

absolute india

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RUSSIAN OPERATIVES ARE NOW IN KIEV, UKRAINE OFFICIALS HAVE CONFIRMED IN A TWEET, BBC REPORTED

RUSSIAN TANKS ENTER KIEV

A brave Ukrainian citizen has been pictured standing up to Russian troops by trying to block a Russian military convoy. The footage, thought to have been filmed in the south of the country close to Crimea, emerged as Russia's military bared down on Kyiv. But Putin's men seemed set to face bloody street-to-street fighting as Ukrainian troops tasked with the city's defence began setting up defensive positions across highways, on bridges and on street corners. President Volodymyr Zelensky told his men 'you are all we have' and hit out at the West for leaving him to face down the might of Russia 'alone', the report added.

► UKRAINIAN ARMED FORCES SAID FORCES "CONTINUED TO RESIST" RUSSIAN FORCES NORTHWEST OF THE CAPITAL. THE POST ADDED THAT TROOPS HAD DESTROYED A BRIDGE ON THE BORDER OF THE TETERIV RIVER TO IMPEDE THE FURTHER ADVANCEMENT OF RUSSIAN FORCES, BBC REPORTED.

► IT ADDED THAT TROOPS WERE STILL HOLDING ON TO AN AIRFIELD ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY - WHICH COULD BECOME A SPRINGBOARD FOR THE RUSSIAN ARMY INTO KIEV IF RUSSIAN TROOPS WERE TO SEIZE IT.



CHECHEN SPECIAL FORCES GIVEN ORDERS TO KILL UKRAINIAN OFFICIALS

New Delhi: A squad of Chechen special forces 'hunters' has been unleashed in Ukraine to detain or kill a set of specific Ukrainian officials, Daily Mail reported. Each soldier has reportedly been given a special 'deck of cards' with Ukrainian officials' photos and descriptions on them, a Moscow Telegram channel with links to the security establishment reported, as per the Daily Mail report. The list is of officials and security officers suspected of 'crimes' by the Russian Investigative Committee, the report added. It came as Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy admitted that he is 'target number one' for Russian assassins in Kiev, while his family is 'the number two goal' for Vladimir Putin's hitmen. The Chechen squad is thought to be in a Ukraine forest and has allegedly been given an 'order to kill' if those on the wanted list cannot be detained, the report said.

RUSSIA'S COUNTER SANCTIONS WILL HIT 'WEAK SPOTS' OF US AND ITS ALLIES

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Moscow will respond to the sanctions imposed by the US and its allies over Russia's military operation in Ukraine, the head of the Russian Senate, Valentina Matviyenko, told journalists during her visit to Tajikistan on Friday, RT reported.



"As for the reciprocal sanctions... they are ready," Matviyenko said, adding that Russia's response would not mirror the restrictions imposed by Washington and its allies, but would instead hit the western nations where it hurts. "We are well aware of the West's weak spots and we have drafted an entire package... a series of potential sanctions to be used against those nations that announced sanctions against Russia," the Senate head said, adding that "the West has many soft spots", the report said.

The official did not elaborate on any details of the drafted sanction proposals. She only said that the measures would be designed so as not to hurt Russia itself.

The Russian government has taken "all the threats stemming from sanctions" into account and developed "safety mechanisms", RT reported. Matviyenko has also said that Russia will remain a reliable gas supplier for Europe despite measures taken by the US and Germany against the Russia-backed Nord Stream 2 pipeline project. Berlin decided to put an immediate halt to the certification of the project even before Russia launched its operation in Ukraine. The decision was taken following the official recognition by Moscow of the two breakaway Donetsk and Lugansk Republics earlier this week, the report said.

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The sound of gunfire has echoed through Ukraine's capital Kiev as Russian tanks were filmed entering the city for the first time, BBC reported.

Ukraine's Ministry of Defence called on those living in the northern outskirts, where the tanks were seen, to make fire bombs "to neutralise the enemy".

The European Union has announced new sanctions to freeze Vladimir Putin's personal assets in Europe, BBC reported.

The Kremlin, meanwhile, says that Russia is ready for talks with Ukraine. Earlier, the Ukrainian army said armed forces are engaged in fighting in the outskirts of the capital Kiev in Dnipro and Ivankiv, where a large number of Russian armoured vehicles have advanced, BBC reported.

NATO IS AFRAID: UKRAINE PRESIDENT

New Delhi: The Ukrainian president says Kiev has been left to fend for itself as NATO is "afraid" to give it any guarantees, RT reported. "I asked them -- are you with us? They answered that they are with us, but they don't want to take us into the alliance. I've asked 27 leaders of Europe, if Ukraine will be in NATO, I've asked them directly -- all are afraid and did not respond. This might be the last time you see me alive." In an address on Friday, Zelensky said he is open to talking about the possibility of a neutral status for Ukraine, but insisted that his country needs third-party guarantees, the report said. "This morning we are defending our state alone. Like yesterday, the world's most powerful forces are watching from afar," Zelensky said in his address to the nation on Friday morning.

Fighting has seemingly intensified in the capital city of Kiev as Russian forces advance, with reports of several explosions, gunfire, and missile strikes being heard in or around the city early on Friday, BBC reported.

Fighting is also raging at an airfield on the outskirts of Kiev, and it could become a springboard for the Russian army into Kiev if its troops seize it

'TAKE POWER AND NEGOTIATE WITH MOSCOW: PUTIN TO UKRAINIAN MILITARY

"Take the power into your own hands!" the Russian President said, arguing that the army would be a better negotiating partner than "a bunch of drug-addicts and neo-Nazis" who he claimed have "entrenched themselves in Kiev", and have been holding the people "hostage", RT reported.

FIRST BATCH OF EVACUEES FROM UKRAINE REACHES ROMANIA: MEA



New Delhi: Amid the crisis in Ukraine, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Friday that the first batch of evacuees from the war-hit nation has reached Romania via the Suceava border crossing. "The MEA team at Suceava will now be facilitating their travel to (Hungary capital) Bucharest for their onward journey to India," said MEA spokesperson, Arindam Bagchi. The government has arranged two Air India flights to ferry them back from Bucharest on Saturday, sources said. The Indian Embassy in Ukraine is working on evacuation routes from Romania and Hungary and the teams are present at Chop-Zahony Hungarian border near Uzhhorod, and Porubne-Siret Romanian border near Chernivtsi. Scores of stranded Indian students have taken shelter in different schools across Ukraine to evade bombing.

PAK ARMY PROMOTES HINDU OFFICER AS LT COLONEL

New Delhi: A Hindu officer of the Pakistan Army, Kailash Kumar, has been promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, Dawn reported on Friday. State broadcaster Pakistan Television announced the development, adding that Kumar is the first Hindu officer to be promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Extending his congratulations, Pakistan Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry called the newly-promoted Lieutenant Colonel "our pride". Pakistan Minister of State for Climate Change, Zartaj Gul Wazir, termed it as a proud moment for the country. Writer Shama Junejo said "history has been made" and expressed the hope to see the officer promoted to the rank of General.



Centre extends visa, immigration modernisation scheme till 2026

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With an aim to modernise and upgrade immigration and visa services, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) approved the continuation of the Immigration Visa Foreigners Registration Tracking (IVFRT) Scheme till March 31, 2026, with a financial outlay of Rs 1,364.88 crore.

With this scheme, the MHA aims to provide a secure and integrated service delivery framework that facilitates legitimate travellers, while strengthening national security through this scheme. According to an MHA statement, "The government led by Prime



Minister Narendra Modi has approved the continuation of the Immigration Visa Foreigners Registration Tracking (IVFRT) Scheme beyond March 31, 2021 for a period of five years from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2026 with a financial outlay

of Rs 1,364.88 crore." The continuation of the scheme shows the government's commitment to the core objective of IVFRT, which is modernisation and up-gradation of immigration and visa services, an MHA official said.

'POOR SUFFER IN JAIL, RICH GET BAIL: SC FOR EARLY RELEASE OF PRISONERS SERVING OVER 10 YRS

Bengaluru | Agencies

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday emphasised that the government and the courts should adopt a reformative approach for those who have spent 10-14 years in prison, while serving a life term, and explore the possibility of releasing them either by granting bail or remitting their sentence.

It made these observations while granting bail to nearly two dozen petitioners, who have been languishing in jail for more than 10 years. The bench observed that the poor and the underprivileged suffer in the jail, however the rich and the influential can secure bail and also escape the law by fleeing from the country.

The top court was unhappy with a deluge of petitions, where prisoners have not been granted relief by the Allahabad High Court, and asked the court to decide bail plea of all prisoners, who have served more than 10 years in jail.

It was informed that nearly 1.83 lakh criminal appeals are pending before the high court, and the counsel argued that there should be some policy to release prisoners who have served more than 10 years.

Sikh boy denied admission to Karnataka school over turban?

Bengaluru | Agencies

Close on the heels of a reputed college at Bengaluru asking a Sikh girl student to remove her turban in wake of hijab row, a private school in Karnataka's Mangaluru has allegedly denied admission to a 6-year-old Sikh boy for wearing a turban.

The boy, with his parents, had gone on Thursday to a reputed private school in the city seeking admission to Class 1, but authorities reportedly denied admission citing that no religious symbols are allowed in the school. Later, the matter was reported to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) which has asked the child to submit a report in this regard.

The CWC has stated that this



is a knee-jerk reaction of the school authorities on the Karnataka High Court's interim order on not allowing any religious symbols, saffron shawl, or hijab into the classrooms. CWC and the Education Department have, however, said that they have not received any complaint in this regard from the parents of the boy. Minister for Education

B.C. Nagesh had clarified that the interim order of the larger bench of the High Court which is looking into the matter on hijab row is not applicable to Sikh students. He said that wearing a turban is a constitutional right of a Sikh community members and HC order implies only on hijab, saffron shawls and other religious symbols.

19 LAKH KIDS IN INDIA HAVE LOST PARENT OR CAREGIVER DUE TO COVID: LANCET

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Covid-19 pandemic has rendered nearly 19 lakh children in India without a parent or caregiver -- the highest in the South-East Asia region, according to new figures published in The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health journal on Friday. But, media reports claim that the Indian government figures refute these figures and as per the Ministry of Women and Child development's Baal Swaraj - Covid care portal, the number is 1.5 lakh.

Globally, the number has surged to more than 5.2 million, revealed the study.

Yet, these may not be the real numbers. According to Dr Juliette Unwin, lead author from Imperial College London (UK), the real estimates are likely to be 10 times higher than what is currently being reported. The global study suggests that two out of three children orphaned from Covid are adolescents aged 10 to 17 years. Further, in line with evidence that Covid deaths disproportionately affected men, three out of four children worldwide lost their father.

Overall, children who experience the loss of a caregiver have an increased risk of poverty, exploitation and sexual violence or abuse, HIV infection, mental health challenges and severe distress, and in some contexts, increased vulnerability to gang involvement and violent extremism.

The researchers call for evidence-based programmes for children experiencing orphanhood to be urgently incorporated into pandemic response efforts, including programs that support economic strengthening, enhanced community and family support, and programs that avoid placing children in institutional care.

Calculations of estimated orphanhood cases per capita showed the highest rates were in Peru and South Africa, with 8 and 7 out of every 1,000 children affected, respectively.

Before the Covid pandemic, there were an estimated 140 million orphaned children worldwide. And in July 2021, the first estimate of Covid's impact on orphanhood was 1.5 million children between March 2020 and April 2021.

The new study increased this estimate to more than 2.7 million children for the same time period, by re-calculating the figures from updated Covid-19 death figures along with excess mortality data to account for indirect deaths associated with the pandemic (July 2021 estimates: 1,562,000 children vs latest estimates: 2,737,300 children), the findings revealed.



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HIGH CRUDE PRICES CAN SPIKE PETROL, DIESEL PRICES BY OVER RS 6 PER LITRE: ICRA

Team Absolute | New Delhi

High crude oil prices, due to geo-political concerns, can spike petrol, and diesel prices by Rs 6 to Rs 8 per litre, ratings agency ICRA said.

According to the ratings agency, the lagged revision in RSPs (retail selling prices) of MS (motor spirit) and HSD (high speed diesel) is warranted by current surge in crude prices at Rs 6-8 per litre.

"The impact of the latter on RSPs and the CPI inflation can be absorbed by a roll back in excise duties on these fuels to pre-pandemic levels," ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said.

"If excise duty on MS and HSD is reduced to pre-pandemic rates, the total revenue loss to the Centre in FY2023 is estimated at Rs 920 billion."

On Thursday, the international crude oil price, in Indian basket terms, surpassed the \$100 per barrel



mark, for the first time since September 4, 2014, fuelled by intensifying geopolitical tensions between Russia and Ukraine, as well as restrained supply.

However, on Friday, the crude oil prices retreated to above \$97 per barrel as a rise in the US oil inventories along with assurance of energy supply from Russia doused prices.

The monthly average RSPs of MS and HSD have been unchanged at Rs

102.9 per litre and Rs 90.5 per litre, respectively, till Friday, despite the recent rise in crude oil prices.

"After the partial cut in November 2021, central excise rates on MS and HSD presently stand at Rs 27.9 per litre and Rs 21.8 per litre, respectively, higher than pre-pandemic period of July 2019-March 2020 by Rs 8 per litre and Rs 6 per litre, respectively," the agency said.

"The Union Budget for FY2023 has

forecast the excise duty collections to contract by 15 per cent to Rs 3.4 trillion, after a tepid 0.6 per cent rise included in FY2022 RE (Rs 3.9 trillion), following the excise reduction undertaken in November 2021."

In April 2020 and May 2020, the Centre had enhanced the excise duty on MS and HSD by a cumulative Rs 13 per litre and Rs 16 per litre, respectively, to Rs 32.9 per litre and Rs 31.8 per litre, respectively, owing to the plunge in crude oil prices after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Subsequently, in November 2021, it had announced a cut in the central excise duty, by Rs 5 per litre on MS and Rs 10 per litre on HSD.

"Effectively, the total cesses levied on MS and HSD by the Gov stand at Rs 27.9 per litre, and Rs 21.8 per litre, respectively, at present.

"These are higher than the rates levied during the pre-pandemic period of July 2019-March 2020 by Rs 8 per litre and Rs 6 per litre, respectively," ICRA said.

Prime minister 'broke backbone' of employment sector: Rahul Gandhi

Amethi | Agencies

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his friends have "broke the backbone" of India's employment.

Addressing an election rally in Amethi, the Wayanad MP said, "The backbone of India's employment sector has been broken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his friends. You'll see in the coming times, the youth of this country won't get employment, teach them however much you want. No one listened to me during COVID, but you saw bodies in Ganga." As the first four phases of the seven-phased Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections have been completed and campaigning for the fifth phase is on, Rahul Gandhi finally hit the ground for electioneering in Amethi during



Uttar Pradesh, then why doesn't he tell the youth of the state that he will give them employment opportunities? Why doesn't he say that in 2014 he promised to give employment opportunities and how many people he gave employment to and in the coming times, he will give more employment to people."

In the backdrop of employment promises in Uttar Pradesh, the Congress MP further accused the Prime Minister of lying. "When they (BJP) say nothing happened in our 70 years... remember, India's biggest billionaires not give employment, small shopkeepers, traders, and farmers do," said Rahul Gandhi while slamming government for not doing enough for the common man.

the fifth phase of elections in the electorally crucial state.

The fifth phase of voting in Uttar Pradesh will take place on February 27 when 60 assembly constituencies will go to the polls. Questioning the government's policies over not providing employment opportunities to the people, he said, "Why doesn't he (PM) talk about employment in his (election) speeches. When he comes to

FIVE HELD AT LUCKNOW AIRPORT WITH GOLD

Lucknow: Customs officials at Lucknow Airport on Friday arrested five persons for smuggling gold worth Rs 1.31 crore. A customs official said that the arrested included three passengers who had flown in from Dubai. "On specific information, the customs team intercepted three persons and searched them. During their personal search, packets of gold paste totally weighing 3,093 grams were recovered. These were cleverly concealed inside the belt area and inner side of the jeans worn by the two passengers. The third passenger was identified by both the passengers as their handler," said a customs official. The official said that the gold paste resulted in recovery of 2,497 grams of standard gold worth Rs 1,31,09,250. During the course of interrogation, the handler admitted that he was supposed to hand over the gold paste along with the two passengers to two aides who were waiting for them outside the airport. These two were also identified and taken into custody. All the five persons were placed under arrest under the Customs Act and the recovered gold was seized. All the accused were taken to a nearby government hospital for a Covid test, and after it came out negative, they were produced before a court, which sent them to 14 days judicial custody after officials said that they were not required for further interrogation.



Centre asks States, UTs to relax Covid restrictions after risk assessment

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Friday asked the States and Union Territories (UTs) to allow further relaxations in the Covid-19 restrictions after a risk assessment based approach on the opening of economic activities, such as social, sports, entertainment, academic and religious events as well as night curfew hours in view of the substantial decline in coronavirus cases.

In a letter written to all Chief Secretaries of states and UTs, Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla said on Friday that further ease may be given for social, sports, entertainment, academic and religious events



as well as night curfew hours in view of the substantial decline in coronavirus cases.

"In view of the overall improved situation, there is a need to follow a risk assessment based approach on the opening of economic activities. Accordingly, after a careful analysis of the local situation, relaxation in various activities may be consid-

ered, such as social /sports/entertainment/academic/cultural/religious/festival related gatherings; night curfew; operations of public transport; shopping complexes, cinema halls, gyms, spas, restaurants and bars; opening of schools, colleges, offices, and other commercial activities," Bhalla said. He also empha-

sised that while allowing all such activities, the wearing of masks, maintaining social distancing, hand hygiene and ventilation in closed spaces, as mandated in the National Directives for COVID Management, should continue to be enforced. "States/UTs should continue with the testing and surveillance, clinical management, vaccination and implementation of COVID Appropriate Behaviour, for managing COVID-19," the MHA communication said. "I would, therefore, urge you to take necessary action in line with the aforesaid MoHFW advisory, dated 18th February, 2022 and for the enforcement of COVID Appropriate Behaviour," Bhalla said.

2 TERRORISTS, CIVILIAN KILLED IN J&K ENCOUNTER

Srinagar: Two terrorists and a civilian were killed in an encounter between terrorists and security forces at Amshipora area in Jammu and Kashmir's Shopian district, officials said on Friday. Police said during the intervening night of February 24/25, based on specific input generated by police regarding presence of terrorists in village Amshipora area of Shopian, a joint cordon and search operation was launched by Police, Army's 44 RR and CRPF. "During the operation, a cluster of houses were cordoned off and searches were started to locate the hiding terrorists," police said. "During the evacuation of civilians trapped around the suspect spot, two terrorists hiding in the nearby house came out and resorted to indiscriminate firing resulting in grievous injuries to one civilian identified as Shakeel Ahmad son of Abdul Rahim Khan resident of Amshipora, who was immediately evacuated for medical assistance. However he succumbed to his injuries and the terrorists' fire was retaliated effectively leading to an encounter." Police said in the ensuing encounter, both the terrorists were killed and their bodies were retrieved from the site of encounter. They have been identified as Muzamil Ahmad Mir, resident of Chatripora and Shariq Ayoub, resident of Bonpora, Amshipora Shopian.



'Legal or illegal', SC asks Centre to make its stand clear on Bitcoins

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday asked the Centre to make its stand clear on Bitcoins. Currently, there is no regulation or any ban on the use of cryptocurrencies in the country.

A bench comprising Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and Surya Kant told the additional solicitor general (ASG) Aishwarya Bhati, "You have to make your stand clear."

The bench was hearing a plea by Ajay Bhardwaj against the Union of India. Bhati submitted before the bench that this case involves 87,000 Bitcoins and the accused is not cooperating with the investigation, and multiple summonses have been issued so far.

The bench queried, "Is it illegal or not..." Bhati replied: "We will do that my lord."



Advocate Shoeb Alam, appearing for an FIR informant, sought cancellation of bail granted to Bhardwaj.

The bench pointed out that a status report had been filed by the Enforcement Directorate in July last year. Bhati added that the accused has not cooperated in the probe. The bench directed the accused to meet with the investigating officer (IO) and cooperate in the investigation.

The bench said the IO will file a status report showing the cooperation of the accused and scheduled the matter for further hearing after four weeks. The bench added that the interim order restraining arrest of the accused will continue till the next date of hearing.

The Reserve Bank of India's order banning banks from supporting crypto transactions, was reversed in March 2020, by the Supreme Court.

Bride refuses to marry after finding groom wearing a wig

Etawah | Agencies

A bride refused to marry the groom on the wedding day after she saw him wearing a wig.

The incident took place in the Bharthana area of the Etawah district on Wednesday night.

The groom, Ajay Kumar, had to return home without getting married. According to reports, when the garland exchange ceremony was underway, the bride noticed that Ajay was extra cautious and repeatedly adjusting his traditional headgear. Someone told the bride that the groom was actually bald and was wearing a wig on his head. The bride fainted and fell on the stage.

Later, when she regained consciousness, she refused to marry the groom. No amount of persuasion from her family could convince her and the baraat finally returned without the bride.



'Go to HC': SC to Bengal BJP leader challenging decision on Mukul Roy

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday declined to entertain a plea by BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari challenging the West Bengal Assembly Speaker order, who dismissed his petition seeking disqualification of Mukul Roy as an MLA.

A bench of Justices L. Nageswara Rao and B.R. Gavai said: "After hearing counsel, we are of considered view that the petitioner can approach high court assailing the Speaker's order."

In June last year, Roy, a former BJP national Vice President, had defected to the Trinamool Congress. In the same month, Adhikari filed the petition before the Speaker seeking Roy's disqualification. The bench queried senior advocate C.S. Vaidyanathan, representing Adhikari, which fundamental



right of his client was violated. "What is the extraordinary in this, what fundamental rights involved?" it asked as Vaidyanathan contended the Speaker's decision was arbitrary. The bench said in September last year, the high court made some observations and they would be treated as prima facie. It added that parties can take all contentions available to them under law. On the aspect of Roy's tenure as Chairman of Public Accounts Committee, the bench said it is only for one year, and

asked the high court to decide the petitions expeditiously. "Not later than a period of one month," it said. In February, Speaker Biman Banerjee dismissed the petition filed by Leader of the Opposition Adhikari seeking Roy's disqualification as an MLA under the anti-defection law. The petition claimed that he switched sides after elections.

Earlier, the high court had asked Banerjee to take a decision on the petition for disqualification of Roy as a member of the House.

Delhi to lift all Covid curbs from Monday, only physical classes from April 1

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) on Friday decided to lift all Covid-related restrictions in the national capital, including the night curfew and 50 per cent capacity rule at restaurants and bars from Monday. As per the new DDMA guidelines, all online classes will be discontinued from April 1 in the city in view of the declining Covid trends. Schools have to do away with the hybrid mode from April 1. All restrictions are likely to be lifted from April 1. The decision was taken in a DDMA meet chaired by Lt Governor Anil Bajjal, and attended by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

"DDMA withdraws all restrictions as situation improves in people facing hardships due to loss of jobs. Schools to function fully offline from 1 Apr. Fines for not wearing masks reduced to Rs 500. All shud continue following Covid Appropriate Behaviour. Govt will keep strict watch", said Kejriwal in a tweet.



The fine for not wearing the face mask has also been reduced to Rs 500 in the city. However, all these

restrictions are subject to Covid positivity rate remaining below 1 per cent. The government will continue

to keep watch on the Covid appropriate behaviour and surveillance on testing and vaccination.



Commercial tax department caught fraud of 315 crores under the guise of GST

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Commercial Tax Department of Madhya Pradesh has caught a GST fraud of Rs 315 crore by exposing the tax evasion of crores by bogus traders, non-existent firms. It has been told in the official information that the Commercial Tax

Department is running a campaign against bogus businessmen who pass on ITC to other firms by issuing fake bills. In this context, data analysis by the officials of State GST Anti-Evasion Bureau Indore-A exposed the supply chain of bogus firms which were doing bogus turnover of crores of rupees. It has been told that during the

data analysis it was found that some firms were doing huge turnover in a short time by taking new registration. During artificial intelligence, geo-tagging and preliminary examination of business sites, it was found that no business activities were found operating at business places and ITC benefit was given to other businessmen on the basis of fake bills without

actually supplying the goods. Apart from this, discrepancies were also found in the documents shown in their registration. After analyzing their suspicious supply chain, the reality came to the fore. The bogus turnover of about Rs 315 crore was uncovered in the raid. Action was taken on the bases of many firms simultaneously in

Neemuch including Indore. During the raid, many firms were found bogus, which were operating only on paper. By showing the supply of 315 crores of DOC in the return, the benefit of bogus ITC of about 15 crores was given to other firms. Manoj Choubey, Joint Commissioner, Anti-Evasion Bureau Indore-A, said that due to this action of the department,

on one hand bogus turnover of crores of rupees has been detected. On the other hand, these bogus firms will also check theft by issuing fake bills in future. Assistant Commissioner Harish Jain said that preparations are being made by the department to take action against other firms on the basis of data analysis and human intelligence.

SELF-EMPLOYMENT WILL CHANGE THE PICTURE AND DESTINY OF MADHYA PRADESH

ALL ROUND DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLE IS OUR TOP PRIORITY: CM CHOUHAN

Women of Self-help groups will run ration shops, will make ready-to-eat and uniforms. All-round development taking place under Prime Minister's leadership. More than 5 lakh people given employment in the state level job fair. CM lays foundation/dedicates development works worth Rs 617 crores

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that all round development of the people is the top priority of our government. The goal of the state government is to provide employment opportunities to the unemployed and make their lives happy. On the occasion of Employment Day on January 12 last, 5 lakh 26 thousand people were provided employment in the state. Chief Minister has said that we have decided that employment opportunities will be provided to the unemployed by organizing employment day every month. Lakhs of people will be linked with employment by organizing Employment Day again on March 29.



stone and dedicated development works worth Rs 617 crore in Shahdol division. Chief Minister said that now members of self-help groups will do the work of stitching school uniforms. They will also run ration distribution shops and manufacture 'ready-to-eat' food. These women will also be entrusted the task of paddy purchase. Our target is that the working women of the state should earn at least Rs 10 thousand a month. The women of the group are manufacturing soap, turmeric-powder, oil, sanitizer etc.

They will be connected to small industries, so as to remove their poverty and make them self-dependent. Chouhan said that 5 kg each free ration is being distributed to the poor sections of the state under Pradhan Mantri Anna Yojana and Mukhya Mantri Annapurna Yojana till March 2022. Similarly, arrangements are being made by the government to provide employment to the people by approving loans under various schemes. Turmeric is being prepared and sold in Shahdol district under the

'Ek Zila Ek Utpad' scheme. The turmeric powder of Shahdol is being sent to other states along with the state.

Women self-help groups will be strengthened

Chief Minister said that to make women members of self-help groups in the state self-reliant, to increase their income from small businesses, a loan amount of Rs. 10 thousand each will be made available to each member so that they can run small scale industries, cottage industries and Griha Udyog and strengthen their economic condition.

Creating opportunities for medicinal farming

Employment opportunities will be provided to the unemployed in the state by producing herbs in many areas for medicinal cultivation. By selling these products the will be able to earn income. There is also good availability of environment and land to produce medicinal herbs in abundance in different areas of the state.

CM Released the Book "Fairy Tale Pinkys Wish" By 5-Year-Old Girl Parshvi Jalori



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan released the book "A Classic Fairy Tale Pinky's Wish" written by 5-year-old girl Parshvi Jalori. Harisingh Sapre, MLA from Kurwai Vidisha, parents of Parsvi, Rishi and Pooja Jalori, family members and Sushri Chandni Mathur of Wordly Wise Publishers were present on the occasion of book release in the auditorium at the residence

office. Chief Minister Chouhan in a conversation with daughter Parshvi asked how this book was written. On this, Parsvi said that I am fond of drawing, painting and reading books. It was because of these interests that I tried to write the book. Parshvi is a senior KG student of Billabong High International School, Bhopal. The book written by her has been given a congratulatory message by Nobel Peace Prize winner Kailash Satyarthi.

Electricity demand increased by 17 percent in Malwa-Nimad

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In the Malwa and Nimar areas of Madhya Pradesh, business activities have started gaining momentum along with normal life, indicating that the demand for electricity in that area is increasing. There is a demand of 17 percent more electricity this year than last year. Amit Tomar, managing director of Madhya Pradesh Paschim Kshetra Vidyut Vitran Company, said that more electricity demand has increased from all categories of consumers, domestic, agricultural, non-domestic and industrial.

Tomar said that on February 23, a total of 10 crore 10 lakh units of electricity have been supplied. The maximum supply was one crore 49 lakh units in Indore district. One crore 40 lakh units have been supplied in Dhar district, one crore 16 lakh units in Ujjain district. During the last 24 hours, a total of 5 crore 62 lakh units have been supplied in Indore revenue division and 4 crore 48 lakh units in Ujjain revenue division.

Tomar said that in the 23 days of February this year, a total of 230 crore 80 lakh units have been supplied, whereas in the 23 days of February last year, a total of 197 crore 10 lakh units were supplied. In this way, the power supply has increased by 17 percent.

Chief Minister Chouhan Planted Karanj and Cassia Saplings

Member of Parliament Gajendra Singh Patel and Representatives of Be-A-Human Also Planted Saplings

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of Karanj and Cassia in Smart Garden. For the last five years, the organisation has been working with many



institutions of the country and the state to spread the feelings of morality to the people. For environmental protection, 2000 saplings have been planted. The youth group of the organisation is working to make people aware of their duties at the village level. Be-A-Human has always been ready for all the social duties related to the environment, tree-planting, protection and society. The organisation believes that if there is humanity in the thoughts of a person, then he will always remain benevolent towards this society, country and the world.

RAJ BHAVAN FILLS WITH JOY OF STUDENTS

Teams of students of Indian Council for Cultural Relations and Sehore visit

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Students visited Raj Bhavan and toured the Garden, Sandipani Auditorium, Panchatantra Van, Udyan, Open Gym, Durbar Hall and other places and got information related to Raj Bhavan. Officers and employees of the Raj Bhavan were very much influenced with the curiosity of the children. Two teams of students visited the Raj Bhavan. In the first group, 58 residents of Tagore Hostel of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose

Residential Boys' School, Sehore, visited Raj Bhavan. The second team of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations included 33 students from 8 countries, Nepal, Bangladesh, Tanzania, Thailand, Sudan, Kenya, Afghanistan and Nigeria. Students from different countries visited Raj Bhavan. A student from Nepal told that it is a matter of pride to understand the science of Ayurveda in Dhanvantari Udyan of Raj Bhavan and to spread the benefits of its knowledge across the world. She told that despite being

far from home, the students have not felt the distance during Covid period.

Masood Noori, a student from Afghanistan studying in Pt. Khushilal Sharma Ayurveda College, told that the people of India and the traditions here never let her miss home. She expressed her gratitude for the generous nature of Indians. Sharing her experience, Noori, who is pursuing a course in painting, said that she was very happy to come to Raj Bhavan. Abdullah, a Kenyan student

studying at Nanaji Deshmukh University of Veterinary Sciences, said that he never faced language barrier in India. His Indian classmates guided him.

Controller Raj Bhavan Surabhi Tiwari expressed gratitude to the students who came to Raj Bhavan and told the students to move ahead in their lives by taking inspiration from the experiences and information gained during the Raj Bhavan visit. She congratulated the children and wished them all the best for their bright future.

Provide nutrition to players according to blood profile : Sports Minister

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Sports and Youth Welfare Minister. Scindia said that players of the academy should be provided nutrition according to their blood profile. She said that full blood profile test should be conducted of those players who were infected with Covid last year till now. Scindia said this while reviewing the activities of Wrestling, Boxing and Shotgun Academy at TT Nagar Stadium.

Wrestling Minister Scindia instructed to train potential players of wrestling academy from foreign coaches for two months to prepare for Asian Games. She instructed nutritionist Aradhana Sharma and Dr. Jeans Thomas Mathew of Sports Science to give diet and supplements according to the weight category of the players and sports and to talk to one sports coach every day in a week to get information about the problems of the players. Minister Scindia said that guideline should be prepared for training by foreign coach for the players under the 'Pay and Play' scheme. She also directed to fix a location for the competition calendar in the shooting academy premises and to prepare a checklist of the coach and players who are out of the state for training camps or competitions.

Boxing Sports Minister Scindia directed to take action to bring Cuban coach within a week for foreign exposure of Boxing Academy players. She said that diet, protein etc. should be given to the players who have recovered from Covid. Proper arrangement should be made for special food, medical consultation and medicines to increase hemoglobin in such players.

46 MP STUDENTS STRANDED IN UKRAINE SAFE

Bhopal: The Madhya Pradesh government said on Friday that 46 students from the state who registered with the Chief Minister's helpline are safe in Ukraine. However, it is not known exactly how many students from the state are stranded in the war-hit country. IANS contacted various officials in different departments of the state government to know the exact number of students from the state stranded in Ukraine, but no concrete information was received on the same. A senior official in the medical education department said the department does have information on the number of students studying in overseas countries. The students go to foreign countries to study as per the contract between them and the respective universities, an official said. "The department has no role in sending students to overseas countries. Instead, they tie up directly with the universities and therefore, the department has no idea about it," said a senior official in the medical education department. Another official said the department carries information of only those students who go to foreign countries for study after receiving a scholarship from the state government.

Dance Heroines Came Out Of the Walls in Khajuraho and Became A Reality on the Stage

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Art lovers are getting to see the sublime and wonderful form of Indian arts at the 48th dance festival in the tourist city of Khajuraho. On the evening bright with the colour of Phagun on the sixth day of the festival the dance performances enthralled everyone in the broad theater built in the middle of the aura of Kandariya Mahadev and Jagdambi temples. When the dancers descended on the stage with full decoration, it seemed that the dancers engraved on the walls of the Khajuraho temples were freed from the captivity of the walls and began dancing. All the performances were amazing from Devika to Rudraksh Foundation and Nayanika Ghosh.

The evening of Khajuraho Dance Festival started with Kathak dance by transgender dancer Devika Devendra S Mangalamukhi. Belonging to the Jaipur gharana, Devika went a little out of fashion and performed Kathak in the Mughalian style. In the presentation titled "Sham e Raks", she gave a soulful rendition of the famous Sufi singer Khusro's Kalam "Ya Re Man Baya Baya". After this she performed Salaam in Sargam Ke Ang. Salaam has been a special part of Kathak performed in the Mughal courts. This was in the Tistra Jati. In the next presentation, Devika performed the traditional pure dance in Teentals. She presented Tatkara like Uthan, Thath, Vividh Parne and answer-

ing questions. She concluded the dance with a dance performance on the famous thumri "Yad Piya Ki Aaye" by Bade Ghulam Ali Sahab. On the rhythm of Kaharwa getting Dhruv from Vilambit, she filled and scattered many colours with a dance spirit. She was accompanied by Janab Amiruddin Khan on Sarangi, Mohit Dubey on Tabla, Shabhanu Kumar Rao on vocal singing and Rekha Khatri on Sitar, making the performances memorable.

In the second presentation of the evening, the artists of Rudraksh Foundation, Bhubaneswar gave a glimpse of the splendour of Odissi dance. Yagyadatt Pradhan, who is among the disciples of famous Odissi dancer Bichitranaanda Swain, Dishanan Sahu, Vichitra Behera, Santosh Ram, Samir Panigrahi, Surendra Pradhan, Sanjeev Kumar Jain and Rasmaranjan gave a spectacular performance of group dance. In the first presentation, presenting Krishna and Kali in dance emotions, the dancers told that there is no difference between Krishna and Kali, they are one. The next presentation in this sequence was from the Mahabharata. In this presentation named Chakravayuh, Abhimanyu's bravery and devious moves of Kauravas were presented in dance. The music in these productions, composed in Raga and Taal Malika, was by Ramhari and the rhythm was by Dhaneshwar. The programme ended with Kathak dance by Nayanika Ghosh.



EDITOR'S SPECS

OBC LEADERSHIP ON TEST IN NEXT PHASES OF UP POLLS

As the elections in Uttar Pradesh move towards the last three phases, it is now the prestige of OBC leaders in all parties that is at stake. Almost all parties have put OBC leaders at the helm of their campaigns and the last three phases will test their popularity. Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya has been playing an important role in the BJP campaign. Maurya is contesting from his Sirathu seat in Kaushambi district and is pitted against Pallavi Patel of Samajwadi Party. Pallavi is a first-time contestant but is confident that the caste arithmetic of the constituency will take her to the victory stand. Another prominent leader whose fate depends on the coming phases is Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party (SBSP) president and MLA Om Prakash Rajbhar. Rajbhar is facing the biggest challenge from BSP that has fielded a rebel SP candidate Shadab Fatima. A former MLA, Shadab Fatima, is popular in the constituency and is confident of wresting the seat this time. Union minister Anupriya Patel also faces a test in the next phases of election for her party Apna Dal which has, so far, seen a high success rate in election. Though Anupriya is not contesting the election, her party candidates are reportedly feeling the heat of anti-incumbency in their constituencies. For Sanjay Nishad, president of the Nishad Party, these elections are a make-or-break affair. He is testing waters in the election for his party in alliance with the BJP and his performance will decide the future of his relationship with the party. For the former BJP minister Swami Prasad Maurya, his election this time, is crucial for his political future. The OBC leadership in the Congress will also be put to test in the coming phases with UPCC president Ajay Kumar Lallu.

Have Big Powers pushed Ukraine to Disaster?

Major Generals B Asthana

BACKDROP

Russia has declared war on Ukraine on February 24, 2022, and is executing a plan meticulously prepared and war-games. NATO appears to have over-relied on the potency of its sanctions to deter Putin, which appears to be a major strategic error because it has not worked in the past and does not appear to be working now. Instead, it has emboldened Russian leadership's resolve that NATO will be unable to respond to a quick offensive beyond condemnation, Ukraine's capacity building, and sanctions on Russia. It has pushed Ukraine to disaster, as its President's loud demand to join NATO was neither acted upon by West, nor provided him any assurance that anyone else would do the heavy lifting or put boots on the ground in Ukraine to fight Russians, despite a massive military force imbalance in Russia's favour.

DECODING STRATEGIC AND MILITARY ACTION OF RUSSIA SO FAR

The contours and logic of Russian plans were evident from its posturing over months, President Putin's speeches to the nation and his demands made to Ukraine. The political aim of Russia seems to be to target Ukraine's leadership to give up demand of NATO membership, or else force a regime change, replacing it with a pro-Russian government not propagating NATO membership/agenda. Strategically, the centre of gravity for the Russian offensive is the minds of Ukraine's leadership and military to surrender to Russia with minimum military casualties. This strategic goal cannot be realised without surrounding Kyiv, which is the key strategic objective; as a result, operations to encircle Kyiv and capture adjacent airbases have been launched. After Russia recognised the independence of the

Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic, the liberation of the Donbas region was a foregone conclusion.

The military aim is to demilitarise Ukrainian military to ensure that Ukraine cannot be used as a springboard by NATO to threaten the security of Russia and isolate Kyiv to facilitate regime change without military interference. To shape the battlefield, Russian military postured three sides of Ukraine with massive combat superiority, used forces in Belarus to invade from the North to reach Kyiv via shortest route, used its Black Sea fleet and Crimea to blockade Ukraine from South, and forces in Donbas region to invade from east and some forces from northeast to expedite consolidation.

The military operations were preceded by cyber-attacks and information warfare. Military operations were launched in a well-planned and professional manner under the banner of 'Special Operations,' beginning with air and missile strikes to neutralise air defence capability, air assets to achieve air superiority, and pulverise military targets, claiming to have destroyed over 70 military targets and installations, including 11 airfields in Ukraine, before ground elements marched in, adding conventional superiority to upgrade its hybrid war.

NATO'S RESPONSE AND FUTURE OPTIONS

President Biden's address on February 22, and statements of other western leaders, clearly indicated that NATO is not going to have boots on ground in Ukraine and will depend on financial sanctions and material support to Ukraine as response to Russian aggression.

This weakness emboldened Russia to seize opportunity for offensive into Ukraine with minimum military cost, so far. NATO is still unclear about further responses, as the Russian offensive is already underway; hence time for any possible military action by



NATO is already over. NATO, therefore is only salvaging its own security by strengthening NATO countries bordering Ukraine/Russia to prevent any possibility of Russian adventurism into any of the NATO countries, leaving Ukraine to its fate, as it's not a member of NATO as yet.

LIKELY RUSSIAN ACTION AHEAD

Russia will try to achieve its strategic objectives as fast as possible and move out of Ukraine to minimise its cost. It will avoid fighting in built up areas, as it will prolong the invasion and may not remain as an occupational force to avoid backlash from a segment of hostile population turning into insurgency against it.

It will therefore try to maximise pressure on Ukraine by all instruments of power to submit to regime change or force it at the earliest and de-escalate. Notwithstanding what

Russia wants, the resolve of Ukrainian military and leadership will determine the timeframe and escalation dynamics and the support of NATO to refuel resistance will determine the staying power. Russia is unlikely to make the mistake of annexing Ukraine, as it does not make sense in strategic cost benefit analysis. To build pressure for Ukraine to surrender, Russia may also take over some key strategic installations, fill its strategic aims are achieved. It's a harsh punishment for Ukraine's uncomfortable geopolitical location and leadership's desire to join NATO, which has thrust it into the centre of a "Big Power Contestation" that is going to be a tragedy for its people, in all contingencies.

INDIAN RESPONSE

The first priority for India should be

to evacuate its own students and diaspora. It can push for diplomatic solutions and peaceful resolutions, as well as measures to reduce temperatures, but it should avoid taking sides because it has good connections with all of the opposing powers. While each country's sovereignty must be maintained, both sides have rejected it when it has served their interests, as in the Iraq war, Crimea and Afghanistan.

India needs to factor the weak western response to Ukraine crisis in its strategic calculations, as it can embolden other authoritative powers like China to take similar actions in Indo-Pacific region.

(Major General S.B. Asthana is a strategic and security analyst, a veteran Infantry General. He is the Chief Instructor, United Service Institution of India. The views expressed are)

international

US CONGRESS WANTS TO KICK OUT RUSSIA FROM UN SECURITY COUNCIL

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A resolution calling to kick Russia off the U.N. Security Council for its invasion of Ukraine -- which has virtually no chance of being enforced -- is circulating among US Congress members from both parties, Axios reported.

The development comes as a recessed Congress tries to assert its role in punishing Russia. Driving the news: The resolution is being led by Rep. Claudia Tenney, a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, in coordination with a House Democrat, according to Tenney's office. "It's obviously a tall effort to kick Russia off," Nick Stewart, Tenney's chief of staff, told Axios. "But, it's one diplomatic tool



we have to up the pressure and increase the isolation."

"It's in a sense a messaging bill, but it also empowers our diplomatic counterparts."

The resolution, Axios reported calls for the U.N. to "take immediate procedural actions" to amend Article 23 of its charter to remove Russia as a permanent member of the Security Council. The resolution argues that Russia's invasion of Ukraine "poses a direct threat to international peace and security" and "run contrary to its responsibilities and obligations as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council." According to the U.N. charter, all permanent members of the Security Council have to sign off on any amendments, giving Russia the ability to block such a move, Axios reported.

18,000 weapons distributed to reservists in Kiev

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Some 18,000 guns with ammunition have been distributed to reservists in the Kyiv region alone since the Russian invasion began early Thursday, according to Ukrainian authorities, CNN reported.

In a joint statement, defence minister Oleksiy Reznikov and Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, chief of staff for the Armed Forces, said there were more arms coming.

"Soon we are to receive additional support with modern weapons and other resources from our partners," they said, CNN reported.

On Thursday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky ordered a general military mobilisation. Zelensky said that "in order to ensure the defence of the state, maintaining combat and mobilisation readiness of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military formations", a broad-based mobilisation was ordered, including in the capital, Kiev, and all Ukraine's major cities.

This included a ban on all male citizens from 18- to 60-years-old leaving the country,



according to the State Border Guard Service, CNN reported. The mobilisation also instructed the "conscription of conscripts, reservists for military service, their delivery to military units and institutions of the Armed Forces of Ukraine" and other state security services.

4 killed, over 20 injured as strong quake hits western Indonesia

Jakarta | Agencies

At least four people were killed and more than 20 wounded as a revised 6.1 magnitude quake destroyed over 10,000 buildings and houses in Indonesia's western province of West Sumatra on Friday, a local official said.

Earlier the Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency issued a report saying the quake measured 6.2 on the Richter scale before revising it to 6.1, the agency's Head Dwikorita Kamawati said, Xinhua news agency reported. The head of the operation unit of the Disaster Management and Mitigation Agency of West Sumatra Province, Jumaidi, told Xinhua by phone that the damages and casualties were reported in Pasaman and Pasaman Barat districts, where the weather agency reported that the intensities of the quake were recorded at VI and V MMI (Modified Mercalli Intensity) respectively. "The death toll rises to four people



now. More than 20 people were injured," Jumaidi said. "I think more than 10,000 houses and buildings were damaged. Now our personnel are on the scene to assess precisely the risks. Some other personnel from the Red Cross, rescuers, the government officials and others are also on the scene to respond to the impact of the quake," he noted, adding that the natural disaster has forced thousands of people to take shelter. The quake jolted at 8.39 a.m. Jakarta time (0139 GMT), with the epicentre at 17 km northeast of Pasaman Barat district and the shallow of 10 km under the earth, the Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency said.

The tremors did not potentially trigger any tsunami, according to the agency.

Ukraine soldiers told Russian officer 'go f*** yourself' before dying defending Snake Island

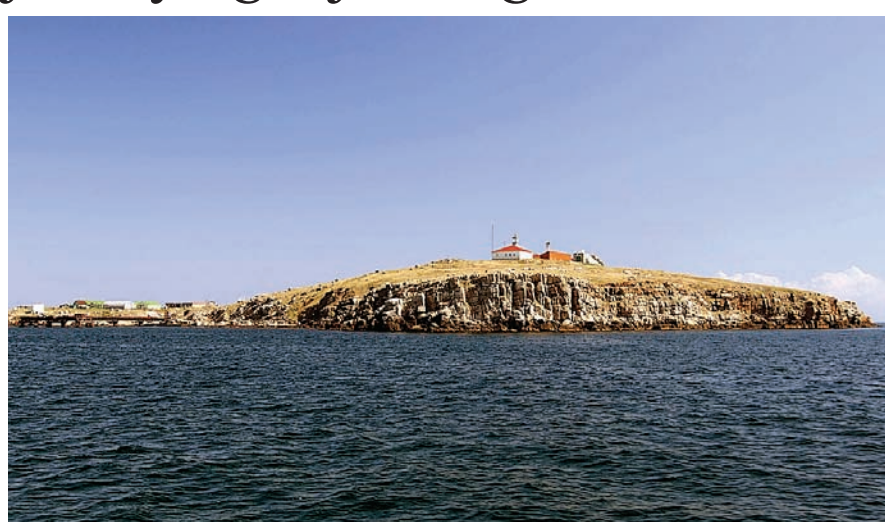
Team Absolute | New Delhi

Ukrainian soldiers, who died defending an island in the Black Sea from an air and sea bombardment, reportedly told an officer onboard a Russian Navy warship to "go f*** yourself" when asked to surrender, The Guardian reported.

There were 13 border guards stationed on Snake Island, a roughly 16-hectare (40-acre) rocky island owned by Ukraine that sits about 186 300 km west of Crimea, when Russian troops bombed the island on Thursday, the report said.

All 13 soldiers died after refusing to surrender, Ukrainian officials announced.

In his address after the first day of the invasion of his country, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky announced he would posthumously present all of the soldiers the 'Hero of Ukraine' award. "All border



guards died heroically but did not give up," Zelensky said. Audio has emerged that is purported to have captured an exchange between Ukrainian border guards on Snake Island and an approaching Russian Navy vessel, in which a Russian officer told the Ukrainian forces on the island to "lay down your weapons", The

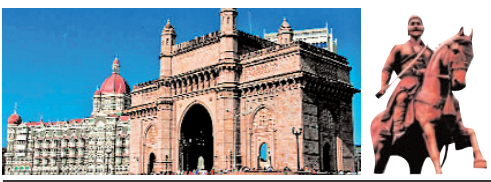
Guardian reported. "This is a military warship. This is a Russian military warship. I suggest you lay down your weapons and surrender to avoid bloodshed and needless casualties. Otherwise, you will be bombed," the Russian office was recorded as saying on a naval radio channel, the report said. After a brief

silence in the recording, a Ukrainian officer reportedly responded: "Russian warship, go f*** yourself", The Guardian reported. The audio has been published by multiple media outlets and was shared on social media by Anton Herashchenko, an advisor to the Ukraine's Interior Ministry, the report said.

RUSSIA PLANS TO SEIZE AIRPORT, FLY IN PARATROOPERS TO ASSAULT KIEV

New Delhi: US intelligence has warned of a plan by Russia to seize an airport in Ukraine capital Kiev, fly in troops, and 'decapitate' the government, Daily Mail reported.

Anton Herashchenko, an advisor to Ukraine's Interior Minister, said that Friday will be the war's 'hardest day' as Russia armour pushes down from Chernihiv - to the north-east of the capital - and Ivankiv - to the north-west - in an attempt to encircle Kiev, where President Volodymyr Zelensky is still holed up, the report said. Ukrainian forces blow up several bridges leading to the capital in the early hours to try and slow down the assault. The US warned tanks were fighting Ukrainian forces 20 miles from the city early Friday, before clashes were reported in a northern district just a few hours later. The fighting appeared to be taking place in Obolon, with the ministry of defence urging residents to make Molotov cocktails to hurl at Russian tanks. Russian forces were also reported in nearby Vorzel, Bucha, Irpen districts. Once Kiev is surrounded, US intelligence believes the plan will be for Russian special forces to move in and seize an airport - likely Sikorsky or Boryspil - which would then be used to fly in a much larger force of up to 10,000 paratroopers who would assault the capital, Daily Mail reported. The job of the paratroopers would be to enter the city, find Zelensky, his ministers, and parliamentarians, before forcing them to sign a peace deal handing control of the country back to Russia or a Moscow-backed puppet regime - effectively ending the war without Putin's ground forces needing to complete the difficult and bloody task of seizing and occupying the whole country, Daily Mail reported.



IT RAIDS SHIV SENA LEADER'S PREMISES; MAYOR SLAMS ACTION

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ahead of the upcoming Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections, the Income Tax Department raided premises linked to a prominent Shiv Sena corporator and his MLA wife for alleged tax evasion, as Mayor Kishori Pednekar slammed the action, here on Friday.

A team of the ITD swooped on the Mazagaon home of corporator Yashwant Jadhav and his wife Yamini Jadhav and carried out searches, besides some business associates in Byculla.

Jadhav is the Chairman of the BMC's powerful Standing Committee which is authorised to prepare the civic budget and sanction expenditures for various works.

Among other things, Jadhav allegedly took bribes of over Rs 15 crore from civic contractors for awarding them big tenders, and then



diverted the money through associates to shell companies in India and UAE purportedly belonging to his family and relatives.

Mayor Pednekar, who went to visit the Jadhav couple, was barred by the police from going to their home and appealed to party activists to remain calm. "The central agencies are being used to harass us. We are not scared of them. This is being done as the

Shiv Sena has done good work in the BMC," Pednekar told mediapersons.

Pointing at the 'continuous hounding' by Central probe agencies, she said that many leaders of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) were targeted but they did not bend before them, they were cleared by the courts and are now rehabilitated politically.

Aam Aadmi Party city working President Ruben Mascarenhas

labelled Jadhav as "one of the most corrupt politicians in India", while the Bharatiya Janata Party spokesperson Ashish Shelar said that more corruption details will tumble out.

Mascarenhas demanded that the ITD probe must be widened to include the BJP and the ruling Sena, Nationalist Congress Party and Congress in the country's biggest and richest civic body. Today's ITD action is said to have come after Bharatiya Janata Party former MP Dr Kirit Somaiya lodged a complaint to the Centre in January, alleging "money-laundering, parking the scam money, hawala transactions" worth around Rs 30 crore, through various shell companies, indulged in by the Jadhav couple. Somaiya also 'suggested' to the ITD and Enforcement Directorate (ED) to initiate suitable action against the couple without waiting for the outcome of reported moves by the Election Commission of India to disqualify Yamini Jadhav for allegedly not disclosing her assets truly in the poll affidavit.

NSE fraud case: Anand Subramanian sent to CBI custody till March 6

New Delhi | Mumbai

A Special Court on Friday sent Anand Subramanian, the former Chief Strategic Advisor of the National Stock Exchange (NSE), to CBI custody till March 6 in connection with the NSE fraud case. He was placed under arrest in the intervening night of Thursday and Friday at Chennai by the federal probe agency. He was later brought to Delhi where the CBI produced him in court.

The agency said that his custodial interrogation was required to confront him with seized articles and others involved in the case. The court after hearing the contention of the CBI allowed his plea and gave Anand into their custody till March 6. Recently his statement was recorded for three consecutive days at Chennai. He was evasive throughout the questioning. Subramanian was brought to the NSE by Chitra Ramakrishna and he reportedly had access to the email ID on which the emails were sent to Yogi with whom the classified information was shared.

The CBI recently raided the SEBI office and recovered some incriminating papers, evidence and digital documents. "These are crucial documents and evidence nailing the lies of the alleged accused involved in the case. We are in the process of making a foolproof case against all the accused. These will help

the prosecution in proving our case when it will go to court," said the source.

The CBI had on February 19 grilled erstwhile NSE director Ravi Narayan. He served as CEO of NSE before Chitra Ramakrishna.

Earlier it was said that he had fled to London and is living there. But the CBI source confirmed to IANS that Ravi Narayan was in Delhi where his statement was recorded. "Ravi was asked to join the investigation. He responded to our summons. He was called at Delhi office where he was grilled. He is also a suspect in the case," said the CBI source.

Ravi too was evasive and tried to evade a lot of questions. He also requested that his LOC should be closed. Chitra Ramakrishna, the ex MD and CEO of the National Stock Exchange, was recently grilled by the CBI in Mumbai. On February 18 she got her statement recorded with the federal probe agency. The CBI had asked her around 50 questions. She had tried to play the victim card by claiming she knew a lot of things. She had also claimed that she was innocent and somebody was trying to frame her. The CBI had asked her for how long she had been sending mails to Yogi Baba, was she given any cut for sharing classified information, if yes where she invested the money. The CBI had already opened a Look Out Circular against Chitra, Anand Subramanian and Ravi.

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST MALIK ARE "WELL-FOUNDED": PMLA COURT

Mumbai: Prima facie, there are reasonable grounds to believe that allegations against Maharashtra minister Nawab Malik are "well-founded", observed a special court here while remanding him in the custody of the ED in connection with a money laundering case. Special judge R N Rokade, designated to hear matters related to the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), also said that sufficient time is required to be granted for the investigation of the offence and Mr Malik's custodial interrogation was necessary. The court on Wednesday remanded Malik, a senior NCP leader, in the custody of the Enforcement Directorate till March 3. Its detailed order was made available on Friday. Malik was arrested by the ED on Wednesday in a money laundering probe linked to the activities of fugitive gangster Dawood Ibrahim and his aides. The court, in its order, said it appears from the report that accused has not cooperated with the investigation on the crucial aspect. "Prima facie, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the accusations are well-founded under PMLA," the judge observed. The court held that the probe was at a nascent stage and Malik's custodial interrogation is necessary to unearth all the ramifications involved in the crime. "The proceeds of crime have traversed since last 20 years and more. therefore, sufficient time is required to be granted for the investigation of the offence," the judge said. The ED case is based on an FIR filed recently by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) against Ibrahim, a fugitive gangster, and others. The NIA had filed its criminal complaint under sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

Court denies immediate relief from arrest to Mahesh Manjrekar in obscenity case

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bombay High Court on Friday refused to grant any protection from arrest or coercive action to filmmaker Mahesh Manjrekar in a case related to showing obscene scenes involving minors in a Marathi movie.

The Mumbai police had earlier this week lodged an FIR against Manjrekar and other makers of the film "Nay Varan Bhat Loncha Kon Nay Koncha", under provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

Manjrekar on Friday filed a petition in the High Court seeking for the case to be quashed and sought interim protection from arrest.

A division bench headed by Justice SS Shinde, however, refused to pass any order



and adjourned hearing in the petition to February 28. The recently released film allegedly contains sexually

explicit content involving minors.

The filmmaker's lawyer Shirish Gupte argued that the aim of the POCSO Act was to save and protect children, their body and mind.

"In the film nothing has really happened to the boys. It is just a creation of art. The scenes shown in the trailer were never part of the film. And the trailer was removed from YouTube," Gupte said.

He further told the court that the case did not require custodial interrogation.

Assistant public prosecutors Madhvi Mhatre and Sangeeta Shinde opposed the petition and said, "An FIR has been lodged at Mahim police station. There are serious allegations against the accused under the POCSO Act." Hearing this, the bench said, "We cannot give a blanket protection."

NAWAB MALIK HOSPITALISED IN MUMBAI



MUMBAI: Maharashtra minister Nawab Malik, who was arrested by the ED and remanded in its custody till March 3, has been admitted to the state-run J J Hospital here for medical reasons, his office said on Friday.

"Hon.@nawabmaliknkp saheb has been admitted to JJ hospital for medical reasons," Malik's office said in a tweet. An official also confirmed that Malik has been admitted to the J J hospital. "During the ED custody, Malik complained about some health issues to the central agency's personnel, following which he was hospitalised," he said. Malik, who is state Minority Affairs Minister and ruling NCP's spokesperson, was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday in connection with a money-laundering probe linked to the activities of fugitive gangster Dawood Ibrahim and his aides. Following his arrest, a court here had remanded him in ED custody till March 3.

Sensex gains over 1,300pts, despite FIIs selling of over Rs 4K cr

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Value buying as well as positive global markets pushed India's key indices -- S&P BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty50 -- higher on Friday, a day after it suffered heavy loss.

However, the upside was capped due to persistent selling pressure by FIIs. On the BSE, NSE and MSEI in the capital market segment, they net sold Rs 4,470.70 crore worth of equities.

Consequently, Sensex settled 2.4 per cent or 1,329 points up at 55,859 points, whereas Nifty 2.5 per cent or 410 points up at 16,658 points.

In the process, both the indices became the best performer in the Asian region.

Globally, Asian markets rebounded on Friday and European stocks too traded higher following Wall Street's surprising overnight reversal, as investors weighed the longer-term impact of tough Western sanctions against Russia after it unleashed



troops, tanks and missiles on Ukraine.

"Nifty recovered smartly on Friday in line with most global markets," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

"While the developments on the Russia Ukraine front will keep influencing the directions of the market,

resumption of supply disruptions and commodity inflation will hurt a lot of economies at a time when they were starting to recover post Omicron threat."

In addition, Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services: "While markets

have seen a pullback - volatility is expected to remain high over the next few days. Market will be keeping a close watch on the ongoing Russia Ukraine conflict over the weekend for any further cues."

"For the near term, Thursday's low of 16,200 may act as a strong support. While traders need to remain cautious of sharp volatility, Investors can use the current dip to gradually add quality blue chip companies in their portfolios." In addition, Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services: "Domestic indices staged a firm recovery tracking positive cues from global markets and took advantage of lower valuations following the massive sell-off in the previous session."

"Global markets took a breather as the fresh US sanctions did not target Russia's oil exports nor their access to the Swift global payment network. However, the market will continue to remain volatile tracking new developments in the Russia-Ukraine war."

STOP CAMPAIGNING, BRING HOME STUDENTS STUCK IN UKRAINE: CONGRESS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole on Friday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi should stop his election campaign, and instead ensure the safe return of Indian students who are stranded in Ukraine.

In a tweet, Patole also posted a video conversation with a veterinary student from Mumbai who is studying in the east European country which has been invaded by Russia.

"Spoke to Chaitali, a student from Mumbai stuck in Ukraine. Due to the war in Ukraine, students are expecting assistance from the Government of India. Modi ji, stop the election campaign and bring our students back home," he tweeted. A large number of Indians, mostly students, are stuck in



Ukraine amid the Russian invasion.

The Indian embassy in Ukraine on Friday said

efforts were on to evacuate stranded students through Romanian and Hungarian border crossings.

INDIA'S FOREX RESERVES RISES BY OVER \$2.7 BN TO \$632.952 BN

Mumbai: India's foreign exchange reserves gained \$2.762 billion during the week ended February 18. The Reserve Bank of India's forex reserves increased to \$632.952 billion from \$630.190 billion reported for February 11. The country's forex reserves comprises of foreign currency assets (FCAs), gold reserves, SDRs, and the country's reserve position with the IMF.



On a weekly basis, FCAs, the largest component of the forex reserves, edged higher by \$1.496 billion to \$567.060 billion. Similarly, the value of the country's gold reserves increased by \$1.274 billion to \$41.509 billion. However, the SDR value declined by \$11 million to \$19.162 billion. The country's reserve position with the IMF rose by \$4 million to \$5.221 billion.

Court stays summons issued to Mamata in national anthem case

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A sessions court stayed the summons issued to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee till March 25 in a case pertaining to her disrespecting the national anthem.

Vivekanand Gupta, a functionary of the BJP's Mumbai unit, had approached the magistrate court with a complaint alleging that Banerjee did not stand when the national anthem was played at an event during her visit to Mumbai in December 2021. Taking cognisance of the complaint, the magistrate court had issued summons to Banerjee earlier this month. It had directed her to



appear before the court on March 2.

The West Bengal chief minister had challenged the lower court's order before the sessions court. As the matter came up for its first

hearing on Friday, judge RN Rokade issued a notice to the respondent (Gupta), and stayed the summons issued by the magistrate court till March 25, when the matter is listed for appearance.

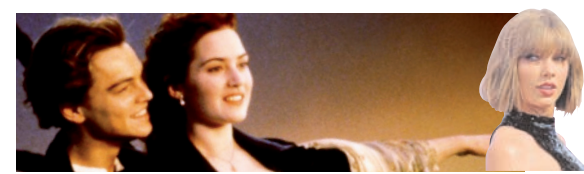
Gupta has accused Banerjee of disrespecting the national anthem. He also demanded that an FIR be registered against her under provisions of the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act.

DISGUSTING POLITICS, CENTRAL AGENCIES BEING MISUSED: SANJAY RAUT

Mumbai: Hitting out at the Central government over Maharashtra Minister Nawab Malik's arrest, Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut on Friday alleged that Central agencies are being misused in the country.



Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Malik was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate on Wednesday. Speaking to the reporters in Mumbai, Raut said, "This is very disgusting politics. When you lose elections...Central agencies & Governor's House are being misused in the country - look at what is happening in West Bengal. What kind of democracy is being run in our country?" Reacting to Aditya Thackeray's speech on Thursday, he said, "Aditya Thackeray said in UP yesterday that very disgusting politics is taking place in the country right now. We will have to fight it together." The Special PMLA court in Mumbai on Wednesday sent Maharashtra Minister and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Nawab Malik to Enforcement Directorate custody till March 3 in connection with Dawood Ibrahim money laundering case.



KANYE'S

NEW GIRLFRIEND CHANEY JONES IS A KIM'S CLONE

Los Angeles | Agencies

Kanye West's newest love interest Chaney Jones was every inch the Kim Kardashian clone as she hit the beaches of Miami. The influencer was practically twinning with Kim as she frolicked in the waves wearing a very cheeky swimsuit and pair of massive neon tint sunglasses.

She wore her wet raven hair slicked back as she emerged from the water, her backside on full display thanks to her thong bathing suit. Chaney left very little to the imagination as she basked in the sunshine wearing her revealing bathing suit.

Aside from her fabulous body, the suit showcased her many tattoos, including a rose inking on her hip. She waded thigh-deep into the water with her friend, cooling down and running her hands atop her hair as she chatted with her pal.

The raven haired beauty eventually emerged with droplets of sea water cascading down her body. Even after splashing around in the water, Chaney looked incredible with her hair perfectly slicked back and her pink lips looking glossy in the sunshine.

She appeared calm and collected as she strode onto the sand after her rejuvenating dip in the sea.

Chaney, an Instagram model and influencer, is said to be Kanye's new love interest after he recently ended things with Uncut Gems actress Julia Fox, Dailymail reported.



Cary Joji Fukunaga, Charlie Hayes revisit 'No Time to Die' locations

Los Angeles | Agencies

No Time to Die' director Cary Joji Fukunaga and location manager Charlie Hayes recently shared the idea behind the film's locations and how the landscape of each place helps in telling the story with regard to the mood and tone of the movie and how locations are always a fundamental component of the James Bond films.

The film boasts of breathtaking locales across five different geographic locations spread across Norway, Italy, London, Jamaica and Faroe Islands.

Talking about the significance of the location of Norway, Cary Joji Fukunaga said, "I had been spending time in Norway and fell in love with the landscape there. And with the actor playing

Mr. White (played by Jesper Christensen) being Danish, and Lea being French we decided we could make Madeleine Norwegian." Charlie further explained the overall process as they chose a commercial forest, just north of Oslo on a vast lake. "The house itself was actually built on the lake rather than alongside it because that worked best for the creative process. The existing structures that we found just weren't quite right in terms of the geography and the layout of the scene that Cary had in his mind."

He then laid out the challenges that came the team's way during the course of filming. "But building the house on the lake brought its own set of challenges. The Norwegian team that we were working with were initially a little bit confused by this request. And then when we were filming, inevitably temperatures started to rise and we noticed that the ice was thinning beneath us. It was safe, of course, but it was a strange thought to get your head around", Charlie added.

NAACP Image Awards Day 4



JAZMINE SULLIVAN, TAMELA MANN FETED WITH MULTIPLE HONOURS

Los Angeles | Agencies

As the NAACP Image Awards witnessed the unfoldings on day 4, singer-songwriter Jazmine Sullivan clinched an armful of trophies, leading the music winners with three trophies. The hit record 'Heaux Tales' fetched Sullivan the honour of outstanding female artist and outstanding album. Her track 'Pick Up Your Feelings' won the outstanding soul/R&B song prize. As per 'Variety', news of the wins served as a bright spot in an otherwise disappointing day for the singer, who announced she has to cancel some upcoming shows after testing positive for COVID-19. As per 'Variety', Anthony Hamilton won the outstanding male artist prize for 'Love Is the New Black' with American rapper Saweetie being honored with the outstanding new artist and saluted for her hit 'Best Friend' featuring Doja Cat. Like Sullivan, Tamela Mann took home multiple awards as she swept the night's gospel categories with wins for outstanding gospel/Christian song ('Help Me', Mann feat. The Fellas) and album ('Overcomer'). The outstanding music video/visual album went to the Nigerian singer/songwriter WizKid's track 'Essence' featuring Tems. Houston rapper and singer Tobe Nwigwe's 'Fye Fye' featuring Fat Nwigwe earned hip-hop/rap song and duo, group or collaboration (contemporary) honors. Other winners included Jay-Z and Jeymes Samuel's soundtrack for 'The Harder They Fall', Silk Sonic, who won the duo, group or collaboration (traditional) award for their smash hit 'Leave the Door Open' and jazz artists Kenny Garrett and The Baylor Project as they nabbed individual prizes. Darnella Frazier, who recorded the murder of George Floyd on camera thereby swinging the world into action against racial injustice, was honored with the Humanitarian's Award.

MARK WAHLBERG'S FAILED PITCH FOR SEQUEL TO 'THE DEPARTED'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Oscar nominee Mark Wahlberg recently revealed that he approached Warner Bros for pitching the sequel to Martin Scorsese's 2006 epic crime thriller 'The Departed', the film that earned him an Oscar nomination. However, things didn't materialise.

The actor spoke to KFC Radio with regards to the same as quoted by 'Esquire', "I went into a meeting with (screenwriter) Bill Monahan at Warner Bros to pitch the sequel to 'The Departed'".

"And let's just say the pitch didn't go very well. He really didn't have anything fleshed out, but he's the kind of guy you just trust to go and write something. And so when we were working on the script for 'Cocaine Cowboys' and 'American Desperado' (I) said, 'Bill, just go write. They like to have things well thought out and planned.' It'd be a pretty good one", he added.

Although Wahlberg did not reveal the details about the failed pitch, he did mention that Monahan was planning to hire actors like Brad Pitt and Robert De Niro to join the cast for the sequel, which would center on Wahlberg's character.

The writer admitted that the absence of a synopsis for the sequel was the reason behind the project not getting a nod from the studio, "I don't do synopses and I don't pitch."



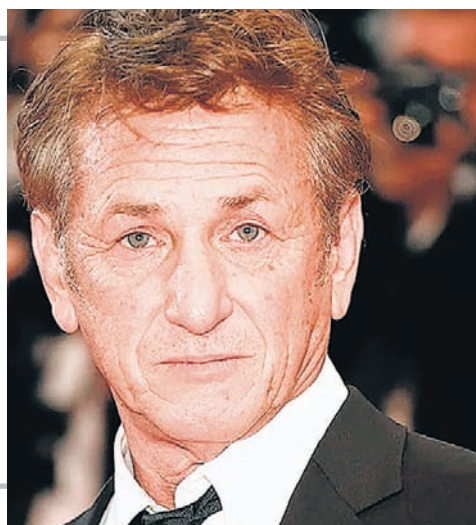
Sean Penn filming documentary in Ukraine on Russian invasion

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Sean Penn, who is known for his association with anti-war and humanitarian causes, is in Ukraine filming a documentary on the Russian invasion, reports 'Variety'. The Oscar winner appeared at a press briefing on Thursday (U.S. Pacific Standard Time) in Kiev, listening to government officials of Ukraine talking about the ongoing crisis.

The doc is a Vice Studios production in association with Vice World News and Endeavor Content. The actor last visited Ukraine in November 2021 to start the preparations for his documentary by visiting with the country's military installations, 'Variety' reports.

"Penn has visited the Office of the President and spoken with [Ukrainian] Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk, as well as local journalists and members of the



Ukrainian military," 'Variety' quoted 'Newsweek' as reporting.

The Office of the President issued a statement through the Ukrainian embassy praising the Oscar-winning actor and filmmaker. The statement's translation accessed by 'Variety' read: "The director specially came to Kyiv to record all the events that are currently happening in Ukraine and to tell the world the truth about Russia's invasion of our country."

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Laura Hamilton

DARREN MANN CAST FOR 'THE MINUTE YOU WAKE UP DEAD' OPPOSITE MORGAN FREEMAN

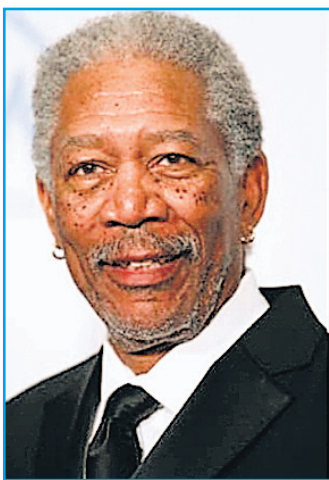
Los Angeles | Agencies

Leo Award winner Darren Mann, who broke out with 2018 drama 'Giant Little Ones', has joined the cast of the neo-noir thriller 'The Minute You Wake Up Dead', where he will be seen in the company of Morgan Freeman, Cole Hauser and Jamie Alexander.

As per 'Variety', the film, with screenplay by Timothy Holland, traces the journey of a stockbroker in a small town who gets involved in an insurance scam with a next-door neigh-

bour, an association that leads to multiple murders. Milestone Studios is handling production finance and sales.

Mann's upcoming credits include the final season of TNT's 'Animal Kingdom' and the indie project 'Breakwater'. In the latter, he'll star opposite Dermot Mulrooney and Mena Suvari in a story of a young ex-con who risks his newfound freedom to track down the estranged daughter of a fellow inmate, unknowingly bringing her past straight to her doorstep.





IPL 2022 to begin on March 26

70 matches across 4 venues with teams divided in two groups

New Delhi | Agencies

The Indian Premier League (IPL) 2022 season will begin from March 26 and run till May 29, said the IPL Governing Council on Friday. The IPL Governing Council, in a meeting on Friday, also said that the 15th edition of the IPL will be played in a bio-secure environment at a single hub to avoid air travel, considered as a major threat for the spread of COVID-19 infection, thereby affecting the players and tournament.

The tournament will be held entirely in the state of Maharashtra with 55 matches in Mumbai and 15 matches in Pune.

A total of 70 league matches will be played across four international-standard venues in Mumbai and Pune - Wankhede Stadium and DY Patil Stadium to host 20 matches each, while Brabourne Stadium and MCA International Stadium, Pune will host 15 matches each. The venue for the playoff matches will be decided later.

All teams will play four matches each at Wankhede Stadium and DY Patil Stadium while featuring in three matches each at Brabourne Stadium and MCA International Stadium, Pune. The 10 teams, with the addition of Lucknow



Super Giants and Gujarat Titans, will play a total of 14 league matches (seven home as well as away), followed by four playoff matches. Each team will play five teams twice while fac-

ing the remaining four teams only once (two only home as well as away).

To decide which teams will play against whom, teams have been divided in two virtual groups based on the number of times being crowned the IPL Champions followed by the number of times the teams reached the final of the tournament.

Group A comprises of Mumbai Indians, Kolkata Knight Riders, Rajasthan Royals, Delhi Capitals and Lucknow Super Giants.

Group B includes Chennai Super Kings, Sunrisers Hyderabad, Royal Challengers Bangalore, Punjab Kings and Gujarat Titans.

Each team will play twice with the teams in their group and with the team in the same row in the second group. With the rest of the teams in the second group they will play only once during the season.

For example, in Group A, Mumbai will play two matches each against Kolkata, Rajasthan, Delhi and Lucknow. Mumbai will also play two matches against Chennai and one match each against other teams in Group B.

Similarly, in Group B, Bangalore will play two matches against Chennai, Hyderabad, Punjab and Gujarat. Bangalore will also play two matches against Rajasthan and one match each against other teams in Group A.

2ND T20I:

Confident India look to continue winning momentum against Sri Lanka



Dharamsala | Agencies

After a thumping victory in the first T20I, the Rohit Sharma-led Team India will look to continue the winning momentum and clinch the three-match series when they face Sri Lanka in the second T20I, here on Saturday.

Team India took a lot of positives from their win in the first T20I. Ishan Kishan looked uncomfortable against West Indies but came out all guns blazing against Sri Lanka in the first T20I, scoring 89 runs in 56 balls with 10 fours and 3 sixes. Shreyas Iyer held the #3 bat-

ting position well and displayed his impeccable finishing skills with an unbeaten 57 runs off 28 balls after starting off really slow.

Team India had a lot of positives in their win in the first T20I. Ishan, who struggled in the home series against West Indies, signalled his timely return to form with his blazing fifty while Shreyas Iyer, who batted at number three in the absence of the rested Virat Kohli, grabbed the opportunity with both hands.

Meanwhile, comeback man Sanju Samson, who did not get the chance to bat in the opener, will be keen to perform to prove himself again in the international arena.

As far as India's bowling is concerned, the hosts used seven options, including the batting all-rounders Deepak Hooda and Venkatesh Iyer on Thursday and they did well to restrict Sri Lankan batters. Venkatesh was a bit expensive but he took a couple of wickets. And in all likelihood, India will love to go with the same bowling lineup.

On the other hand, Sri Lanka will need to play out of their skins to end India's 10-match winning streak at the picturesque stadium of Dharamsala. The visitor's top order failed to put up a big performance with the bat while their bowling attack also looked ordinary in the absence of frontline spinners Maheesh Theekshana and Wanindu Hasaranga.

PSV Eindhoven reach round of 16 in UEFA Conference League

Tel Aviv | Agencies

Dutch club PSV Eindhoven entered the round of 16 of UEFA's Conference League after a 1-1 away draw against Israeli side Maccabi Tel Aviv.

Eindhoven progressed on Thursday night with a 2-1 aggregate win after their 1-0 home victory in the first leg. Thursday's match was played in front of 28,000 fans at Bloomfield Stadium in Jaffa, the southern part of the coastal Tel Aviv-Jaffa conurbation. It was a significant game for PSV's Israeli striker Eran Zahavi, who played for Maccabi for three and a half years and received a warm welcome from the local fans. Zahavi led Maccabi to three Israeli league championship titles, before he moved in 2016 to Chinese Super League side Guangzhou R and F where he was crowned top scorer. After a strong opening by Maccabi, PSV took control, but the first half ended goalless. Just seconds into the second half, Maccabi were close to scoring, but a shot by Croatian striker Stipe Perica hit the post. In the 57th minute, Maccabi fans threw objects into the pitch which led the game to be suspended for five minutes.

After the resumption, Zahavi, who did not threaten Maccabi's goal, was substituted in



the 66th minute. Belgian striker Yorbe Vertessen scored for Eindhoven in the 84th minute, 10 minutes after entering the game.

Maccabi evened the score in the 91st minute with a header by Spanish defender Enrique Saborit, after an accurate pass from midfielder Gabi Kanichowsky.

The draw for round of 16 will take place late on Friday at UEFA headquarters in Nyon, Switzerland.

Strandja Memorial Boxing

Nikhat stuns Olympic medallist, Nitu too cruise into final

New Delhi | Agencies

India's Nikhat Zareen and Nitu continued their rampaging form to progress into the finals at the 73rd Strandja Memorial Boxing Tournament in Sofia, Bulgaria on Friday. The 25-year-old Nikhat secured a hard-fought yet convincing 4-1 win against Turkey's Buse Naz Cakiroglu, while Nitu clinched a dominating victory against Hanna Okhota of Ukraine in the semi-finals.

In an intensely fought women's 52kg semi-final battle, the 2019 edition's champion Nikhat put up a solid resistance against the Tokyo Olympics silver medallist Cakiroglu as both the boxers exchanged heavy blows and fought from a close distance.

However, Nikhat, the boxer from Telangana, held her nerve and tilted the result of the nail-biting encounter 4-1 in her favour with some hard-hitting punches.

In a contrasting women's 48kg semi-final bout, Nitu produced a well-composed performance



against the 2018 World Championships silver medallist Okhota. Having taken an early lead after the opening round, the two-time world youth champion from Haryana capitalised on the momentum and executed timely and precise punches throughout the second round that saw her putting herself in a commanding position. Eventually, the Indian pro-

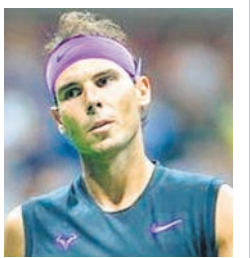
gressed into the final after the Ukrainian boxer abandoned the bout before the start of the third round. Nitu and Nikhat will play their gold medal matches on Sunday at Europe's oldest international boxing tournament.

Later, another Indian boxer Nandini will fight for a place in the final as she takes on Kazakhstan's Lazzat Kungebayva in the +81kg Last-4 stage.

NADAL SETS UP MEDVEDEV SEMIS CLASH WITH ACAPULCO Q-F VICTORY

Acapulco (Mexico):

Spanish tennis stalwart Rafael Nadal was made to work hard for a Mexican Open quarterfinal win against American



Tommy Paul, with the 35-year-old scoring a 6-0, 7-6(5) win to set up a clash with Russian Daniil Medvedev here on Friday (IST). Nadal had defeated Medvedev as recently as in the Australian Open final last month, where he overcame the Russian in a marathon five-setter comeback win to clinch a record-breaking 21st Grand Slam title.

For both the semifinalists, the Mexican Open is their first event since Melbourne.

Against Paul, Nadal dropped just 10 points in the opening set for a bagel but met stiff resistance in the second in hot and humid Acapulco. The fourth-seeded Nadal dictated early before the American began to use his athleticism to telling effect, regularly getting the better of rallies in a second set that lasted over 90 minutes.

ERWEE'S MAIDEN TEST TON PROPELS SOUTH AFRICA TO STRONG POSITION IN 2ND MATCH VS NZ

Christchurch | Agencies

South Africa's left-handed opening batter, 32-year-old Sarel Erwee, scored his maiden century to give the tourists a strong start, with the Proteas ending Day 1 of the second Test against New Zealand on 238/3 at the Hagley Oval here on Friday.

Following the debacle in the opening Test at the same venue, where South Africa lost by an innings and 276 runs, Erwee scored a patient 221-ball 108, sharing fruitful partnerships with captain Dean Elgar and Aiden Markram as the tourists aim to hit back with crucial World



Test Championship points away from home.

Erwee could only manage 10 and a duck on his Test

debut a week back as the Proteas had suffered an innings defeat, getting bundled out for 95 and 111 with the Blackcaps notching up 482.

But in just his second international match for South Africa, Erwee came up with a commanding performance, holding up one end for nearly the entire day on Friday.

Brief scores:

South Africa 238/3 in 90 overs (Dean Elgar 41, Sarel Erwee 108, Aiden Markram 42, Temba Bavuma 22 not out) vs New Zealand.

CWG 2022

Mirabai Chanu qualifies for Birmingham with a golden lift

Singapore | Agencies

Tokyo Olympic silver medallist weightlifter Mirabai Chanu has bagged her berth to the upcoming Commonwealth Games by securing a gold medal in the 55kg category in the CWG qualification event.

The 27-year-old lifter from Manipur bagged the top spot in Singapore by lifting a total of 191kg that secured her a spot in Birmingham.

The Indian weightlifter, who secured a silver medal in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games in 2021 in the women's 49kg category, has moved up a weight division and is participating in 55kg now.

Having secured the quota, Mirabai is looking forward to winning gold in CWG as it gives her good preparation for the Asian Games which are expected to be tougher.

The weightlifter was overjoyed with the qualification and said, "Seven months of intense training and my never-ending love for the sport continues to pay off. I would like to extend my thanks to our Ministry of Youth and Affairs, Weightlifting Federation of India, SAI and all the other stakeholders who have helped me reach here. I am determined to work harder and do everything I can to grab the gold medal again for my country in the CWG."



UEFA SHIFTS CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL FROM ST PETERSBURG TO PARIS



Nyon (Switzerland) | Agencies

The UEFA executive committee held an emergency meeting on Friday and has decided to move the Champions League final from St Petersburg to Paris.

The 2022 final was scheduled to be held at Krestovsky Stadium, which is sponsored by Russian state-owned company Gazprom, but it has been decided that the marquee event final will now be moved to the Stade de France in Paris to be played on the original date of May 28.

A statement from European football's governing body said, "The UEFA executive committee decided to relocate the final of the 2021/22 UEFA Men's Champions League from St Petersburg to Stade de France in St Denis. The game will be played as initially scheduled on Saturday, May 28."

"UEFA wishes to express its thanks and appreciation to French Republic president Emmanuel Macron for his personal support and commitment to have European club football's most prestigious game moved to France at a time of unparalleled crisis," it added.

The executive committee also decided Russian and Ukrainian clubs and national teams competing in UEFA competitions will be required to play their home matches at neutral venues until further notice.

A proud moment for New Zealand cricket: Williamson on 'Team of the Year' honour

Auckland | Agencies

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson said that it was a proud moment for the cricketing community in the country to be named as 'Team of the Year' at the 59th Halberg Awards. The Halberg Awards, established in 1949, are given for recognising the top sporting achievements in New Zealand.

New Zealand men's side were awarded for a spectacular 2021, notably for winning the inaugural edition of the World Test Championship (WTC), reaching the top of ODI rankings and becoming the runners-up at the Men's T20 World Cup.



"The teams category is an incredibly tough one, so it's

tough to decide I'm sure. But at the same time it's a proud moment for New Zealand cricket to receive an award like that, and some nice recognition. Yeah it was a good evening to celebrate NZ sport in a time that has been incredibly tough for everybody and for sports people as well, so it was a nice night," said Williamson on SENZ Breakfast show.

Williamson was also named the sportsman of the year for the second time, beating competition from Hamish Bond, Paul Coll and Scott Dixon. He was at his humble self when he said he was uncomfortable in winning an individual award when New Zealand had performed as a unit.

"I suppose it is just so difficult to choose these things. I think when you're receiving individual awards and you're playing in a team, it's certainly tough to recognise individuals when there are so many people that are sort of pulling and contributing in the same direction."

Williamson, out of action since December due to a long-standing elbow injury, was happy with New Zealand's victory over South Africa by an innings and 276 runs in the first Test at Christchurch. "I suppose you can do all of the things that you do, and do them to the best of your ability, but you still have an opposition there that are looking to play their best cricket.



SHAFQA NAAZ ON THE EVOLUTION OF WOMEN ON INDIAN TELEVISION

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Shafaq Naaz opens up on how she believes that the projection of women has changed on the small screen. Talking about the same, Shafaq averred: "This is a very good change that Indian television has adapted wherein unlike the earlier days female actors are no longer showcased as weak or vulnerable. There is a huge exposure nowadays after the introduction of OTT and people's mindsets have changed overall."

"People nowadays want to see women who are strong-headed rather than being vulnerable onscreen in the narrative, or play the damsel in distress." The actress is popularly known for playing Kunti in 'Mahabharat' and Mayuri in 'Chidiya Ghar'. Furthermore she added: "And I think it is very important to break the stereotype of women being fit to only play roles wherein they play the sympathy card. If you compare the previous shows made with the shows made now, there's a vast difference." "There are shows talking about women empowerment and I believe we need more such concepts," she concluded.



Ranveer credits SLB for polishing the actor in him

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali celebrates his 59th birthday on Friday, his frequent collaborator Ranveer Singh spoke about how the director has shaped him as an artiste. The two have worked together on 'Ram Leela', 'Bajirao Mastani' and 'Padmaavat', all of which gained positive response from all quarters.

The actor spoke about how the director rendered him with a new perspective on the craft of acting. "Mr. Bhansali is somebody who has shaped me as an artiste more than any other creative collaborator in my entire life. I used to approach acting a certain way - I used to think 'mujhe sab pata hai, I know everything' but Mr. Bhansali stripped down my constructs."

"He broke me down and he made me into ash, so that I could rise from the ashes to be reborn as the artiste that I've grown into today. I'm indebted to him lifelong for that", he added. There has been an evolution of Ranveer's creative bandwidth ever since he has started working with Bhansali, commenting on the same Ranveer shared, "He really expanded my bandwidth as an artiste, my range and overhauled my understanding of the craft of acting. I'm grateful to him for everything that he has contributed towards shaping my craft. As a director he has these wild ideas about what to do in a scene, about the characters and about the choices."

OTT helps him connect with new generation: Bobby



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Even though he was one of the favourites of the '90s generation, Bollywood actor Bobby Deol, also the son of yesteryear superstar Dharmendra, has found a new generation of audience through some of his successful web films and web series in the last two years. The actor says his father is quite emotional and proud of the recent success that he has achieved through the web shows. In conversation with reporter, Bobby shared, "Yes he is a star of Hindi cinema but for us, he is our papaji. He is very emotional and proud of my current success also because this medium of OTT is very different and new for their generation."

For him, he always says and makes us believe that the love from the audience is more important than awards. My father in the prime of his career did not receive those film awards but he was always loved by the audience. Now when he sees how my work is getting recognised by a new generation of audience, it makes him feel proud."

Bobby made his Bollywood debut with the film 'Barsaat' in 1995, delivering some of the successful films such as 'Kareeb', 'Soldier', 'Bichhoo', 'Ajnabee', 'Humraaz' and 'Yamla Pagla Deewana'. He made his OTT debut in 2020 with a Netflix film 'Class of 83' and web series 'Aashram'. Both of them were well received.



Bollywood swarms to Farhan-Shibani's wedding bash

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Producer Ritesh Sidhwani hosted a wedding bash at his residence in Mumbai's Khar area for his creative and business partner Farhan Akhtar after the latter's wedding with Shibani Dandekar. The party hosted by Ritesh was attended by the who's who of the Hindi film industry. Members of the fraternity like Deepika Padukone, Aamir Khan, Rhea Chakraborty, Shanaya Kapoor, Sanjay Kapoor, Tara Sutaria, Aadar Jain, Vidya Balan, Riteish Deshmukh, and Genelia D'Souza attended the event, the theme of which was all black. Also seen at the get-together were the

Dandekar sisters, Anusha and Apaksha, along with Farhan's father Javed Akhtar and step-mom Shabana Azmi. Farhan's cousin and filmmaker Farah Khan was also spotted, apart from Siddhant Chaturvedi and Chunky Panday. In addition, Shah Rukh Khan's kids Suhana and Aryan were also seen arriving at the venue, they were greeted by Farah Khan. Suhana and Aryan also made a public appearance representing Shah Rukh's team Kolkata Knight Riders at the IPL auction in Bengaluru, earlier this month. Gauri Khan too arrived for the bash after sometime in another car. Farhan and Shibani got married in an intimate ceremony on February 19 at Javed Akhtar and Shabana Azmi's farmhouse in Khandala after dating for four years.

Prepared to show my unseen sides: Poonam Pandey

Aakruti Bagla | Mumbai

After Nisha Rawal and Munawar Faruqi, Poonam Pandey is the third confirmed contestant of the upcoming reality show 'Lock Upp', to be hosted by Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut.

Poonam Pandey is a popular model and actress, who has always remained in the news for her eccentric dressing style. Last year, Poonam made headlines after she filed a com-

plaint against her husband Sam Bombay for alleged sexual assault.

In an exclusive chat with Absolute India News, Poonam expressed her excitement and revealed what made her to accept the show. She said, "Everything about 'Lock Upp' is so new that I could not resist. 'Lock Upp' is different from rest of the reality shows we have seen so far. And I think it's going to be super entertaining. Also as far as I know there won't be doors attached to the bathrooms."

She further said, "I am looking forward to new challenges which not only me but the whole country will witness for the first time. I am totally prepared to show the side of mine, one has never seen before."

Sharing her excitement about Kangana hosting the show, she said, "I am eager to meet her as she is a strong woman and I am a big fan of her. Being straightforward is her specialty and very few people have the courage to express their opinion and I find myself similar to her that way."

Gangubai Kathiawadi: Good girl Alia Bhatt as the "mafia queen" is a treat to the eyes



FILM REVIEW

BY AAKRUTI BAGLA

(Running in Theatres)

Direction: Sanjay Leela Bhansali
Cast: Alia Bhatt, Ajay Devgn, Huma Qureshi, Seema Pahwa, Vijay Raaz, Jim Sarbh, Chhaya Kadam, Mitali Jagtap, Indira Tiwari, Shantanu Maheshwari.

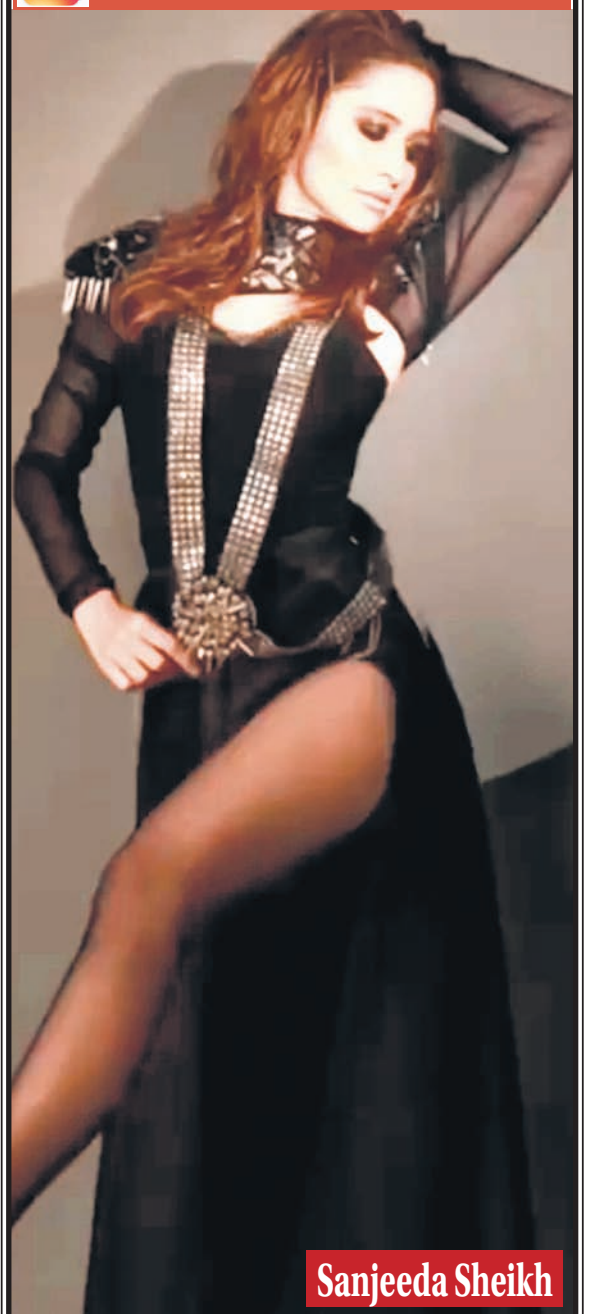
Duration: 157 minutes
Ratings: 3.5 (three and half stars)

Sanjay Leela Bhansali's films have always remained in the news due its controversial nature. His latest movie, which is a biographical crime drama 'Gangubai Kathiawadi' is one such film, based on one of the chapters of Hussain

Zaidi's book "Mafia Queens of Mumbai". It chronicles the journey of the indomitable queen of Kamathipura, Gangubai Kathiawadi. Talking about the star casts and their performances, from being the glamorous "Student of the year" to "the lady gangstar of Mumbai" Alia Bhatt, portraying the role of Gangubai, has definitely lived upto the expectations. Ajay Devgn is outstanding as Lala. Vijay Raaz has effortlessly pulled off his role as a eunuch and wish we could just see more of him.

Huma Qureshi's special dance number also cannot be missed. Shantanu Maheshwari makes his debut in Bollywood with the film where he plays the good-boy delightfully and convincingly. Reuniting with Bhansali after Padmaavat, actor Jim Sarbh delivers a decent performance as a journalist. Talking about the music, none of the song other than 'Dholida' is outstanding. Overall, the beauty of film lies in how it shows Gangubai's character transformation through various stages in her life which makes the film a must watch.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Sanjeeda Sheikh