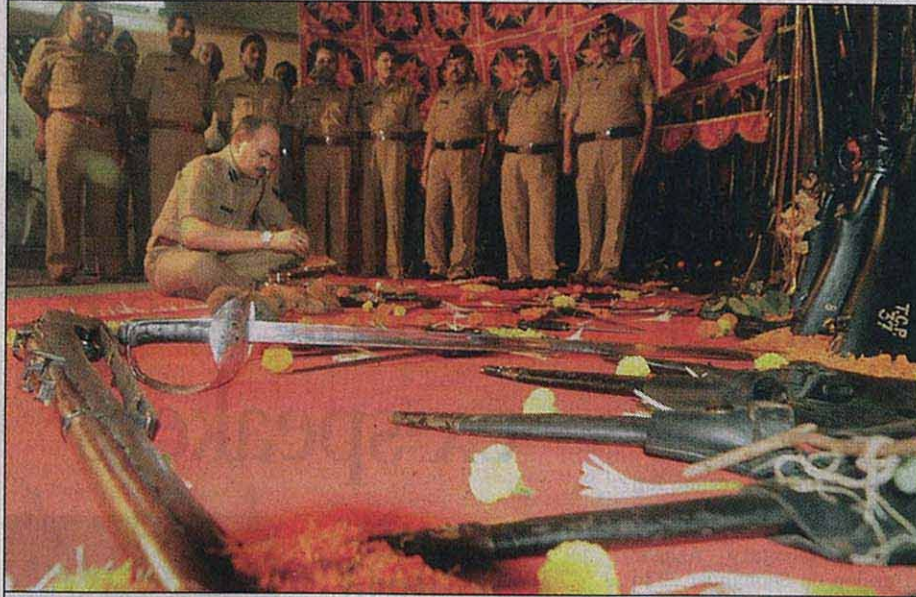


GUARDING THEIR FAITH

Anil Shinde



METAL MANTRA: Cops worship their weapons at Thane Central Jail, as part of 'astra' puja on Thursday

Suspected gas leak at Marol

Mumbai: The Marol fire brigade was summoned to a building at Jogeshwari (E) on Thursday afternoon, after a family complained of a gas leak.

The complainant Shyam Gavtod (45) said that he had kept *prasad* over his domestic LPG cylinder around 1.30 pm when there was a sharp odour. Suspecting a gas leak, Gavtod immediately brought the cylinder outside and kept it in the open. The fire brigade subsequently took away the cylinder for examination. **TNN**

Real estate expo at BKC

Mumbai: From a two-bedroom flat for Rs 1.5 crore in Kandivli (E) to a Rs 35 lak-terrace flat in Virar, builders displayed their projects at the four-day Maharashtra Chamber of Housing Industry (MCHI) Property 2011 exhibition that opened on Thursday.

The expo has 15,000 multi-location properties backed by clearances put on display at the MMRDA Grounds, BKC. Last month, the MCHI adopted a self regulatory code of conduct for developers and set up a consumer grievance redressal mechanism to ensure transparency in real estate transactions.

With the real estate market in slowdown mode and few sales taking place, nervous builders are hoping that the ongoing festival season would boost transactions. Despite the slowdown however, builders have refused to reduce the rates. **TNN**

Town planning meet tomorrow

Mumbai: A symposium on the topic 'Land Procurement for Urban Development' will be held on Saturday at Belapur. Around 300 town planners, policy makers, and economic researchers from six states of western India are expected to attend the symposium to be held at the Institute of Town Planners, India (ITPI) building in Belapur.

The minister of state for urban development Bhaskarrao Jadhav will inaugurate the conference. **TNN**

UN offers programme for a green conscience

Shreya Bhandary | TNN

Mumbai: For all the nature lovers, here's your chance to learn more about our environment and be part of a programme recognized by the United Nations. Under this programme, a student can sit at home and appear for an exam based on the study material provided to them through their respective schools. Participants will be rewarded with a certificate approved by the UN at the end of the programme.

The UN General Assembly declared 2011 as the International Year of Forests (IYF), a global platform to celebrate people's actions to sustainably manage the forests of the world. The Indian Astrobiology Research Centre (IARC) which is associated with IYF 2011 will offer this certification programme in India. "This is the first of its kind programme in our country and we have already received a lot of applications from schools," said Pushkar Vaidya, the programme head and a scientist with IARC.

This programme is also officially listed in the UN calendar. In an e-mail interaction, Miriam Danar from the United Nations said, "We are happy to see that the IYF is being

celebrated in such a worthy manner."

For a nominal fee of Rs 250, students between the ages of 10 and 16 years will be provided with study material including books and CDs explaining everything from the various types of forests across the world, global warming, the various tribes thriving in different forests

For a nominal fee of Rs 250, students between the ages of 10 and 16 years will be provided with study material, including books and CDs, explaining the various types of forests across the world, global warming and how to save these forests

and how to save these forests. The course is available for no charges for students who belong to municipality schools. "This programme drives the point that to know about the environment is no more a matter of optional interest but rather a need for the immediate future," added Vaidya.

A higher version of this certification programme is also available for anybody above 17 years of age.

However, this course involves referenced essay-writing (with strict plagiarism checks) and it is only after the submission of the essay that the login ids and passwords for the exams will be provided to the participants. "We want to ensure that the decorum of a United Nations initiative is maintained and the participants are made to earn their certification," said Vaidya.

In Mumbai, all branches of Oxford Public School and Children's Academy School have enrolled themselves with this programme. "The programme opened in Surat and Delhi last month and in Bangalore, Rajkot and Darjeeling this week," added Vaidya. The added advantage for schools who comply with the rules and regulations of the programme will be to get a mention in the final report that will be submitted to the UN next year. "This way, even the schools will be more enthusiastic about this programme," concluded Vaidya.

Those schools and students who are interested in this programme can visit forests.astrobiology.co.in for further information.