.5	28.0	22.0	Port Blair	—	29.0	21.0
Dehradun	—	16.0	6.0	Puducherry	—	30.0	20.0
Gangtok	—	11.0	5.0	Pune	—	31.0	22.0
Goa	—	33.0	24.0	Raipur	—	29.0	21.0
Guwahati	—	24.0	11.0	Ranchi	21.1	18.0	10.0
Hubbali	—	31.0	20.0	Shillong	—	15.0	4.0
Hyderabad	—	28.0	20.0	Shimla	—	11.0	1.0
Imphal	—	22.0	4.0	Srinagar	—	9.0	—5.0
Jaipur	—	22.0	5.0	Thiruvananthapuram	0.4	33.0	24.0
Kochi	—	32.0	25.0	Tiruchi	—	29.0	23.0
Kohima	—	16.0	5.0	Vijayawada	—	30.0	21.0
Kolkata	—	21.0	15.0	Visakhapatnam	—	31.0	21.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing						Yesterday
CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	7	214	65	362	249	■
Bengaluru	12	60	42	68	83	■
Chennai	26	44	45	135	—	■
Delhi	8	52	65	362	249	■
Hyderabad	15	42	42	154	—	■
Kolkata	23	90	38	321	285	■
Lucknow	33	4	43	414	—	■
Mumbai	13	42	62	282	199	■
Pune	76	25	108	160	116	■
Visakhapatnam	10	64	45	120	—	■

In observation made at 6.00 p.m., Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 373 indicating a severe level of pollution. In contrast, Mysuru, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 43.

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease