

absolute india

VOL. 7, ISSUE 119, BHOPAL | THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 2022 | ₹5 | PAGE 08

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GLACIERS REcede, MAY CAUSE WATER SHORTAGE

“Glaciers are like trees, with many branches coming out of them. In the Alaknanda River, we found that many extended portions of the glaciers got separated from the main glacier, mainly because of climatic reasons. This increased the number of glaciers in the area.

Team Absolute | Meerut (UP)

Scientists have found a reduction of 59 square km in the glacier area over a period of almost 50 years, between 1968 and 2020. This has been mentioned in the first detailed 'inventory of glaciers' at the Alaknanda River basin, which contributes the maximum water to river Ganga, and means that 8 per cent of the total area of glaciers has decreased.

Scientists say this could potentially cause a water shortage in the holy river. Regional climate change has been mentioned as a big reason behind the development.



This study of the river basin was published in the Geocarto International by Taylor & Francis.

The average retreat rate of glaciers in the basin was 11.7 metres per year. The analysis of climatic parameters in the basin suggested substantial evidence of deglaciation due to global warming, especially since the winter temperature increased by 0.03 degrees Celsius per year between 1968 and 2020.

The team of scientists studied

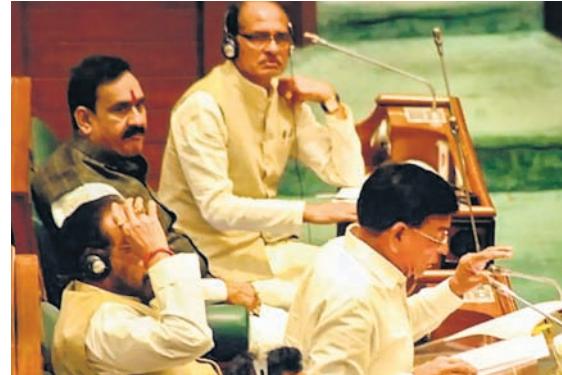
almost all satellite imagery since 1968 meticulously, and found that though the area of the glaciers reduced in the river basin, the number of glaciers increased from 98 to 116.

However, scientists said the increase in numbers was "nothing to celebrate". Small portions of the glaciers were melting in a way that they would not contribute water to the river and hence, there would be a "cascading effect" on the water security of the people living downstream, they said.

India needs to be ready to fight future wars with indigenous weapons: Army chief

New Delhi: Indian Army Chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane has said that the Russia-Ukraine conflict shows that a conventional war can happen and the country needs to be ready to fight future wars with indigenous weapons. "Is the war being fought in cyberspace or through air-conditioned chambers?" General Naravane asked. He then replied that this war shows that a "conventional war could happen". "The war we are seeing is being fought physically on the ground," the Army chief told mediapersons at a function in the national capital on Tuesday. He also said that the "biggest lesson that we can learn from the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war is that India needs to be ready to fight future wars with indigenous weapons." The war between Russia and Ukraine has entered the 14th day. On Tuesday, the United Nations Security Council called for decisive action to end the conflict. The Security Council held its seventh meeting in two weeks related to the unfolding situation.

No new taxes, MP government presents Rs 2,79,237 cr budget



Development Corporation and Rs 50 crore for Other Backward Classes," Deora said.

He said two new industrial parks will be set up in Bhopal apart from solar plants in Sagar, Ujjain, and Shahapur to promote green energy. "To promote electric vehicles, 217 charging stations will be set up in Bhopal, Indore, and Jabalpur," he said.

Deora said the government is working for the welfare of its employees and that the dearness allowance has been increased from 20 to 31 per cent. He added the government will promote organic farming through a new scheme and storage facilities for about 1 lakh MT of horticulture produce will be developed.

Opposition Congress earlier staged a protest in the well of the House before Deora's speech. During over an hour-long budget speech, Congress MLAs kept raising issues such as rising unemployment, SC/ST, OBC scholarship, atrocities against them, Narmada river conservation, etc.

UPPER AGE LIMIT REMOVED FOR ALL CANDIDATES IN NEET UG

New Delhi: Upper age limit for appearing in the undergraduate medical entrance exam, NEET-UG, has been removed for all candidates, the National Medical Commission, the top regulatory body of medical education in the country, has said. Earlier, the age limit was 25 years for general category candidates and 30 years in the case of reserved category candidates. The decision was taken in the fourth NMC meeting held in October last year, Dr Pukesh Kumar, Secretary of the commission said. In a letter addressed to the National Testing Agency (NTA), Dr Kumar has asked the agency to remove the maximum age criteria from the information bulletin of NEET UG. "It has been decided in the 4th NMC meeting that...there should not be any fixed upper age limit for appearing in the NET UG examination. Therefore, the information bulletin may be modified accordingly," Dr Kumar said. Taking it to Twitter, the Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Mansukh Mandaviya said, "The National Medical Commission removes the fixed upper age limit for appearing in the NEET-UG examination. The decision will immensely benefit aspiring doctors and further help in strengthening medical education in the country." NEET is the only entrance examination in India for admission to MBBS, BDS and some other allied courses. Every year, around 15 lakh students appear for it. Last year, the test was conducted in September. The NTA is yet to announce the date and time for NEET 2022. Since last year, the test is also being used for admission to BSc Nursing and BSc Health Sciences courses.

Russia drops gold tax to encourage savers to dump dollars

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday signed a law that exempts individuals from value added tax (VAT) on the purchase of gold. The measure is meant to provide support to Russian citizens, looking to invest their rubles, which have been depreciating in value amid Western sanctions, RT reported. Moscow has imposed restrictions on the purchase of some foreign currencies, including the US dollar and the euro, the common way for Russians to protect their savings in the past. The document was published on the state portal for legal information. Corresponding amendments have also been made to the Russian Tax Code. The new legislation is retroactive and applies to purchases made since March 1.

Previously, when buying physical gold, Russians had to pay 20 per cent from the purchase in VAT. When selling the precious metal back to the bank, the VAT paid was not returned.

INDIAN STUDENTS EVACUATED FROM SUMY LEAVE FOR POLAND

New Delhi: Government officials here said that the Indian students, who were evacuated from Sumy in Ukraine and transported to Poltava on Tuesday, have boarded a special train to reach Lviv from where they will be crossing over to Poland on Wednesday. From Poland, they will be airlifted to New Delhi on Wednesday night or Thursday along with Bangladeshi and Nepalese nationals who were also evacuated from Sumy on Tuesday, the officials said. The Indian Embassy in Ukraine said on Wednesday that the evacuated students, who were brought to Poltava using the humanitarian corridor by bus on Tuesday, have moved westward.

SC GRANTS BAIL TO RAJIV GANDHI ASSASSINATION CONVICT



New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday granted bail to A.G. Perarivalan convicted for the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, which he has already spent more than 30 years behind the bar.

A bench comprising Justices L. Nageswara Rao and B.R. Gavai said: "Taking into account, the appellant has spent more than 30 years of incarceration, he is entitled to be released on bail despite vehement opposition of the Additional Solicitor General (representing the Centre), the appellant is directed to be released on bail." During the hearing, the bench noted that the decision on Perarivalan's mercy petition had been delayed, and he had already undergone more than 30 years of imprisonment. The bench queried Additional Solicitor General K.M. Nataraj, what is the role of the Governor in sending the remission plea to the President? Does the Governor have any independent discretion in a decision taken by the state cabinet? The bench noted that there is sufficient material on record in connection with his conduct during the imprisonment, along with his educational qualifications.

In 2014, the top court had commuted his death penalty to life imprisonment on the ground of delay in deciding their mercy petitions. Perarivalan was sentenced to death for aiding in making the bomb, which killed Rajiv Gandhi.

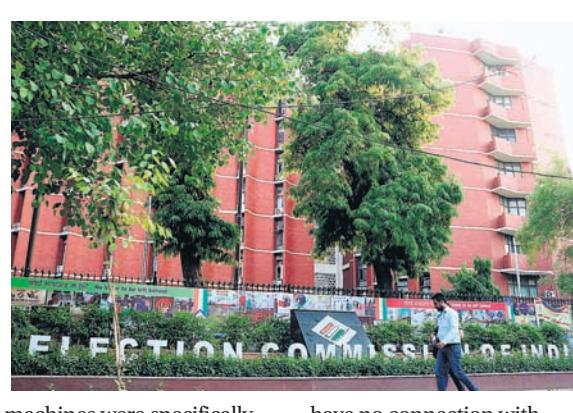
EC ORDERS ACTION AGAINST VARANASI ADM OVER EVMS TRANSPORTATION ISSUE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Election Commission on Wednesday ordered the Uttar Pradesh Chief Election Officer to take action against Varanasi's Additional District Magistrate N.K. Singh over violation of rules in transportation of EVMs.

The lapse on the ADM's part was that he did not inform political party representatives about the movement, EC officials said.

However, the Commission also clarified that these



machines were specifically earmarked and separated for training purposes only and

have no connection with polled EVMs. It is reiterated that no

votes.

The UP CEO's office, in statement issued on late Tuesday night, said that a 'rumour' was spread by people of some political party by stopping the vehicle and alleging that these EVMs were used in elections.

The officials also said that as per the report sent by the Varanasi District Election Officer, it was found during the probe of the incident that these EVMs were marked for training for the officials involved in counting duty on March 9.

Anand Subramanian sent to 14 days judicial custody in NSE fraud case

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi's Rouse Avenue Court on Wednesday remanded Anand Subramanian, the ex Group Operating Officer of the National Stock Exchange (NSE), to fourteen days judicial custody, in connection with the co-location scam case.

Subramanian was arrested by the CBI on February 24. The CBI official produced him before the court of Sanjeev Aggarwal on

Wednesday. The federal probe agency moved a plea before the court saying he wasn't required for further questioning and requested the court to send him to judicial custody. The court allowed the move of the CBI and remanded Subramanian to fourteen days judicial custody. He will now be lodged at Tihar Jail.

The CBI had on Sunday arrested Chitra Ramkrishna, the ex MD and CEO of NSE in connection with the case. She was produced before the court on Monday which remanded her to seven days police custody.

The federal probe agency is probing the matter since May 2018 but they haven't found any concrete evidence to identify mysterious Himalaya Yogi with whom the classified information was shared by Ramkrishna.

Recently, the SEBI had imposed a fine of Rs 3 crore on her, following the market regulator finding that she allegedly shared vital inputs about the NSE with the yogi.

DCGI GIVES EMERGENCY USE OKAY TO COVAX FOR 12-17 YEAR OLDS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's drug regulator has granted restricted emergency use authorisation to Serum Institute of India's (SII's) COVID-19 vaccine Covax for the 12-17 years age group subject to certain conditions, official sources said on Wednesday. It is the fourth vaccine to receive the regulator's nod for use among those below 18 years. The Drugs Controller General of India's (DCGI's) approval comes after the Subject Expert Committee on COVID-19 of the Central Drug Standards Control

Assets worth Rs 1,984cr attached in money laundering case

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday said it has attached immovable and movable properties in the form of lands, buildings and share holdings worth Rs 1,984 crore in connection with a money laundering case pertaining to Karvy Stock Broking Ltd (KSBL), and its Chairman Comandur Parathasarathy and others. The ED initiated money laundering investigation on the basis of FIRs filed by the CCS Police Station, Hyderabad Police, on the complaints of lending Banks who complained that the Karvy Group had availed large amounts of loans by illegally pledging their clients' shares worth about Rs 2,800 crore and the loans became NPA after the release of the client's securities as per the orders of

NSE and SEBI. KSBL was one of the leading Stock Brokers in the country with millions of clients. The scam came to light after a limited purpose inspection of KSBL conducted by NSE in 2019 revealed that KSBL had not revealed a DP Account and credited the funds raised by pledging of client securities to 6 of its own bank accounts ("Stock Broker Own Account") instead of the "Stock Broker Client Account". The ED collected the audit conducted by NSE and the orders passed by SEBI and ROC against KSBL and the forensic audit reports of BDO India LLP.

In 2021, the ED conducted searches at nine locations. In 2022 Parathasarathy, and G Hari Krishna, CFO, were arrested, and sent to judicial custody. The ED said that the accused individuals were evasive throughout the questioning.





BOOKIES BETTING BIG ON BJP IN UP, U'KHAND, GOA; SEE AAP WIN IN PUNJAB

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Ahead of the announcement of results of the assembly elections in five states, the bookies who run the satta bazar have put the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the driver's seat in three states -- Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Goa, while they have considered only the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) as a formidable contender in Punjab, with no party coming close to it.

While the bookies are betting on the basis of per seat in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, in Goa and Uttarakhand, they are betting on forming the government.

In Punjab, they are giving the AAP 40 paise against a rupee, predicting a possible AAP government in the state.

The bookies have put the Congress in second position, while the Akali Dal has been placed third.



The BJP appears nowhere in the bookies' calculation.

"We are talking about 40 paise for the AAP government, Rs 3.50 for the ruling Congress and Rs 25 for the BJP. It is based on our calculations," said a bookie on the condition of anonymity.

As per their calculation, the AAP gets 55 paise for 50 seats and 80 paise for 52 seats. The Congress is

being paid 40 paise for 30 seats and Re 1 for 32 seats.

In other words, the AAP is likely to get a maximum of 50 seats and the Congress 30 seats. The Akali Dal gets 50 paise for 12 seats and 75 paise for 13 seats. "A new wave have entered Punjab. Farmers are supporting the AAP. It was ahead of all others since the beginning. This did not change anywhere," said a bookie.

According to the bookies, the BJP may form the government in Goa and Uttarakhand.

The bookies said in these states, they were not betting on seats but on whether a government is formed or not. "The BJP is ahead of others in both the states. The cost of forming a BJP government in Goa is 66 paise. The price of the Congress is Rs 1.60 and Rs 10 for an AAP government. In Uttarakhand, we are giving BJP 80 paise and the Congress Rs 1.20 for forming the government," said a bookie. In Uttar Pradesh, they are betting on seats. Here too, the BJP is ahead of others while the Samajwadi Party is trailing the saffron party. "The price is Rs 1.20 for 245 seats for the BJP and Rs 1.60 for 135 seats for the SP. These are the final prices which won't change," said a bookie. The satta bazar prices are showing that the BJP is quite strong in three states while it's only the AAP in Punjab.

BIHAR CRICKET ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT BOOKED FOR ATTEMPT TO RAPE IN DELHI

New Delhi: The president of Bihar Cricket Association was booked by Delhi Police in an attempt to rape case, official sources said here on Wednesday. According to sources, the accused, Rakesh Tiwary, committed the crime at a five star hotel in the national capital in July, 2021. The complainant, who is a director in a private firm, had lodged a complaint on Sunday after which the police registered a case under sections 376 and 354 of the Indian Penal Code at the Parliament Street Police Station on Monday, March 7. The victim woman, in her complaint, has alleged that the incident took place when she met the accused regarding clearing the pending dues of the Bihar Cricket Association. It was at that time, when the victim was allegedly molested by the accused in a hotel. When reporter contacted the Delhi Police, an official said that "it is a sensitive matter" and they have lodged an FIR for "attempt to rape and molestation". Further investigation is underway.



Kolar | Agencies

Hundreds of train passengers who were standing on the tracks had a fortuitous escape when they missed being run over by a Shatabdi Express in Kolar district of Karnataka on Wednesday. However, one person died after being run over by the train while two others were seriously injured.

The incident took place at Tekal railway station near Malur in Kolar district. Two passenger trains were stopped at the station to allow the passage of the Shatabdi train. The trains were stopped on either side of the tracks. The Shatabdi Express going towards Chennai from Mysuru was supposed to pass on the mid-track. However, hun-



dreds of passengers from the two passenger trains who had gotten down stood on the tracks. As the Shatabdi rushed towards the station, the people gathered on the tracks ran helter skelter and narrowly missed being hit by the train. Though other peo-

ple shouted and alerted those on the tracks, one person came under the train and died on the spot. The identity of the person is yet to be established as the body was totally crushed. The two injured persons have been rushed to a near-

by hospital. The Tekal police and the railway police rushed to the spot after the incident. It is being probed that when the express train was arriving why did the station authorities not alert the people and move them away from the tracks.

India to get WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday approved the establishment of the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (WHO GCTM) in Jamnagar, Gujarat. This would be the first and only global outpost centre (office) for traditional medicine across the globe.

The cabinet signed the Host Country agreement between the Central government and the World Health Organization (WHO) to approve the establishment of GCTM.

The WHO GCTM will be established in Jamnagar under the Ministry of AYUSH.

A Joint Task Force (JTF) is constituted for coordination, execution and monitoring of activities for the establishment of this Centre.

JTF comprises representatives from the government of India, Permanent Mission of India, Geneva and the World Health Organization.



Under the ambit of this, an interim office is being established in Jamnagar to execute the identified technical activities and planning of fully functional WHO GCTM.

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director General, had announced the estab-

lishment of WHO GCTM in India on the occasion of 5th Ayurveda Day on November 13, 2020.

"WHO GCTM would emerge as a centre of global wellness, bolster evidence-based research, training and awareness for Traditional Medicine," said Modi.

The WHO GCTM would provide leadership on all global health matters related to traditional medicine as well as extend support to member countries in shaping various policies related to traditional medicine research, practices and public health. The Ministry of AYUSH has collaborated with WHO on many fronts including developing benchmarks documents on training and practice of Ayurveda and Unani System, introducing a second module in the Traditional Medicine Chapter of the International classification of Diseases-11, developing apps like M-yoga, supporting the work of International Pharmacopoeia of Herbal Medicine (IPHM) and other research studies etc.

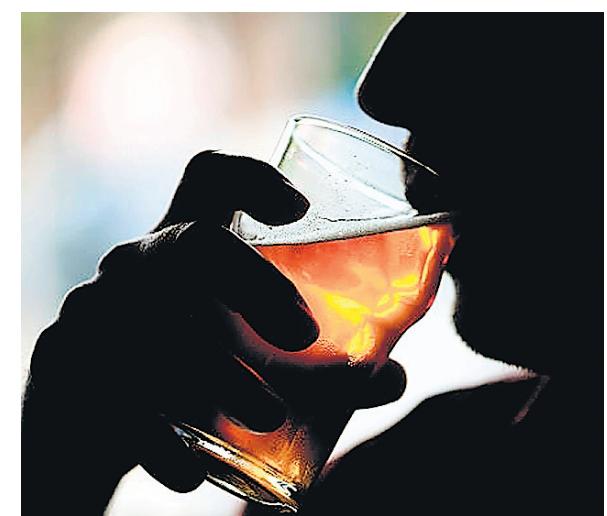
SUSPECTED POISONOUS LIQUOR CLAIMS FIVE LIVES IN SIWAN, WEST CHAMPARAN

Patna | Agencies

Three persons died in Siwan and two others in West Champaran districts after they consumed suspected poisonous liquor on Wednesday.

The deceased, identified as Awadh Kishore Manjhi, Kamlesh Manjhi and Noor Mian were natives of Debar village which comes under Daraunda block in Siwan district.

According to the family of the deceased, they had consumed country made liquor on Tuesday evening and complained of uneasiness at night. "We rushed them to a nearby private hospital where they died during the treatment on Wednesday morning," said a relative of the victim who requested anonymity. Two of the bodies were cremated before police could reach the spot. The police team then



sent the third for post-mortem. Pouches of liquor were also recovered from the houses of the deceased. Meanwhile in West Champaran, two persons died under mysterious circumstances in Nautan Tola village under Nautan police station in the district. The family members of the deceased are tight-lipped. They did not inform the police. However, local villagers told the police.

Police of both the districts refused to give any statement.

Unite, form your own govt: Meghalaya Guv Satya Pal Malik urges farmers

Jaipur | Agencies

Meghalaya Governor Satya Pal Malik has urged farmers to unite and form a government of their own.

Addressing a Samaj Jagriti Shatabdi Mahotsav programme organised by Jaat Samaj on Tuesday in Sardarshahar town of Churu district in Rajasthan, Malik said, "Farmers should come out as givers and not takers. They should unite and form their own government." Launching a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Malik questioned his silence on the 'death of over 700 farmers during the protest against three contentious farm laws'.



"Prime Minister writes a condolence note even if there is a slight accident in Delhi. However, over 700 farmers sacrificed their lives but he did not express his condolence," Malik taunted.

Malik alleged that when he tried to apprise Prime

Minister Modi of farmers' challenges, people advised him to stay silent, saying that he will never be promoted to the post of president or vice president. "I told them that I have worked in senior positions and now want to serve farmers," he claimed.

Chhattisgarh announces old pension scheme for govt employees

Team Absolute | New Delhi

After Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Wednesday announced the restoration of the old pension scheme (OPS) for government employees during the budget for the year 2022-2023. Chhattisgarh is the second state to reintroduce the old pension scheme for government employees that provides an assured income after retirement.

To prepare for the 2023 assembly elections, Baghel had advised Rahul Gandhi that after MNREGA, reverting to the OPS will attract various sections of the people and will strengthen their hold in the state. Baghel ditched the colonial legacy of a budget briefcase for a



'Bahi Khata' and carried the state Budget Papers in the briefcase made from cow dung powder. Moreover, on the direction of Rahul Gandhi, CM Baghel in the Budget also announced an increase in annual assistance under the Rajiv Gandhi Bhamihin Krishi Majdur Nyay Yojana from 6,000 to 7,000 per annum from the next year to attract landless agri-cultural labourers.

The Chief Minister also announced a slew of initiatives which include waiving the examination fees for Chhattisgarh domicile applicants in all professional examinations, provision of Rs 580 crore under the Prime Minister Aayush Bharat Yojana, National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme, as he tried to

touch every section of the society. Realizing Mahatma Gandhi's mantra of extending the benefits of the government's welfare schemes to the last person of the society, CM Baghel announced a Budget of Rs 1,04,000 crore with the main focus on sectors like agriculture, employment, health, education and infrastructure. Baghel announced the National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme proposal at Rs 1,702 crore. To ensure the quality of education in English medium, Baghel announced the construction of new buildings for 18 government colleges, additional classrooms in 22 government colleges. New courses in 16 graduate colleges and 23 post-graduate colleges have also been added.

MP GOVT PRESENTS BUDGET AMID UPROAR BY CONGRESS

The third day of the budget session of the Madhya Pradesh Assembly on Wednesday began with protests from the Congress. Soon after Speaker Girish Gautam allowed Finance Minister Jagdish Deora to read the budget for 2022-23, Congress MLAs started their protests in the House.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

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read the budget for 2022-23, Congress MLAs started their protests in the House.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who is also the leader of the House, stood up and requested the opposition to let the Finance

Minister read the budget.

"This budget is not only for MLAs but for all sections of the society, including children, women, employees and others. They want to listen to the budget. They want to know what their government has done and what

is proposed to be done. It would be wrong if the opposition does not allow the budget presentation," Chouhan said.

Speaker Girish Gautam urged the leader of the opposition Kamal Nath to ask Congress MLAs not to create uproar in the House.

"We all know that annual budget is important and it is scheduled to be presented today. The annual budget decides the future of the development of the state. People want to know about it. I would urge Congress leaders to maintain dignity in the House," Gautam said.

However, the Congress MLAs did not pay heed to the requests and continued their protest. Meanwhile, the speaker asked Finance Minister Jagdish Deora to go ahead with the budget presentation.

As the Finance Minister started presenting budget, the Congress MLAs reached to the Speaker's dias and started raising slogans.

However, the budget presentation continued despite protests by the Congress MLAs.

Chouhan Participated In Parliamentary Excellence Award Programme



- The Behaviour and Conduct of Public Representatives Should Be In Accordance With Democratic Dignity: CM
- Programme held in Mansarovar Auditorium at the Assembly

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that in a democratic system, the responsibility of the people's representatives is towards the people. Therefore, the behaviour and conduct of public representatives in the House should be in accordance with democratic dignity. Legislators can develop the best feeling and image in the general public regarding the functioning of the legislature only by their behaviour and work style in the House. We also have this responsibility in order to pass on these democratic traditions and values in the right form to the coming generation.

Chouhan was addressing

the Parliamentary Excellence Award 2021 distribution ceremony organised by Madhya Pradesh Vidhan Sabha. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla presided over the programme organised at Mansarovar Auditorium located in the Vidhan Sabha. Speaker of the Vidhan Sabha Girish Gautam, Minister of Law and Legislative Affairs Narottam Mishra, MLA and former Speaker of the Assembly Sitasharan Sharma, ministers, public representatives and officials were present.

Chouhan welcomed Om Birla on his arrival in Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly. He said that Birla has set an example for better functioning of the House by establishing new traditions while keeping the old traditions alive. The depth of

Birla's works and the height of thoughts are commendable.

Chouhan said that Speaker of Madhya Pradesh Vidhan Sabha Girish Gautam deserves congratulations for restarting the tradition of distribution of Vidhan Sabha awards. By rewarding the best works and activities, they become alive forever. Chief Minister in his address, remembered the Patwa style of former Chief Minister Sunderlal Patwa in the Vidhan Sabha and also mentioned the memories of the former members of the Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly.

Chouhan congratulated Law award-winning journalists and officers and employees for being honoured with the Outstanding Legislator Award.

Special Handloom Expo in Chandigarh from March 10

Bhopal: On the occasion of Amrit Mahotsav being celebrated on the 75th anniversary of Independence, silk weavers of Madhya Pradesh will showcase their art and skills at Chandigarh Special Handloom Expo. The materials available at the expo will be available at discounted rates to the tourists. The expo will take place from March 10 to March 30, 2022. Commissioner Silk Vishesh Gadhpale informed that the expo will be jointly organised by Madhya Pradesh Silk Federation and Government of India Ministry of Textiles, Development Commissioner Handlooms, New Delhi. The expo will be held at Circus Maidan, Sector 17 of Chandigarh city. He said that in the 14-day expo, weavers' societies, state undertakings, Migrayan Prakrit, Khadi Village Industries, Madhya Pradesh Handicrafts Development Corporation, Handloom Directorate would register their participation in the expo.

Chouhan was addressing

Economic Survey Shows Unemployment and Debt Rising in MP

Ahead of Madhya Pradesh 2022-23 budget presentation on Wednesday, the economic survey showed both debt and unemployment are increasing.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Ahead of Madhya Pradesh 2022-23 budget presentation on Wednesday, the economic survey showed both debt and unemployment are increasing. In MP, Finance Minister Jagdish Deora will present the budget for 2022-23 in the assembly on Wednesday.

Before the budget session, Congress Legislature Party had passed a resolution demanding the protection of cows, a big announcement about cow protection is possible in the budget. As per the economic survey presented in the assembly, both debt and unemployment are increasing. The net public debt is expected to be around Rs 2,09,019.47 crore against Rs 1,59,008.74 crore in March 2020. The market component of this debt is 60.80 per cent.

The state's per capita income has been estimated to go up to Rs 1,50,326 from Rs 1,24,685 last year's estimated per capita income, an increase of 18.87 per cent, which is still 35 per cent lower than the national average. In 2020, the number of

unemployed in the state was 24.72 lakh which went up to 30.23 lakh in 2021. The percentage of educated youth has also gone up from 93.37 per cent (of the total unemployed) to 95.07 per cent. So a total of 5.46 lakh unemployed have increased in the state in the last year, and 35 per cent unemployed in the state are graduates. The per capita income was Rs 1 lakh 4 thousand 894 in 2020-21, which has increased to 1 lakh 24 thousand 685 in 2021-22. But still, it is much less than the national level.

Despite spending Rs 3500 crore on primary school education, children taking admission in schools fell by 1.80 lakh in a year. The school dropout rate in primary classes has gone up to 1.35 per cent from 1.05 per cent, whereas in middle classes, it has gone up to 6.36 per cent from 4.22 per cent. The government has given Rs 380.96 crore compensation for the flood victims. On the other hand, in the case of death due to snakebite, compensation of 78.83 crore was distributed to the victim's family.

CM Planted Saptaparni and Cassia Saplings in Smart Garden

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted Saptaparni and Cassia saplings in Smart Garden on Wednesday. R Anupama Sanjeev, Pushpalata Sharma, R Sanjeev Gopinathan of Lok Jagar Kala Manch Bhopal and social worker Sumit Pachauri also planted saplings. Manch has planted 2100 saplings in different districts of the state and took care of them for 3 years. Along with this, intensive plantation was done on the banks of Kaliyas River in Bhopal. The Manch is actively working for girl child digital education along with tree plantation in rural areas. Computer education centres for girl child have been established in three villages of Vidisha district. In these villages, 5000 saplings were planted during the last monsoon. The Manch is actively working for sustainable, clean and green villages and also working with farmers for organic fertilisers and farming techniques. Chouhan plants a sapling every day in fulfillment of his resolve. Saptaparni planted today is an evergreen medicinal tree, which has great importance in Ayurveda. The bark and leaves of Cassia are used in making Ayurvedic medicines.

Patwari fails to garner elders support over his boycott call

Team Absolute | Bhopal

On March 7, as Madhya Pradesh governor Mangubhai Patel was about to make his address on the opening day of the budget session of the state assembly, state Congress working president Jitu Patwari courted controversy by calling for boycott of the address. This, however, found no takers within his party. Leader of the opposition Kamal Nath distanced himself from Patwari's boycott call, saying he would not go against the established traditions of the assembly and adding that Patwari's demand was not the party line.

Patwari argued that the BJP government was in slumber and his boycott call was meant to serve as a wake-up call. He listed issues that he claimed the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government had failed to address—the financial burden on the state, an out-

of-control bureaucracy and the high number of cow deaths. Patwari's call for boycott did not find support from former chief minister Digvijaya Singh either. Digvijaya said he has always respected constitutional offices, such as that of the governor. Why did Patwari, considered by many as a rising star in the Congress and supposedly close to Rahul Gandhi, announce the boycott call without approval of the state leadership? Congress insiders feel Patwari, who was education minister in the erstwhile Nath government, is being ambitious. The MLA from Rau in Indore had figured prominently in the efforts to save the Nath government in 2020 by attempting to woo back Congress MLAs who had gone with the BJP. Patwari first went to Delhi and Gurugram to get some of the dissenting MLAs back and later to Bengaluru, where the defectors were camping in a resort.

In 2018, when Nath was appointed Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) chief, Patwari was appointed working president. In April 2020, he was appointed chairperson of the state media cell of the Congress by Nath. This enables Patwari to hold press conferences in Bhopal.

Many within the party believe Patwari is in Rahul's good books. With assembly elections in MP less than two years away, Congress leaders have begun positioning themselves for various roles. After the March 7 incident, Patwari clarified that he would be striving to bring Nath back as MP chief minister. He defended his decision to call for a boycott by saying that the BJP government does not want to run the assembly properly and has reduced the number of days it functions. If the assembly does not run, how will MLAs express their views, he asked.

Ministers reaction over budget

Budget for all round development of the state: Tomar

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Energy Minister Pradyuman Singh Tomar said that the budget presented by Finance Minister Jagdish Deora is a budget for the all round development of the state. Proper care has been taken in the budget for all sections including the poor, youth, elderly, women, students and employees. A 30 percent increase in the budget of the Energy Department and a provision of Rs 23,255 crore for this year is welcome.

Tomar informed that, a subsidy of Rs. 21 thousand crore has been given to the domestic and agricultural consumers. This year also the provision of subsidy is a relief for this category of consumers. A provision of Rs 2500 crore has been made in the budget for the improvement of power infrastructure and reduction in power losses. In addition, Rs 5 thousand 418 crore will be invested in capital works in all power companies.

STATE'S BUDGET IS PEOPLE-FRIENDLY AND FINANCIALLY-EMPOWERING: BHARGAVA

Public Works Minister Gopal Bhargava has said that the budget of the year 2022-23 of the Madhya Pradesh government is a budget that will realize the dream of a people-friendly and Atmanirbhar Madhya Pradesh. Through this budget, economic activities in the state will get more mobility, strength and stability.

Bhargava has said that there is provision of about Rs 42 thousand crore for infrastructure, out of which a provision of Rs 7580 crore has been made for the Public Works Department, this is about Rs 1000 crore more than last year's budget due to which the departmental works will gain momentum. He said that initial provision of Rs 58 crore for Narmada Expressway, the most ambitious road project of the state government which makes the government's intention clear. Also, the provision of special amount for damaged roads is also commendable. Similarly, while providing support to traditional crafts and handlooms in the state, there is a provision of more amount in the budget of cottage, Khadi and Village Industries than last year, which will give a boost to the activities of this sector.

BUDGET FOR SOLAR ENERGY IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR SELF-RELIANT STATE: DANG

Environment, New and Renewable Energy Minister Hardeep Singh Dang has said that the proposed budget will script a new story of success in the direction of making Madhya Pradesh and the country self-reliant. Dang said that a provision of Rs. one thousand 300 crore has been proposed for solar energy in this year's budget. This will provide cheap renewable energy along with environmental protection, which will establish new dimensions of development. Dang welcomed the proposed provision of 23 thousand 255 crore in the field of energy for the year 2022-23 by increasing by 30 percent the budget estimate of 17 thousand 908 crore for the year 2021-22. He said that Madhya Pradesh has become a leading state in the country by continuously setting new records in the field of new and renewable energy. The provisions of the new budget will make it easier for the state to achieve its high targets.

BUDGET TAKES CARE OF EVERY SECTION: PATEL

Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Social Justice and Disabled Welfare Minister Prem Singh Patel has described the state's budget for the year 2022-23 as one of welfare for all sections including farmers, poor, women, children and elderly people. Patel said that the provision of Rs 150 crore for the proposed Chief Minister Animal Husbandry Development Scheme is welcome. There are immense employment opportunities for the youths in this sector. Along with this, with the provision of Rs. 142 crore to provide door-to-door veterinary services through veterinary vehicles, the milk production and animal husbandry industry will prosper by improving animal health.

EDITOR'S SPECS

The King maker in Goa!

A day ahead of the counting of votes, the marginal players in the coastal state of Goa may emerge as kingmakers in case of a fractured mandate as predicted by the exit polls. The Trinamool Congress is in alliance with the Maharashtra Party (MGP) in Goa. But the Trinamool leaders are not sure about which way the MGP will move as the party has been more inclined towards the BJP and the Trinamool will not support any BJP move, sources said. The Congress is reaching out to smaller parties in Goa in case of a hung Assembly as the BJP has already started to strategise its operation. The Congress has sent Karnataka party chief D.K.

Shivakumar to Goa to oversee post-poll operations in the state. The Congress is wary of the BJP overtures to smaller parties and independents. The party has reason to feel apprehensive as in 2017 despite being the single largest party the Congress could not form the government as the party could not decide between Digambar Kamat and Luizinho Falerio to be the Chief Minister. Now Falerio has moved to the Trinamool. Sources say that the Congress central leadership will reach out to parties like Trinamool, NCP and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) while Shivakumar will talk to MLAs individually and try to manage the Congress flock in the state. The Trinamool is tight-lipped about any moves and says that only when results are out, the party will decide what to do as it maintains equidistant from both the BJP and the Congress. Goa is likely to witness a hung Assembly with ruling BJP and Congress going neck-and-neck, as per the ABP C-Voter Exit Poll. The fate of the state will depend on the smaller parties like the Trinamool-MGP combine and Independents, who can emerge as the king maker in the 40-member Assembly.

absolute edit**A BLACK WALL FOR UKRAINE, AND A BLACK UMBRELLA OVER FINLAND, SWEDEN**

Robinder Sachdev

The last 15 days have been intense in view of the Russia-Ukraine war, and related happenings. As an analyst, I have been a panelist on a few TV channels in India to discuss these developments. Sometimes even 10-12 hours every day. There is so much that could be discussed, analyzed, and speculated. It seems that there will be a conventional conflict between NATO and Russia – not possible to say when, but probably within the near to medium future in our lifetimes of present folks living on planet earth. And there is a probability, presently in the low teens, that this conventional conflict will spiral into a nuclear conflict (more on this NATO-Russia can be subject of a next column). However, there might arise another scenario wherein nuclear weapons may be rattled within 3-6 months, in a different region of European theatre, as discussed below. As of today there are about 6-7 big picture scenarios of the future that are emerging from this conflict. In my column today, I shall restrict to 2 of these probable scenarios in the short term, 3-6 months.

1. The Black Wall -- Some things have been clear from day 1 of the invasion. One of the things that is clear, and that makes eminent sense from the Russian point of view, is to create a Black Wall for the Ukraine of tomorrow, which will deny it access to the Black Sea (and Sea of Azov) -- forever.

This Black Wall will be the boundary of a land corridor along the sea coasts of Ukraine. This zig-zag land corridor along the Black Sea coast, starting with Russia on the east of Ukraine, along the entire sea-coast of Ukraine till the south-west end of Ukraine, may range from 50 miles to 100-300 miles at places, and will stretch till Odessa and beyond, till the tail-end borders of Ukraine with Moldova and Romania.

Forget the fate of rest of Ukraine, this corridor would be converted into Russian territory. This will ensure that irrespective of the internal chaos and whatsoever happens inside a landlocked Ukraine, the Ukraine of tomorrow will be forever blocked from access to Black Sea (and Sea of Azov) -- at the mercy of Russia. Plus this region is rich in minerals, base metals and industrial infrastructure (Ukraine provides 70 per cent of global supply of neon gas -- critical to the making of semiconductor chips), logistics linkages of rail-

roads, and ports, including Odessa, the giant hub of shipping and ship-making. This is a rich region overall, will contribute to the Russian economy, and also create global leverage and supply-chain choke-points for neon gas, palladium (also to make semiconductor chips), wheat, and sunflower oil, among others.

It may be worth deploying Russian forces to own this region.

What happens inside the remaining territory of a land-locked Ukraine is a very different matter. In this region, there may be urban civil war, political chaos, puppet regimes of Russia, or Russia-hating elements that hold power in the next years or decades -- but Russia would have created a Black Wall for Ukraine for all times to come. 2. Black Umbrella over Finland, Sweden -- One of the last remaining non-NATO countries that share its border with Russia is Finland. Plus Sweden is one step removed from Finland, and is a non-NATO country, thus far. Both these countries now desire, and public opinion is growing inside both of them, to join NATO. In past months and weeks, some NATO countries have already expressed their support for Finland and Sweden to join NATO.

Now, if Russia thinks that NATO, US expansionism is threatening Russia (and that is the primary reason why it has gone to war with Ukraine), then of course the moves and statements from Finland and Sweden should be cause of great worry in the Kremlin.

In the background of dark enmity and a proxy war in Ukraine with US and NATO that is radically fracturing and redefining the European security structure and global geopolitics, logic indicates that Russia will want to deny NATO expansionism in Finland,

What could Russia do to ensure that Finland and Sweden do not join NATO? Will it warn both of them to not go down this path? Or, will Russia stand-by passively and in the next few years Finland and Sweden both become NATO members?

The "Black Umbrella" scenario posits that in view of signals emanating from Finland, and Sweden, Russia may first warn both these countries to remain neutral, and to drop any of their NATO aspirations immediately. Russia may demand a written treaty from both these nations, to this effect. Essentially the same terms as were dictated to Ukraine are NATO membership. Finland, a small country of about 6 million people, and a defence budget of about \$ 6 billion, is puny compared to

Russian conventional forces. So is Sweden, though it is buffered by Finland in between. Thus a Russian warning could make them both halt, change their track.

The question is -- what happens if Finland and Sweden ignore Russian warnings, and persist in their NATO admission process? Will Russia assemble forces on the Finland border, and threaten brinkmanship? Or, will it march to Helsinki? With a drumbeat rolling in the background about reports from Russia, about nukes pointed at Helsinki and Stockholm.

Prime Minister Sanna Marin of Finland will have to make some choices. Soon.

Finland and Sweden do not have NATO cover yet, so it can be assumed that NATO will not put its soldiers on the ground to defend them. (Note: well, NATO could move an emergency resolution, and come to the aid of Finland, Sweden, and then it becomes a NATO-Russia war.

Or, NATO could accomplish a fait accompli in next few days, weeks, with secret activity under a special fast-track process, and one fine morning very soon surprise the world, by announcing that Finland and Sweden are full-fledged members of NATO alliance, from that moment on.) Barring the surprise announcement of Finland and Sweden as NATO member countries, Russia may not need to marshal too large a force at the Finnish border to pose a dire and real threat to Finland. Sure, Russian forces will be stretched in Ukraine, but at the same time it could deploy some small, reasonable numbers on the Finnish border, and inform that its threat must be taken seriously.

Combine with some military and strategic nuclear exercise in North-West Russia, or in the Baltic Sea. Then give a 48 hour notice to both countries to sign a treaty of neutrality. Or face war. Will Finland and Sweden acquiesce to Russian demands, and live under the "Black Umbrella" of a Russia dictated foreign policy, or will Finland fight back? Finland may have no choice.

The US and NATO will cer-



tainly be upset, but what can, will it do? Will it tip-over and go to war with Russia, in support of a non-NATO country? And risk a nuclear conflagration with Russia?

Thus in the next 3-6 months, a Black Umbrella scenario may cover Finland and Sweden. Or, otherwise it will be a war that could suck in NATO along with a rapid spiral to nuclear sabre rattling. Given the stretch of Russia's conventional forces in Ukraine, it may not be out of place to speculate that Russia will resort to a nuclear threat to halt Finland and Sweden from joining NATO.

This has become a dog-eat-dog world in Europe, and will define the security architecture of Europe in this century. Russia has put Europe to notice, all gloves are off, and Russian red lines are now being linked -- with a bluff, bluster, or reality of nuclear Armageddon.

Oh, a minor addendum to the above scenario. There will be still one more last remaining country on the Russian border that is contemplating joining NATO, i.e., Georgia.

Georgia is a poor, former Soviet Republic, many miles and minds away from Europe as compared to Finland, Sweden which are globally seen as pure-blooded European nations, and an integral part of the 'West'. Russia will gain more heft and revenge against NATO when it delivers a counter-punch to the West by targeting Finland, Sweden, rather than targeting Georgia. Georgia can be tamed later.

(Robinder Sachdev is president, The Imagindia Institute. The views expressed are personal)

international**'ZELENSKY SURVIVED MORE THAN DOZEN ATTEMPTS ON HIS LIFE'**

New Delhi | Agencies

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky has already survived more than a dozen attempts on his life, said Mykhailo Podoliak, an advisor to the Head of the Presidents Office.

"Foreign sources talk of two or three attempts. I believe that there have been more than a dozen such attempts. We are constantly receiving intelligence that there are certain reconnaissance groups trying to enter government quarters and the like," Podoliak said, Ukrayinska Pravda reported.

"We have a very strong network of intelligence and counter-intelligence -- they are monitoring this situation and these reconnaissance groups are being eliminated on their approach. That is to say, we are aware of their plans and our counter-intelligence is taking care of the situation," he said.

"From a security point of view, I am not at liberty to discuss certain elements. These risks still exist," he added.

Western intelligence correctly states that



the main target for Russian President Vladimir Putin is Zelensky in terms of attacking government quarters and attempting to kill the country's key leader, he said.

Previously, The Times had reported that since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine war, Zelensky has survived at least three murder attempts.

US-PAK TIES 'BRITTLE' AND 'TRANSACTIONAL', WORSENED BY 'CHINA FACTOR'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Two former Pakistani diplomats, Sajjad Ashraf and Tauqir Hussain, underscore the 'challenge' in US-Pak relations, calling them 'brittle' and 'transactional'.

Ashraf, writing for East Asia Forum, says: "The nature of and the confusion emanating from the American withdrawal from Afghanistan has further exposed the brittleness of this relationship. The Taliban victory is seriously testing Pakistan's long-fraught bilateral relationship with America." As far back as in the 1950s, the interests of the US-Pakistan relationship were only partially served when each side used the other to advance its own agenda that impacted negatively on other's interests," writes Tauqir Hussain.

Now, Ashraf says, "the Biden administration has noticeably turned away from Pakistan again."

Washington has chosen to remain barely on talking terms with Islamabad since withdrawing from Afghanistan last summer.

"The United States continues to blame Pakistan's military for supporting non-state actors, including the Taliban. And yet every American dignitary visiting Pakistan makes a bee-line to pay a courtesy call on the chief of army staff and only meets the civilian leadership as a formality."

The US, he says, has often downplayed the role of Pakistan's civilian leadership vis-a-vis the "military's domineering presence in Pakistan."

With that in mind, Ashraf writes: "A sizeable number of US policy makers are revisiting the United States' relations with Pakistan. Both Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley assured Congress that the administration is looking at the role Pakistan played during the past years and what role the United States would want it to play in the future."

Twenty-two Republican lawmakers have proposed a bill in Congress that includes an assessment of support by the government of Pakistan for the Taliban between 2001 and 2020.

Wendy Sherman, the deputy secre-

tary of state and the highest placed US official to visit Pakistan since Biden took over, made it all plain in October 2021. Departing from Mumbai for Pakistan, in an answer to a journalist's question, she said, "we don't see ourselves building our broad relationship with Pakistan and we have no interest in returning to the days of a hyphenated India, Pakistan". She added that her trip to Pakistan was aimed at accomplishing a "specific and narrow purpose" -- referring to Afghanistan.

Ashraf and Hussain underscore the point that the US is sore with Pakistan for the latter's role in Afghanistan.

"There is a near unanimous view in Pakistan that instead of owning up to its own flawed policy and botched execution of the Afghan campaign, the United States finds it convenient to scapegoat Pakistan. US policy still looks at Pakistan through an Afghan prism and wants Pakistan for a specific purpose of over the horizon of counter-terrorism operations in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Pakistan seeks broad-based relations focusing

on geo-economics. The United States also seems annoyed that Prime Minister Imran Khan has applauded the Taliban victory and, in his typical candor, described Pakistan's service provider relationship to the US as 'lopsided'.

On the near-future of US-Pak ties, Ashraf says: "Now that the foreign policy priorities of Biden administration are clear, there is little likelihood of a significant shift in its stance towards Pakistan. Similarly, it is now wrong for the United States to expect that Pakistan would remain a service provider state and sacrifice its vital security interests."

Pakistan moving close to China, Ashraf says casts a shadow over US policy towards Pakistan. The United States has not made its annoyance with Pakistan signing up to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) a secret. As the United States courted India, Pakistan, by necessity, got closer to China. In the face of US embargoes, Ashraf notes, Pakistan is now "almost entirely dependent upon China for military supplies."

Beijing to continue largest ever nuclear force expansion in history: US intel

New Delhi | Agencies

Beijing will continue the largest ever nuclear force expansion and arsenal diversification in its history, as per the 2022 Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community.

Beijing is not interested in agreements that restrict its plans and will not agree to negotiations that lock in US or Russian advantages. China is building a larger and increasingly capable nuclear missile and bomber force that is more survivable, more diverse, and on higher alert than in the past, including nuclear missile systems designed to manage regional escalation and ensure an intercontinental strike capability in any scenario.

Beijing is accelerating the development of key capabilities it believes the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) needs to confront the United States in a large-scale, sustained conflict. The PLA Navy and Air Force are the largest in the region and continue to field advanced platforms that improve China's ability to establish air superiority and project power. The PLA Rocket Force's (PLARF) short, medium, and intermediate-range conventional systems can



hold US forces and bases in the region at risk, the report said.

"We assess that China presents the broadest, most active, and persistent cyber espionage threat to US Government and private sector networks", the report said.

China's cyber pursuits and export of related technologies increase the threats of attacks against the US homeland, suppression of US web content that Beijing views as threatening to its control, and the expansion of technology-driven authoritarianism globally.

China almost certainly is capable of launching cyber attacks that would disrupt critical infrastructure services within the United States, including

against oil and gas pipelines and rail systems.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) will continue efforts to achieve President Xi Jinping's vision of making China the pre-eminent power in East Asia and a major power on the world stage. The CCP will work to press Taiwan on unification, undercut US influence, drive wedges between Washington and its partners, and foster some norms that favor its authoritarian system.

Beijing sees increasingly competitive US-China relations as part of an epochal geopolitical shift and views Washington's diplomatic, economic, and military measures against Beijing as part of a broader US effort to prevent China's rise and undermine CCP rule.

Beijing will continue to promote the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to expand China's economic, political, and military presence abroad. Beijing will adjust its approach to BRI in response to publicity and sustainability challenges, and diversify project selection in an attempt to improve the initiative's brand and minimize international criticism. China also will promote new international norms for technology and human rights, the report said.

The time is now to try to help at the border: UN

United Nations | Agencies

There are countless stories of Ukrainian refugees' journeys as they flee their homes in search of shelter in neighbouring countries.

Now the Head of the United Nation's refugee agency, UNHCR, has said the focus needs to be on helping refugees at the borders, Reuters news agency reported. Speaking at a press conference in Stockholm, the UNHCR High Commissioner Filippo Grandi said, "The time is now to try to help at the border", rather than having discussions about how refugees should be divided between countries, the BBC reported.

He pointed out that Moldova, which is not a member of the EU and shares a border with Ukraine, is particularly vulnerable due to the influx of refugees.

On Saturday, Moldova's Foreign Minister said the country was "near breaking point".

Grandi added that the number of refugees who have left since Russia's invasion of Ukraine began has probably reached between 2.1 and 2.2 million.

Six humanitarian corridors to try and evacuate civilians: Ukraine

Kiev | Agencies

Ukraine will try to evacuate civilians through six "humanitarian corridors" on Wednesday, including from the besieged southern port city of Mariupol, Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk has said. In a video statement, she said Ukrainian Armed Forces had agreed to stop firing in those areas for 12 hours from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. local time (7 a.m. until 7 p.m. GMT) -- and urged Russian forces to fulfil their commitment to local ceasefires, the BBC reported.

The news comes as Ukraine managed to carry out its first mass evacuation exercise on Tuesday, carrying an estimated 5,000 civilians from the city of Sumy in north-eastern Ukraine to Poltava, in the centre.

Authorities in Kyiv have previously accused Moscow of shelling a refugee corridor intended for civilians trying to escape the city of Mariupol. It is also unclear whether the six proposed routes will go -- previous offers of routes to Russia or its ally Belarus were rejected by the Ukrainian government.

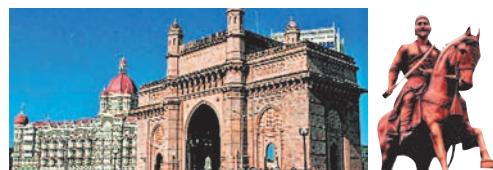


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'ERASE ALL DIFFERENCES:' BOMBAY HC TELLS MAHA GOVERNOR, CM

The Bombay High Court has expressed distress that the two apex Constitutional functionaries in Maharashtra - the Governor and Chief Minister - do not "trust" each other, and urged them to "sit together" and "erase" all their differences.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bombay High Court has expressed distress that the two apex Constitutional functionaries in Maharashtra - the Governor and Chief Minister - do not "trust" each other, and urged them to "sit together" and "erase" all their differences.

The observations came when a bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice M.S. Karnik dismissed two Public Interest Litigations, one filed by a Bharatiya Janata Party leader Girish Mahajan and other by activist Janak Vyas.

Referring to Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari's inaction on the nomination of 12 MLCs, pending since November 6, 2020, the bench



pointed out that there was no movement even after the court's verdict in Aug. 2021. At that time, the court had observed that it was the Governor's duty to decide on the recommendations of the Council of Ministers for the 12 MLCs' nomination "within a reasonable time". Expressing anguish over how the court was "treated" after it passed the order, Chief Justice Datta said that now it is March 2022, and nothing has happened even after eight months. The petitioners had challenged the unfortunate part in the state was the two highest Constitutional functionaries "do not trust each other", with both the Governor and Chief Minister

and were proposed to be held on Wednesday (March 9), but the Governor's nod is awaited.

They contended that the amendments were "undemocratic", "arbitrary", "illegal", and "unconstitutional", but Chief Justice Datta objected to the lack of pleadings in the PIL to demonstrate their locus or how the election of Speaker was a matter of public interest. State Advocate General Ashutosh Kumbhakoni had strongly opposed the PILs on the grounds of maintainability and said they were a waste of the court's precious time. Reacting to the developments, state Congress President Nana F. Patole said that the high court's observations were "slap on the face" of those who are creating hurdles in the election of the Speaker. In a strong statement, he said the Governor must respect the court's verdict and take immediate action on the Speaker election and the nomination of 12 MLCs. "The BJP must understand the democratic process and stop rushing to the court all the time to prevent the good work of the MVA government. We want to conduct the Speaker's election before the state Budget on March 11. We hope the Governor will take a decision on priority in this regard," Patole urged.

No COVID-19 death in Maharashtra for third time this month

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra on Wednesday (March 9) did not record a single COVID-19 death. This was for the third time this month that the state did not report any COVID-19 death. Earlier on March 2 and March 7, the state hadn't reported any death due to coronavirus.

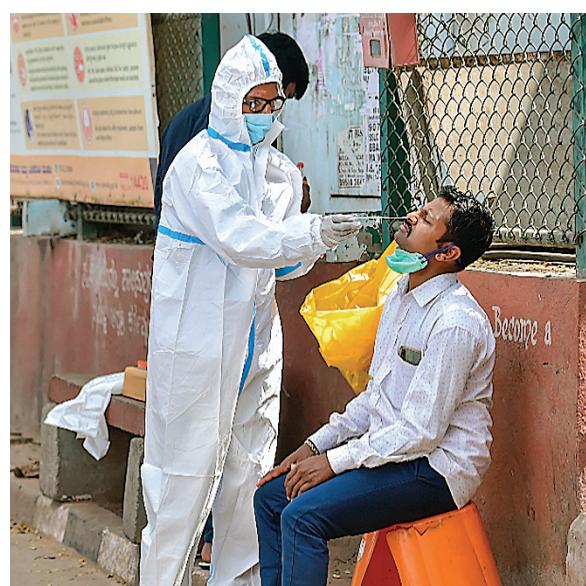
Meanwhile, the state recorded 359 fresh COVID-19 cases, taking the number of active cases to 3,009.

559 patients were discharged in the day, taking the tally to 77,19,100. The recovery rate in the state is 98.08%. The case fatality rate in the state is 1.82%.

Currently, 27,116 people are in home quarantine and 604 people are in institutional quarantine.

The Mumbai circle--which consists of MCGM, Thane, TMC, Navi Mumbai, KDMC, Ulhasnagar MC, Bhivandi Nijampur MC, Mira Bhayandar MC, Palghar, Vasai Virar MC, Raigad, Panvel MC--recorded 87 new cases.

The Nashik circle--which consists of Nashik, Nashik MC, Malegaon MC, Ahmednagar MC, Dhule, Dhule MC,



Jalgaon, Jalgaon MC, Nandurbar--reported 43 fresh COVID-19 cases.

The Pune circle--which consists of Latur, Latur MC, Osmanabad, Beed, Nanded, Nanded MC--recorded 13 fresh cases.

The Akola circle--which includes Akola, Akola MC, Amaravati, Amaravati MC, Yawatmal, Buldhana, Washim-- recorded 9 fresh cases. Nagpur circle--which includes Nagpur, Nagpur MC, Wardha, Bhandara, Gondia, Chandrapur, Chandrapur MC, Gadchiroli--reported 6 new cases.

The Aurangabad circle--which consists of Aurangabad, Aurangabad MC, Jalna, Hingoli, Parbhani, Parbhani MC-- reported 5 fresh cases.

ANOTHER CRUDE PRICE SPIKE TO BATTER INDIA'S EQUITIES FURTHER

Another spike in global crude oil prices on the back of new sanctions banning Russian energy imports is expected to hammer the Indian equity markets further.

Mumbai: Another spike in global crude oil prices on the back of new sanctions banning Russian energy imports is expected to hammer the Indian equity markets further. On Tuesday evening, the Brent Crude oil price again reached \$130 per barrel on expectations that western countries might ban Russian energy imports. Besides, the Russia-Ukraine conflict pushed gold prices to Rs 55,000 per 10-gram. Sanctions on Russia, which is a major producer of Crude oil and gold, are expected to reduce their global supply. The crisis has also accelerated FII selling in the domestic market on the back of inflationary fears. The FIIs net sold Rs 8,142.60 crore worth of equities. At present, India imports 85 per cent of its Crude oil needs. It is estimated that high Crude oil prices will raise prices of domestic transportation fuels in the range of Rs 10 to Rs 32 per litre, thereby unleashing an overall inflationary trend. "Both gold and Crude prices were up during India trading time, but have risen a bit more later. The US is poised to ban import of oil from Russia. About 8 per cent of US oil and refined product imports come from Russia," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities. "Such an action could theoretically send oil prices soaring. However, oil prices have risen and stock prices have fallen over the past few days partly in anticipation of such a move. Hence, the impact on stock markets on Wednesday could be limited," Jasani added. According to Siddhartha Khemka, Head, Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services: "Any negative news from the conflict will hamper market sentiments. Our markets have mirrored global trends and any further rise in Crude oil prices will be negative. The situation is dynamic and needs constant monitoring."

'Working on strategies to help them pursue careers': Maharashtra minister assures medical students from Ukraine

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra medical education minister Amit Deshmukh on Wednesday assured students who have returned from war-torn Ukraine that they would not face academic losses. "We are working on alternative strategies so that they can continue to pursue their medical careers," Deshmukh said while addressing a meeting on Wednesday. The meeting was held to analyse several aspects of how medical students from Maharashtra returning from Ukraine can be assisted on humanitarian grounds.

Presently, 250 students have registered on the website of Maharashtra University of Health Sciences, Nashik. An approximate 18,000 students from India had enrolled for admission to 33 medical universities in Ukraine. Of these, at least 2000 students are from Maharashtra itself. While the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test is mandatory in India, there is no equivalent examination for students seeking admission to medical universities in Ukraine and Russia. Students who want to pursue their medical career in India will have to appear for the NEET examination, Lt Gen (retd), Dr Madhuri Kanitkar, Vice Chancellor of Maharashtra University of Health Sciences, Nashik said while making a



presentation at the meeting.

Dr Kanitkar said that efforts will now be stepped up to collect information from deans of various medical colleges apart from the district administration on the exact number of students and what stage of the medical course they were in. It will not be legally acceptable to accommodate them in our colleges as students have to clear the NEET examination to gain admission. "We cannot graft them onto our system. On a positive note, in the next three to six months, there is a plan to provide a foster kind of support system where online learning can take place. To ensure that they do not face academic loss, the state medical authorities for

the next three to six months will liaise with universities around Russia and Ukraine and ask them their plan for these medical students. In case students want to return, they can be assisted to take up studies in universities in Russia and Georgia, Dr Kanitkar said.

The meeting was attended by representatives of the National Medical Commission, officials from Maharashtra University of Health Sciences, Nashik, private medical college authorities and others. There are wide differences in the system of medical education in India vis-a-vis Russia and Ukraine, officials said, stating that it would be next to impossible to accommodate them in the

Maha BJP marches on the road seeking Nawab Malik's ouster

The Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party on Wednesday conducted a rally at Azad Maidan followed by a procession (morcha) to Metro Cinema, demanding the resignation or sacking of arrested Minister Nawab Malik.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party on Wednesday conducted a rally at Azad Maidan followed by a procession (morcha) to Metro Cinema, demanding the resignation or sacking of arrested Minister Nawab Malik.

The rally was addressed by top leaders including state President Chandrakant Patil, Leaders of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis (Assembly) and Pravin Darekar, who said they would not rest till Malik was out of the cabinet. The Mumbai Police, present in strength, stopped the procession wending its way from Azad Maidan to Metro Cinema and detained a majority of the top leaders who were subsequently taken to the police station.

They included Patil, Fadnavis, Darekar, Ashish Shelar, Nitesh Rane, Manoj Kotak, Chandrashekhar Bawankule, Ashish Shelar, Kirit Somaiya, Mohit Bharatiya, and others, who were whisked off in a police van to Yellow Gate Police Station and released a few minutes later.

On stepping out, Fadnavis vowed that the BJP's struggle will continue till Malik is ousted and other leaders warned of similar protests or processions across Maharashtra.

In late-February, Minority Affairs Minister Nawab Malik was detained by Enforcement Directorate (ED) in an early morning swoop at his home and after 8 hours of interrogation, arrested.

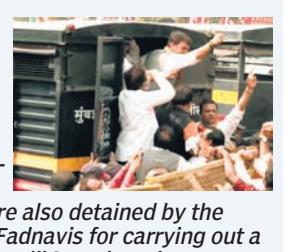
The action against Malik came in an alleged money-laundering case arising out of a purportedly 'tainted'

pertaining to a slur on Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.

The BJP has been clamouring for Malik's scalp, labelling him 'anti-national, traitor, having mafia links, etc', both inside the Legislature and outside and has threatened to continue its agitation till 'truth prevails' and the Minister is out of the Cabinet. On Monday, Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut created a sensation in political circles, labelling the ED as "an extortionist" and the BJP's "ATM", both running an extortion racket, demanded an investigation into the central agency's officials, but the BJP has outrightly rejected the allegations.

FORMER CM DEVENDRA FADNAVIS DETAINED BY MUMBAI POLICE

Mumbai: Former Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis was detained by the Mumbai police on Wednesday. He was spotted waving the BJP flag from the police jeep in photos while being detained. Other leaders were also detained by the Mumbai police along with Fadnavis for carrying out a protest march demanding Malik's resignation.



Fadnavis had been protesting in the past few days in the Maharashtra Legislative assembly demanding the resignation of NCP minister Nawab Malik who is currently in judicial custody till March 21 in relation to a money laundering case involving gangster Dawood Ibrahim. Malik was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate on February 23 after hours-long interrogation. The ED case is based on an FIR by the National Investigation Agency (NIA). The ED has registered the case under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). The ED has been investigating the money laundering case for the past few months. In the same regard, it conducted multiple raids at Ibrahim and his aide's hideouts. Nawab Malik's son Faraz Malik was also summoned by the ED for interrogation earlier. In February the ED questioned Ibrahim's sister Haseena Parkar, his brother Iqbal Kaskar, his brother-in-law Salim Fruit, and Chhota Shakeel.

Late on Tuesday night when some people in Hadapsar noticed what appeared to be a tiny auto-rickshaw with something weird flapping above it, and then a feminine figure dressed in the National Tricolour lights suddenly hurtling towards earth, they mistook it for some strange Unidentified Flying Object (UFO).

It was actually India's queen of adventure sports, Shital Rane-Mahajan, paying a unique tribute to womankind on the International Women's Day (March 8), plus aiming for a new Guinness World Record by herfeat, along with pilot Vijay Sethi. In the unprecedent fly-by-night adventure lasting around 25 minutes, the duo -- Shital and Sethi -- completed a thrilling ascent of 5,100 feet above Pune on an Australian-made Paramotor fitting with a hummerchute, encircling the sky for around 3-4 kms. "We had secured all clearances, including the Pune ATC and the Weather Bureau... But just as we touched 5,100 feet, we encountered thick black clouds and had to deviate from our charted route... I was worried stiff, but I

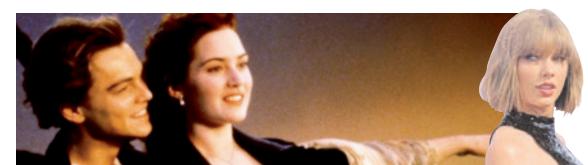
Pune | Agencies

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Indian system of education.

Saurabh Vijay, Secretary, Medical Education and Drugs department, Maharashtra said the two systems (in India and that in Russia and Ukraine) were totally different. "However the Government of India is still resourcing students from the affected parts of Ukraine and today's meeting was a broad one to discuss strategies on how best to help them," he said.

Shiv Uttr, President of Maharashtra Medical Council and representative from Maharashtra on the National Medical Commission, said that Wednesday's meeting was to take a humanitarian view of the situation. As per the NMC rules, any foreign medical graduate has to appear for the examination in India after their training is over abroad and then undergo an internship programme. "NMC has a right to change rules and while previously internship was not allowed at two different places the body has allowed students who have completed three months of internship in universities and hospitals in Ukraine to complete the remaining nine months in India. However as per the rules one cannot finish half term in Ukraine and then conduct the remaining half term in India. This is a unique situation and hence rules pertaining to the internship period have been modified," Dr Uttr said.



BRUNA MARQUEZINE JOINS CAST OF DC'S 'BLUE BEETLE'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Brazilian actress Bruna Marquezine has been signed to play the female lead, Penny for the superhero movie 'Blue Beetle', the movie is the first DC Films production to star a Latino character, reports 'Variety'.

The film also stars Belissa Escobedo, Harvey Guillen, Xolo Maridueña, who is set to star in the lead role of Jaime Reyes, the alter ego of the Blue Beetle, a vigilante who has a scarab grafted onto his spine that gives him tremendous powers and the ability to emit blue energy.

As per 'Variety', Escobedo will play Jamie's younger sister, Milagros. However, Guillen's role is wrapped in secrecy and cloaked in mystery. The film, the script of which has been penned by Gareth Dunnet-Alcocer, will be directed by Angel Manuel Soto, who is known for his work in 'Charm City Kings'.

The film will debut in theaters on August 18, 2023. DC is on a roll following the outsized box office success of 'The Batman' which minted \$134 million in the U.S. last weekend. Upcoming films include 'The Flash' a merry jaunt through the metaverse that will see the speedster interact with Michael Keaton's Batman, and a sequel to 'Aquaman'.



Florence Pugh in talks for Princess Irulan's role in 'Dune: Part 2'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Florence Pugh is in negotiations to join the cast of 'Dune: Part 2', a follow-up to the critically acclaimed, commercially successful (for a pandemic) 'Dune'.

If the deal closes, Pugh will play Princess Irulan Corrino, a royal who becomes romantically entangled with Timothee Chalamet's Paul Atreides.

It's a critical role, one with the potential to grow if "Dune" stretches deeper into novelist Frank Herbert's literary canon.

Production on the sequel is expected to start this summer, and the film is slated to hit theaters on October 20, 2023. It brings back much of the ensemble from the first film, including Rebecca Ferguson, Josh Brolin, Stellan Skarsgård, Dave Bautista, Zendaya and Javier Bardem, reports variety.com.

Denis Villeneuve, credited with making a book thought to be unadaptable into something cinematic and comprehensible, returns as director. For a sign of how terribly these things can go, look no further than David Lynch's justly excoriated 1984 version of the same source material.

'Dune' grossed nearly \$400 million globally and snagged 10 Oscar nominations, including nods for best picture and best adapted screenplay.



Mindy Kaling comedy series 'Never Have I Ever' gets Season 4

Los Angeles | Agencies

'Never Have I Ever', the comedy series co-created by Mindy Kaling and Lang, has been renewed for Season 4 at Netflix, which will also be the show's last season, confirms 'Variety'.

News of the fourth-season renewal comes before Season 3 of the series, whose star cast is led by Maitreyi Ramakrishnan and Poorna Jagannathan, even has a premiere date.

Production on the third season recently wrapped and it will debut over the coming summer. Ramakrishnan essays the lead character, Devi, a first-generation Indian American teenager juggling the pressures of her home life, including grief over losing her father, with a complicated love triangle, evolving friendships

and inner emotional turmoil best expressed by narrator John McEnroe, notes 'Variety'.

"Hey Crickets, we've got some morning announcements for you: Season 3 of 'Never Have I Ever' is gonna drop this summer! Plus we've just been renewed for a fourth and final season, which we are absolutely thrilled about,"

Kaling and Fisher tweeted.

"We can't wait to reveal all the steamy romance and hilarious adventures we have in store for you. Thanks to all our fans for your support -- especially you #Bevi and #Daxton stans. We love you!" the co-created added.

In addition to Ramakrishnan, Jagannathan and McEnroe, the cast includes Richa Moorjani, Jaren Lewison, Darren Barnet, Lee Rodriguez, Jez and Ramona Young.



How Pattinson landed 'The Batman' role

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Robert Pattinson feels that he accidentally planted the seed with producer Dylan Clark for the role of Batman in his latest cape crusader film. "I think I accidentally planted the seed. I

was meeting Dylan for something else and then... Actually, to be honest, I think I definitely was angling after it, but I didn't know what the status of the project was.

"But I remember talking to Dylan for a long time then just right at the end, being, 'So what's happening with The Batman?' But it didn't really fit into the kind of stuff I was doing then. But for some reason, with Batman... It's literally the only comic character I'd ever do. It's by far the coolest one. And I thought it was completely out of reach as well.

He added: "So, I was like, 'Oh, I might as well just throw my cap in the ring.' I didn't realize that Matt was thinking

about me for it as well, which is a lovely coincidence."

What did Pattinson think about his take on this character when you first heard it, or read the script?

The actor said: "It's funny, because I didn't quite realize why it felt so different at first, and I actually had to talk to him about it afterwards, and he's like, 'Oh, it's because Bruce isn't a playboy in it. He's not a playboy and he hasn't got control.'" Normally in all the other movies, he has complete control of the delineation of when he's Bruce in public, when he's Bruce in private and when he's Batman, and he can just change at will.

Whereas in this film, he's basically Batman the whole

time, in a way; he's just let Bruce disappear. I mean, Bruce feels nothing about himself, Bruce is just this afterthought to his life. Which is sad in a way."

Renee

Zellweger to star in World War II drama series

Los Angeles: Actress Renee Zellweger is set to star in the drama 'Avenger Field' that is in development at Peacock. According to Variety, the one-hour drama series tells the story of those who established a clandestine all-female US Airforce program called the WASPs (Women Airforce Service Pilots) to battle Hitler from home. Inspired by the true story of WASP leader Jackie Cochran (Zellweger) and the diverse group of women who fought the system, skeptics and even sabotage to bring everyone home safely. Felicia D. Henderson is attached to serve as writer, showrunner, and executive producer via WaterWalk Entertainment. Susanna White will direct and executive produce. Zellweger will executive produce with Carmella Casinelli under their Big Picture Co. banner. Steve Stark and Stacey Levin of Toluca Pictures, Emily Rose and Jill North of North Rose Pictures, and Connie Tavel also executive produce. MGM TV is the studio. News of the series comes on the same day as the debut of the NBC limited series 'The Thing About Pam', a true crime drama in which Zellweger stars as Pam Hupp. Zellweger also recently starred in the Netflix series 'What/If'. She is primarily known for her film files, earning widespread acclaim for her role in the Judy Garland biopic.

Caelan Higgins/Twink

'GOT CO-CREATORS HAVE NO DESIRE TO RETURN FOR SPIN-OFFS

Los Angeles: Popular series 'Game of Thrones' is ready with spin-offs, with the upcoming Targaryen-centric prequel 'House of the Dragon' first out of the gate later this year. While the network HBO

sets out on expanding the world of Westeros, don't expect original series creators David Benioff and D.B. Weiss to return to the franchise. Weiss recently told Entertainment Weekly he has no intention of returning to "Game of Thrones" in the future, reports variety.com. "All in, we were 11 years, probably, doing that show," Weiss said. "When I say 11 years, it was full on, all in, all day, every day for 11 years. It was the best decade of our lives. It still kind of feels a bit like a dream, but we got to a place where it was pretty clear to us that we had reached the end of what made sense for us to be involved in that world that we lived. It just felt like, for us, it was time to move on and get excited and terrified about building something else - building lots of something else." "We never saw more 'Game of Thrones' shows [as] something that made sense for us to be involved with, given where we were just as people at the time we were done with the original," Weiss added.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Amy Day



Jadeja tops the list of all-rounders in latest ICC Test rankings

Dubai | Agencies

India's Ravindra Jadeja on Wednesday became the top-ranked all-rounder in the latest ICC Test rankings. Jadeja's Player of the Match performance, where he made a career-best, unbeaten 175 with the bat and had a match haul of 9/87 in India's win by an innings and 222 runs against Sri Lanka in Mohali was enough to catapult him to the pole position. During the Test match at Mohali, Jadeja had become the first player in Men's Test cricket history to score more than 150 runs and take nine wickets in a single Test. Apart from the all-rounder rankings, Jadeja's unbeaten 175 lifted him up to 17 places from 54th to 37th rank with the bat. The nine wickets scalped by him helped Jadeja to move up to 17th position with the ball. His all-round contribution was enough for him to regain the top all-rounder spot from



West Indies' Jason Holder, who had held it since February 2021. Jadeja's only previous time on top of all-rounders rankings was in August 2017, when he spent a week at number Far away from Mohali, in the Rawalpindi Test between host Pakistan and Australia, which ended in a batting feast draw, opener Imam-ul-Haq hit a century each in both innings to move to a career best 63rd place with 477 points. His teammate Azhar Ali struck 185 and moved up 10 places to 12 whilst Haq's opening partner, Abdullah Shafiqe added a second-innings century to gain 27 places to 67. Australia's Marnus Labuschagne missed out on a century, being dismissed for 90, but that was enough to gain a point up to 936 and 12th position on his own in the list of highest-ever batting ratings. Usman Khawaja also fell in the 90s but continued his renaissance, moving up six places to 24 with the bat, his highest position for three years. In bowlers rankings, spinner Nauman Ali of Pakistan impressed with figures of 6/107 in Australia's first innings and saw him gain 19 places to 51.

Hamilton | Agencies

After making a winning start to their campaign in the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup with a 107-run win over Pakistan, India will be seeking middle-order gains when they face New Zealand on Thursday at Seddon Park. The Mithali Raj-led side know Sophie Devine & Co. very well, after all the two teams faced each other in five ODIs at Queenstown in February, where New Zealand won 4-1.

In the match against Pakistan, India were in trouble at 114/6. Mithali, Shafali Verma and Harmanpreet Kaur failed to make substantial contributions. While Shafali fell for a six-ball duck, Harmanpreet and Mithali played a lot of dot balls and eventually got out for single figures. Smriti Mandhana got a fifty but was far from her usual self while Deepti Sharma reached to 40 but couldn't convert into a big knock.

It was a 122-run partnership between Pooja Vastrakar (67) and

Sneh Rana (53 not out) that saved India from a likely loss to Pakistan. Youngster Pooja was solid in her stroke-play while the experienced Sneh gave nice support and ensured that India had a respectable total of 244.

In bowling, India's spin attack of Deepi, Sneh and Rajeshwari Gayakwad along with pacers Jhulan Goswami and Meghna Singh kept the lid tight on Pakistan. Rajeshwari, in particular, was brilliant in keeping the pressure up on the Pakistani batters and took four wickets in the process.



WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

India seek middle-order gains against familiar foes New Zealand

SQUADS

India: Mithali Raj (captain), Harmanpreet Kaur (vice-captain), Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Verma, Yastika Bhatia, Deepti Sharma, Richa Ghosh (wicket-keeper), Sneh Rana, Jhulan Goswami, Pooja Vastrakar, Meghna Singh, Renuka Singh Thakur, Taniya Bhatia (wicket-keeper), Rajeshwari Gayakwad and Poonam Yadav.

New Zealand: Sophie Devine (captain), Amy Satterthwaite (vice-captain), Suzie Bates, Georgia Plummer, Maddy Green, Brooke Halliday, Hayley Jensen, Fran Jonas, Jess Kerr, Melie Kerr, Frankie Mackay, Rosemary Mair, Katey Martin, Hannah Rowe and Lea Tahuhu.

Bayern thrash Salzburg to march into UEFA Champions League quarterfinal

Berlin | Agencies

Robert Lewandowski scored the earliest hat-trick in UEFA Champions League history to pave the way for Bayern Munich's 7-1 (aggregate 8-2) victory over Salzburg in the second leg of the last-16.

The record German champions started powerfully on Tuesday night and took only two minutes to test Salzburg goalkeeper Philipp Kohn, who had to palm away Lewandowski's dangerous effort.

Lewandowski continued his threat as he was brought down by Salzburg's Maximilian Wober to win a penalty in the 12th minute. The striker stepped up and opened the scoring after sending Kohn the wrong way, Xinhua



reports. Salzburg almost responded out of the blue, but Bayern keeper Manuel Neuer was on guard to tip Nicolas Seiwald's shot over the bar with 15 minutes gone.

Lewandowski got another penalty with 21 minutes played. The striker made no mistake from the spot and caught Kohn flat-foot-

ed again. The Poland international snatched his treble moments later after Thomas Muller received possession in midfield before chipping the ball into the path of the relentless Lewandowski, who finished the job into an open goal. Things went from bad to worse at the half-hour mark as

Kingsley Coman dispossessed Mohamed Camara to set up Serge Gnabry. The German international had space on the right wing and drilled the ball past hapless Kohn. After the restart, the Bavarians started where they left off as Muller got his name on the scoreboard after hammering a shot into the top right corner with 54 minutes gone.

Salzburg showed signs of life in the 70th minute when substitute Maurits Kjaergaard overcame Neuer to reduce the arrears.

Bayern's progression was never in danger though, as Julian Nagelsmann's men responded in style after Muller wrapped up his brace in the 82nd minute before Leroy Sane made it 7-1 with five minutes remaining.

Shreyas, Mithali, Deepi nominated for ICC Player of the Month

Dubai | Agencies

India's Shreyas Iyer, women's team skipper Mithali Raj and all-rounder Deepi Sharma figure in the list of ICC Player of the Month nominees in the men's and women's sections, respectively for the month of February 2022.

Iyer played a key role in India's white-ball domination as they blanketed the West Indies and Sri Lanka.

In the women's section, Mithali Raj was one of the few shining lights for India in the ODI series against New Zealand. She was the highest run-scorer for India, and the second-highest overall with 232 runs, including three fifties, averaging 77.33 while striking at 82.56.

Deepi Sharma shone both



with the bat and ball in the series against New Zealand. She took the most wickets (10) in the ODI series and was handy with the bat as well, aggregating 116 runs in five matches. She grabbed a four-for in the second ODI and followed it up with a 69* in the next match.

Women's World Cup: West Indies beats defending champs England

Dunedin | Agencies

West Indies wicket-keeper-batter Shemaine Campbell's 80-ball 66, followed by an all-round bowling performance helped the Stafanie Taylor-led team defeat defending champions England by seven runs to notch their second win in the ICC Women's World Cup at the University Oval here on Wednesday.

Thanks to a competitive 225/6 in 50 overs -- built largely around Campbell's partnership with Chedean Nation (49 not out) -- West Indies put pressure on England, who later succumbed to Shamilia Connell's (3/38) pace to be all out for 218 in 47.4 overs.



Brief scores:
Brief scores: West Indies Women 225/6 in 50 overs (Deandra Dottin 31, Hayley Matthews 45, Shemaine Campbell 66, Chedean Nation 49 not out; Sophie Ecclestone 3/20) beat England Women 218 in 47.4 overs (Tammy Beaumont 46, Danni Wyatt 33, Sophia Dunkley 38, Sophie Ecclestone 33 not out, Kate Cross 27; Shamilia Connell 3/38, Hayley Matthews 2/40, Anisa Mohammed 2/24) by 7 runs.

Bairstow's fighting century guides England to 268/6 on Day 1 of Test vs Windies

North Sound (Antigua) | Agencies

A fighting unbeaten century from England middle-order batter Jonny Bairstow -- his eighth Test ton -- saw England recover from a disastrous start on the opening day of the first Test against the West Indies to post 268/6 at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium here on Wednesday (IST).

Bairstow built big partnerships with first all-rounder Ben Stokes and then Ben Foakes as England bounced back with the bat on the opening day. West Indies seamers Kemar Roach, Jayden Seales and Jason Holder all picked up two wickets on the day, with Holder producing amazing control to concede just 15 runs from his 16 overs.

England will resume with Bairstow on 109 not out and Chris Woakes on 24.



West Indies haven't lost a home series to England since 2004, and

SAVITA TO LEAD WOMEN'S HOCKEY TEAM IN PRO LEAGUE GAMES AGAINST GERMANY

Bhubaneswar | Agencies

India's veteran goalkeeper Savita will continue to lead the women's hockey team, while defender Deep Grace Ekka will be her deputy in the upcoming FIH Women's Pro League matches against Germany at the Kalinga Stadium on March 12 and 13. Hockey India on Wednesday named a 22-member squad which will take on the world No.5 side, with two new faces -- young defender Akshata Abaso Dhekale (Hockey Maharashtra) and forward Deepika Jr (Hockey Haryana) -- picked in the senior core group following impressive performance in the National Championship.



THE SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Savita, Bichu Devi Kharibam. **Defenders:** Deep Grace Ekka, Gurjot Kaur, Nikki Pradhan, Udita and Akshata Abaso Dhekale. **Midfielders:** Nisha, Salima Tete, Sushila Chanu Pukhrambam, Jyoti, Monika, Neha, Navjot Kaur and Sonika. **Forwards:** Rajwinder Kaur, Sharmila Devi, Navneet Kaur, Lalremtsiami, Sangita Kumari, Mariana Kujur and Deepika Jr.

'Mankading' no longer unfair play; saliva to shine the ball banned: MCC

London | Agencies

The Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) on Wednesday approved new laws, which will remove the 'Mankad' method of dismissing batters from those listed under unfair play. The MCC also banned the use of saliva to shine the cricket ball.

The far-reaching rules will come into effect from October 2022.

The MCC said in a statement that the game had evolved and the MCC Laws sub-committee had suggested changes for the 2022 Code, "which were subsequently approved at the



Club's Main Committee meeting last week." According to MCC, the law on running out the non-striker -- commonly called the "Mankad" dismissal which involves a bowler choosing to whip off the bails when a non-striker steps out of the crease instead of completing his delivery to the batter on

the amount of swing the bowlers were getting. Players were using sweat to polish the ball, and this was equally effective. "The new Laws will not permit the use of saliva on the ball, which also removes any grey areas of fielders eating sugary sweets to alter their saliva to apply to the ball. Using saliva will be treated the same way as any other unfair methods of changing the condition of the ball," said the MCC statement.

The changes are intended to shape the game of cricket as it should be played," it added. MCC Laws Manager, Fraser Stewart, said, "Since the

publication of the 2017 Code of the Laws of Cricket, the game has changed in numerous ways. The second edition of that Code, published in 2019, was mostly clarification and minor amendments, but the 2022 Code makes some rather bigger changes, from the way we talk about cricket to the way it's played.

"It is important that we announce these changes now as part of the Club's global commitment to the game, giving officials from all over the world the chance to learn under the new Code ahead of the Laws coming into force in October," he said.

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VAANI KAPOOR: I'M WORKING IN THE BEST ERA OF BOLLYWOOD CINEMA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Vaani Kapoor feels blessed to be working in the "best Bollywood era" because "there is wide acceptance of subjects that were deemed forbidden for actors" earlier. Vaani says, "The fact that the industry has produced two back to back progressive films like Chandigarh Kali Aashiqui (CKA) and Badhai Do shows the paradigm shift that the Hindi film industry is going through." "As an artiste, I feel I'm working in the best era of cinema because there is wide acceptance of subjects that were deemed forbidden for actors to choose." Vaani credits the progressive movie-going audience of India for accepting such films with open arms as it would lead to positive social change towards inclusivity for all genders. Vaani says, "I'm delighted that both CKA and Badhai Do found its audience and entertained people with a heartfelt story of inclusivity in a highly divisive world. As an actor and a consumer of cinema, I love entertainers that can leave a message and I'm proud that I was part of an uplifting film like CKA!" "I hope the film made the right impact on the minds of audiences. The fact that my countrymen are encouraging cinema on gender equality is an amazing feeling because we all know that we can be an extremely progressive country." Vaani will be next seen in the much-awaited action drama 'Shamshera' that releases on July 22. She has been paired opposite Ranbir Kapoor.



DILJIT GOES GLOBAL, TO PERFORM WITH TORY LANEZ, DIAMOND PLATNUMZ

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor-singer-songwriter Diljit Dosanjh has signed a strategic deal with a major record company to amplify his presence on a global level. Under the partnership, he has forthcoming singles with Canadian rapper Tory Lanez and the Tanzanian star Diamond Platnumz.

Commenting on his partnership with Warner Music, Diljit, whose earlier track 'Lover' generated more than 68 million views on YouTube, said, "I'm delighted to be collaborating with Warner Music. Together, we'll take Indian music way beyond the usual diaspora audiences to the top of the global charts." As a part of the deal, he has already set the ball rolling in motion by collaborating with artists across the globe, "I've

already started working with some of Warner Music's artists from other countries and it's proving an exhilarating creative process. I'm just so proud to be playing my part in putting Indian music firmly on the global map."

Diljit has recorded 13 studio albums and established himself as one of Punjabi music's biggest stars. His 2020 album 'G.O.A.T.' was featured on Billboard's Global Chart. The partnership is the latest landmark move from Warner Music India, which launched two years ago in March 2020. The company swiftly signed a licensing deal with another Hindi record label, Tips Music. It also founded the Maati label, in a bid to strengthen the Indian folk music genre. In the

Punjabi music scene, Warner Music has signed partnerships with Ziiki Media and Sky Digital.



Puja Agarwal intrigued and excited by OTT as a platform

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Puja Agarwal, who has been recently seen in the short film 'Mirro', says that OTT as a platform excites her and she would like to be part of more projects on OTT. "I have worked in a couple of short films. Recently, my film 'Mirro' got released. My focus is more on OTT. I feel a lot of amazing content is being made for various OTT platforms and I would love to be part of some. It's a medium which allows you to experiment as an actor," she says.

Ask her what is her favourite genre as an actor and a viewer, and she says: "I have been intrigued by the fantasy genre since childhood. I love magic, fairies, witches and the dreamy world." Meanwhile, while work is important to Puja, so is relaxing and rejuvenating, she says. "Spending quality time with family and friends and going on a solo vacation trip are some of the things I do to refresh myself. I have very few friends in life and they all are my family. While I have a diverse network of people I know, I feel a greater sense of belonging and well-being by nurturing close, meaningful relationships that will support me through thick and thin," she says.



APARSHAKTI KHURANA TO HOST CRITICS' CHOICE AWARDS 2022

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The global entertainment studio, International Art Machine (IAM), has tied up with Preity Zinta and Dibakar Banerjee to roll out content after it makes its debut with 'The Immortals of Meluha', helmed by celebrated director Shekhar Kapur, as already reported by IANS. Preity Zinta joins the growing line-up of stars, such as Madhuri Dixit, Raveena Tandon and Sushmita Sen, who have returned to showbiz after a sabbatical via OTT platforms. Her comeback project is the thriller, 'The Kitty Party'. 'The Kitty Party' is a female-driven murder mystery that moonlights between being a dramedy and thriller," Zinta said to 'Variety', adding that it's "too early to comment more except that we cannot wait to get started". Zinta, whose credits include such memorable films as 'Dil Se', 'Veer Zaara' and 'Kal Ho Naa Ho', is also the co-owner of the IPL team, Punjab Kings. Next up is the political drama 'Gods' from Dibakar Banerjee, who's known for his films 'Khosla Ka Ghosla', 'Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!', 'Shanghai' and 'Detective Byomkesh Bakshi', apart from the Netflix series 'Lust Stories'. "Gods' is an Indian story in a way that can only happen in India," Banerjee said to 'Variety'. "It centres around the Great Indian Family. The generations. The power play. The family politics. I am finally getting my secret wish -- a family soap that will upset the genre -- and channeling some of the best of Indian TV from the 80s and the 90s."

10 NAHI 40 REVIEW: SWEET-SIMPLE-HILARIOUS & HEART-TOUCHING FILM

FILM REVIEW

BY AAKRUTI BAGLA

Cast: J.S. Randhawa, Sonal Mudgal, Birbal, Manmauji, Manoj Bakshi and ensemble. **Director:** J.S. Randhawa

Duration: 1hr 54min
Ratings: * * 1/2 (three and half stars)

I t's not always about living life, it's about loving and enjoying it to the fullest' and this is what forms the crux of the story.

Story begins from a residential society wherein both old and young people live. The main protagonist of the movie Sumit very often gets irritated and disturbed by the nagging behavior

of old people in his neighborhoods. Every now and then he keeps having arguments with them.

Sumit (J.S. Randhawa) shares a close bond with his sister-in-laws Aashi and Sonal who work for the welfare of the elderly people. While Aashi is sensible and mature,

Sonal is a happy-go-lucky person.

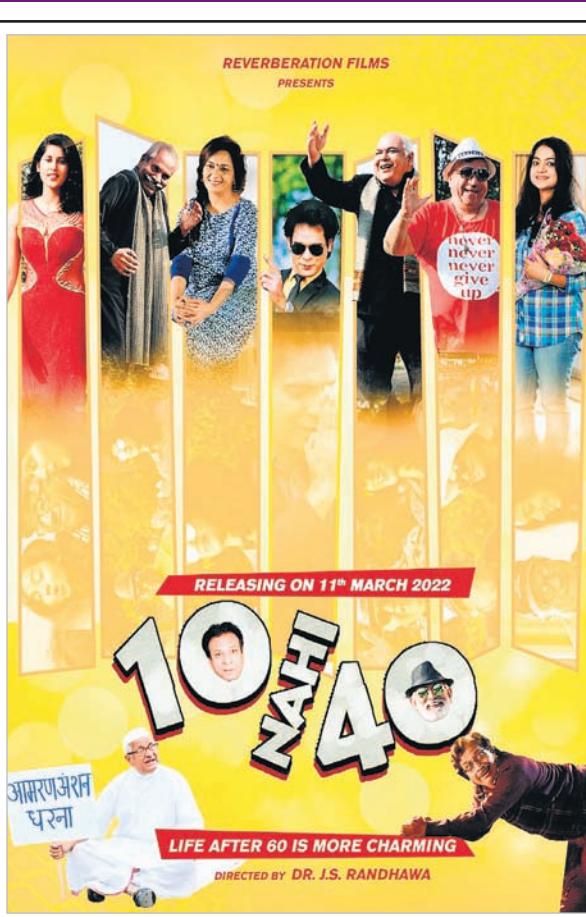
The story gradually revolves around how Aashi leads him to change his attitude and they together decide to open a day care center for elderly. In this course, he understands that even though the old people look happy but they are lonely within.

While some elders don't find peace in their house due to children fighting, in some cases kids don't have time for their parents while some are lonely. The daycare centre is built with the impression that it provides them a platform for enjoyment and fun in each other's company.

The day care centre was named 10 nahi 40 indicating that life is not to be counted by the years you lived or years that are left but by the years you lived happily and enjoyed.

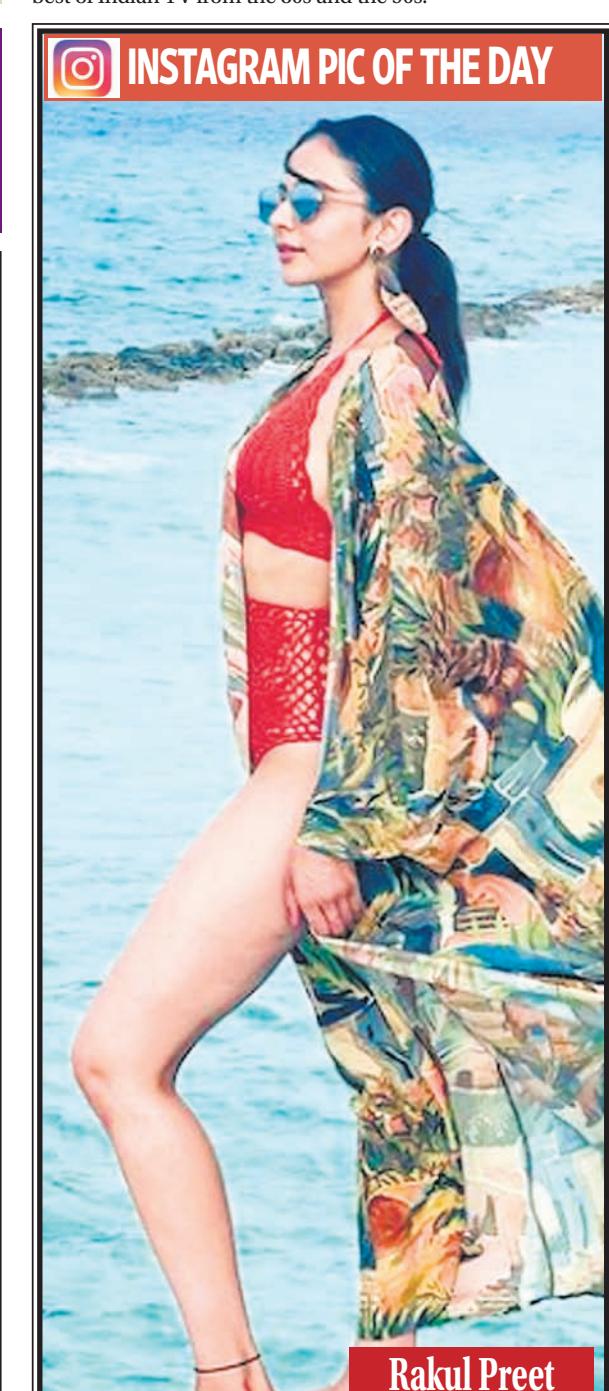
Talking about the performance, veteran actors Birbal, Manmauji and Manoj Bakshi's flawless portrayal of their characters have added to the beauty of the film. Their acting looked completely natural and it is the comic timing add the much needed spark to the film. J.S. Randhawa, Sonal Mudgal and Aashi Singh too have done justice to their roles.

The film has been balanced very well between the entertainment and emotional quotient. The movie sends out a



message to the youngsters to be more understanding and sensitive towards the elder people. The best thing about the film is a significant message is conveyed without unnecessary exaggerations and in a humorous way. However, it is the film's underwhelming music that's a dampener.

The narrative is not sufficiently cinematic, rather it is simplistic and sanitized. The pace of scenes is either too fast or too slow. 10 nahi 40 is uneven but heartfelt. Despite the flaws, the emotions connect.



Rakul Preet