

absolute india

VOL. 7, ISSUE 148, BHOPAL | FRIDAY, APRIL 08, 2022 | ₹5 | PAGE 08

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM BHOPAL, MUMBAI AND NEW DELHI

NATION >02
All Andhra ministers resign to make way for Jagan Reddy's...



HOLLYWOOD > 06
'I woke up to a million texts!'



SPORTS > 07
Villarreal win quarterfinal first-leg thriller 1-0 against Bayern...



GUJ'S KANDLA RECORDS 45 DEG C, ENTIRE NW, WEST INDIA IN GRIP OF HEAT WAVE

SCORCHING

▶ HEAT WAVE CONDITIONS WILL STAY IN SOME PARTS OVER MADHYA PRADESH DURING NEXT FIVE DAYS WITH SEVERE HEAT WAVE CONDITIONS IN ISOLATED POCKETS OVER WEST MADHYA PRADESH ON APRIL 10 AND 11, THERE WILL BE HEAT WAVE CONDITIONS IN SOME POCKETS OVER HIMACHAL PRADESH AND IN ISOLATED POCKETS OVER PUNJAB, UTTAR PRADESH, JHARKHAND, AND BIHAR DURING NEXT FIVE DAYS, OVER JAMMU DIVISION ON FRIDAY, OVER NORTHERN PARTS OF GUJARAT & KUTCH TILL APRIL 9 AND OVER VIDARBHA DURING APRIL 9-11.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

With a record 45 degrees Celsius, Kandla in Gujarat recorded the highest maximum temperature while Barmer in Rajasthan recorded 44.9 degrees Celsius, the second highest, even as heat wave continued to grip almost entire west, central, and north-

west India on Thursday. Over two dozen places across India, included two stations in Delhi, registered maximum temperature of more than 41 degrees Celsius. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has further predicted rise in maximum temperatures by about 2 degrees Celsius very likely over parts of northwest India during next three days and no significant change, thereafter.



BIRBHUM MASSACRE: 4 REMANDED TO CBI CUSTODY TILL APRIL 10

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The four persons arrested by the Central Bureau of India (CBI) from Mumbai in connection with the March 21 massacre at Bogtui village in West Bengal's Birbhum district where nine persons were charred to death, were remanded to CBI custody till April 10 by a court on Thursday. The accused have been identified as Bappa S.K. alias Sal Mohamad, Sabu S.K. alias Sadril, Taj Mohammad alias Chand, and Serajul S.K. alias Poltu. The four accused were produced before the court on Thursday. After hearing the argument of the prosecution, the court sent all of them to CBI custody till April 10. Earlier, the CBI had prepared a list of 21 accused, one of them being the Trinamool Congress's block president Anarul Hossain. The federal probe agency had set up a temporary camp in a government guest house in West Bengal's Rampurhat. Earlier, the local police had also prepared a list of accused and the CBI's list is almost exactly the same. Hossain was questioned by the CBI. His statement was recorded and he was called to the camp to join the probe. Following the orders of the Calcutta High Court, a team of forensic experts led by the CBI officials went to Rampurhat and collected samples on March 25. Before the court order, the local police had lodged a case and had claimed to have arrested 10 people.

FEWER PEOPLE SCARED OF COVID; INFLATION, UNEMPLOYMENT BIGGEST CONCERNS

FOR THE LIFE

▶ AS MANY AS 49.3 PER CENT OF THE RESPONDENTS SAID THAT INFLATION AND SKYROCKETING PRICES OF FUEL AND DAILY USE COMMODITIES ARE THEIR MAIN CONCERNS AT THE MOMENT.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

▶ A TOTAL OF 27 PER CENT OF THOSE WHO WERE INTERVIEWED IN THE SURVEY SAID THAT UNEMPLOYMENT IS THE BIGGEST ISSUE FOR THEM, WHILE ONLY 14.3 PER CENT SAID THAT THE SITUATION IS GETTING DANGEROUS BECAUSE A NEW CORONAVIRUS VARIANT IS THEIR BIGGEST WORRY.

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Inflation and unemployment are the main concerns of Indians at the moment rather than a non-ending sequence of new variants thrown by the deadly Coronavirus. This was revealed in a comprehensive survey on the occasion of World Health Day on Thursday. The survey, conducted immediately after the reported detection of a new variant of Coronavirus in Mumbai, further revealed that fewer people are scared of new variants now as they believe that

the government has made sufficient arrangements to handle any crisis situation arising from the new variants. While the majority of the respondents -- 52 per cent -- said that the news of a new variant of the deadly virus doesn't scare them anymore, 30.4 per cent said that they get worried about the detection of a new variant. The survey also revealed the reason for people overcoming fear of the lethal virus. During the survey, 38 per cent of the respondents said that they believe the government has made sufficient arrangements to handle any crisis situation arising from a new variant of Coronavirus.

Consumer courts can direct refund with interest for delay in apartment delivery: SC

“If a consumer prays for refund of the amount, without an alternative prayer, the Commission will recognise such a right and grant it, of course subject to the merits of the case. If a consumer seeks alternative reliefs, the Commission will consider the matter in the facts and circumstances of the case and will pass appropriate orders as justice demands.”



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday held that consumer courts can grant relief to flat purchasers, who are aggrieved with delay in handing over of the flat as

per the apartment buyers agreement. The bench said: "We have referred to the legal regime under the Consumer Protection Act, only to show that the (National Consumer Disputes Redressal) Commission has the power and jurisdiction to direct

return of money under Section 14 of the Consumer Protection Act, if a consumer so chooses. The freedom to choose the necessary relief is of the consumer and it is the duty of the courts to honour it." "A consumer can pray for a refund of the money with interest and compensation. The consumer could also ask for possession of the apartment with compensation. The consumer can also make a prayer for both in the alternative," bench said. The bench noted that the power to direct refund of the amount and to compensate a consumer for the deficiency in not delivering the apartment as per the terms of agreement is within the jurisdiction of the consumer courts.

UN suspends Russia from Human Rights Council

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The United Nations General Assembly today suspended Russia from Human Rights Council after killings in Ukraine's Bucha, reports news agency AFP. Evidence of civilian killings in Bucha and other towns around Kyiv -- which Ukraine has blamed on Russian troops, allegations denied by Moscow -- have shocked the world and triggered calls for new sanctions on Moscow. Ukraine said it was "grateful" for the decision to suspend Russia from the UN Human Rights Council, saying "war criminals" should not be represented in the body. "War criminals have no place in UN bodies aimed at protecting human rights," Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said on Twitter.

INDIA ABSTAINS ON RESOLUTION

United Nations: India abstained on a General Assembly resolution that was passed on Thursday suspending Russia from the UN Human Rights Council. Permanent Representative T.S. Tirumurti said after the vote: "India abstained because it had reservations about how 'due process' was applied to the resolution, while it 'unequivocally condemned' the killings in Bucha in Ukraine, which was the impetus for the resolution." The adoption of the resolution with 93 votes giving it a two-thirds majority marked a big diplomatic win for the US and its allies. Twenty-four countries voted against it and 58 abstained. High-stakes diplomacy preceded the voting on the latest resolution by both the West and Russia. Russia threatened countries abstaining on the resolution will face consequences. The Russian Mission circulated a note warning that Moscow will consider abstaining or absenting an "unfriendly" act that it will take into account in "the development of bilateral relations".

IMRAN LOSES SC BATTLE, FACES NO-TRUST MOTION ON SATURDAY

Islamabad: In a landmark judgement, the Supreme Court of Pakistan ruled on Thursday that the National Assembly Deputy Speakers ruling to dismiss the no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Imran Khan and the subsequent dissolution of the Lower House by the President on the PMs advice were contrary to the Constitution and the law of the land, Express Tribune reported. The court also ordered to reinstate the National Assembly and summon its session on Saturday to hold voting on a no-trust motion moved against Imran Khan. A five-member bench announced the verdict. The top court also summoned the officials of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), including its secretary, Attorney General Khalid Jawed Khan argued that everyone needed to be loyal to the state. He said that he is not defending the ruling. "However, I think new elections are the only solution," he said.

'XE' VARIANT DOESN'T SEEM TO CAUSE MORE SEVERE DISEASE: GAGANDEEP KANG

New Delhi: One of India's top virologists, Gagandeep Kang, said on Thursday that going by what we know about the 'XE' variant of Covid-19 till now, it doesn't seem there is too much cause to worry. The variant spreads a little faster, but it doesn't seem to cause a more severe disease, she told reporter. "We are more worried about severe diseases, and if that's not happening, I think we should track it, but not worry too much about it," Kang said on the reported detection of the 'XE' variant in Mumbai. However, the INSACOG has denied the detection of XE variant, saying that this variant does not correlate with the genomic picture of the 'XE' variant. INSACOG is the forum set up under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to study and monitor genome sequencing and virus variation of circulating strains of Covid-19 in India.

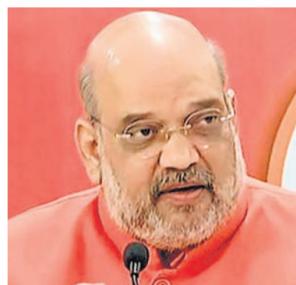
BOMMAI ORDERS PROBE INTO AL-QAEDA VIDEO PRAISING K'TAKA STUDENT

Mysuru: Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Thursday ordered a probe into a video released by terror outfit Al-Qaeda lauding a girl who shouted 'Allahu Akbar' at a mob during the recent protests against the hijab ban in the state. The current controversy erupted after Al-Qaeda's global terrorist Ayman al-Zawahiri in a nine-minute video praised Muskan Khan, a college student from Mandya district, for raising the slogan 'Allahu Akbar' to counter a mob chanting 'Jai Shri Ram' in the college premises at the height of the hijab crisis in Karnataka. In the video titled 'The Noble Woman of India', Zawahiri could be heard reciting a poem he composed to praise Muskan. "I have directed the police chief to probe the matter and verify the truth regarding the video, which is said to be released by an Al-Qaeda terrorist. Once the report is available, further action will be decided," Bommai said. He added that a conspiracy is being hatched against the nation and the law of the land over the hijab incident.

HINDI SHOULD BE AN ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGE TO ENGLISH: SHAH

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said Hindi should be accepted as an alternative language to English but not to local languages. Presiding over the 37th meeting of the Parliamentary Official Language Committee, he said "unless we make Hindi flexible by accepting words from other local languages, it will not be propagated". The Home Minister told members that now, 70 per cent of the agenda of the Cabinet is prepared in Hindi and over 22,000 Hindi teachers have been



recruited in the eight states of northeast. "The nine tribal communities of the

northeast have converted their dialects' scripts to Devanagari while all the eight states of the northeast have agreed to make Hindi compulsory in schools up to Class 10," he said. Shah also said there is a need to give elementary knowledge of Hindi to students up to Class 9, and pay more attention to Hindi teaching examinations. The Home Minister also said that after a meeting with all concerned Secretaries, an Implementation Committee should be constituted to review the progress of implementing recommendations of the 1st to 11th volume of the Official Language Committee report.

FROM DRONES TO LIGHTWEIGHT TANKS, INDIA BANS IMPORT OF ANOTHER 101 MILITARY ITEMS

▶ The third list comprises highly complex systems, sensors, weapons and ammunition like Light Weight Tanks, Mounted Arty Gun Systems (155mmX52Cal), Guided Extended Range (GER) Rocket for PINAKA MLRS, Naval Utility Helicopters (NUH), Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessels (NGOPV), MF STAR (Radar For Ships), Medium Range Anti-Ship Missile (Naval Variant), Advance Light Weight Torpedo (Ship Launch), High Endurance Autonomous Underwater Vehicle, Medium Altitude Long Endurance Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (MALE UAV), Anti-Radiation Missiles, Loitering Munitions and others.

▶ The spirit behind issuing these three lists comprising 310 defence equipment, slated to be manufactured locally, reflects the growing confidence of the Government in the capabilities of the domestic industry that it can supply equipment of international standards to meet the demand of the Armed Forces.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

From lightweight tanks, naval utility helicopters to drones, India has banned the import of yet another 101 military equipment and systems in a bid to promote indigenisation in defence manufacturing. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday released the third positive indigenisation list of 101 items, comprising major equipment and platforms. The list, notified by the Department of Military Affairs, Ministry of Defence (MoD), lays special emphasis on equipment/systems which are being developed and are likely to translate into firm orders in the next five years. These weapons and platforms are planned to be indigenised progressively with effect from December 2022 to December 2027. These 101 items will, henceforth, be procured from local sources as per provisions of the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020. "Today's development follows issue of first list (101) and second list (108) that were promulgated on August 21, 2020 and May 31, 2021,



respectively," said the defence ministry. Import substitution of ammunition which is a recurring requirement has been given special emphasis. It is likely to stimulate the potential of indigenous Research and Development (R&D) by attracting fresh investment into technology and manufacturing capabilities. It will provide ample opportunities for understanding the trends and future needs of the Armed Forces. He exuded confidence that this new list will prove to be crucial in the development of the domestic industry and take the research & development and manufacturing capacity of the country to a higher level.



2,105 RETURNED TO KASHMIR VALLEY AFTER ABROGATION OF ARTICLE 370: MHA

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Ministry of Home Affairs has said a total of 2,105 Kashmiri migrants have returned to Kashmir Valley for taking up jobs provided under Prime Minister's Development Package after the abrogation of Article 370.

The Ministry said a total of 841 Kashmiri migrants had returned to Kashmir Valley in 2020-21 while 1,264 people went back in 2021-22.

Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai on Wednesday told the Rajya Sabha that four Kashmiri Pandits among 14 Hindus were killed by terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir since 2019.

Moreover, 34 people belonging to minority communities were killed by the terrorists in the last five years including 11 in 2021.

According to the data furnished by the Ministry, in 2019, one each non-Kashmiri Pandit minority member was killed in Anantnag, Srinagar and Pulwama, while in 2020, one Kashmiri Pandit and one minority community member were killed.

Similarly, in 2021, two Kashmiri Pandits and three minority members were killed in Srinagar, one Kashmiri Pandit in Pulwama, and three minority members were killed in Kulgam by the terrorists.

No death has been reported so far in 2022. The



MHA also said the government has been making all efforts to restore assets to the Kashmiri migrants, and properties of 610 applicants have been returned. Nityanand Rai said the District

Magistrate has been designated as the custodian of the migrants' properties. The Jammu and Kashmir government has also started a portal to resolve the complaints of migrants.

South Central Railway deployed 'Kavach' on 859 km route in 2021-22

Hyderabad | Agencies

With a total of 859 km route and 77 stations covered during FY 2021-22, the South Central Railway (SCR) has reported the highest-ever deployment of Kavach -- India's indigenous Automatic Train Protection system, in a financial year, officials said.

This is the best-ever performance by the railway zone in a financial year, since the commencement of the project.

Kavach is now deployed across 1,445 km route covering 135 stations across the South Central Railway Zone.

Arun Kumar Jain, General Manager (in-charge), SCR said in the next stages, the system will be extended to more sections, bringing a major part of the railway zone under the 'Kavach' net-



Signal Passing at Danger i.e., Red (stop signal), and avoid collisions. It activates the train breaking system automatically if the driver fails to control the train as per the speed restrictions. In addition, it prevents collision between two trains or locomotives, equipped with a functional Kavach system.

'Govt should use CBI, ED to check hoarding, not against political opponents'

Kolkata | Agencies

Criticising the Central government, West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee on Thursday said the Union government should use the central probe agencies like CBI and ED to control inflation and check hoarding, instead of using them against the political opponents.

"The Central government is not doing anything to control inflation in the country. The prices of petrol, diesel, cooking gas and other essential commodities including life-saving medicines are increasing every day. The Union government is totally silent about the sufferings of the people because of this exorbitant price rise. The central probe agencies like CBI and ED should be used to check hoarding and control inflation instead of using them for harassing the opposition parties," Banerjee told the mediapersons after chairing a meeting of the state's task force for controlling the price of essential commodities, here at the state secretariat 'Nabanna'.

She described the recent rise in the price of petrol and diesel as the BJP's "return gift" vic-



... in the recent assembly polls, in four out of five states.

The Trinamool Congress chief also slammed the Central government for alleged denial of payment of Goods and Services Tax (GST) dues to the state governments, especially to the non-BJP-ruled states.

"Our government alone has around Rs 90,000 crore of GST dues from the Union government. If the GST dues are not paid over a long period of time, I doubt that in the coming days, many such state governments would not be able to pay the salaries to the state government employees," she said.

Banerjee also said the Central government should waive off toll tax.

All Andhra ministers resign to make way for Jagan Reddy's new Cabinet

Amaravati | Agencies

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will reconstitute his Cabinet as all 24 ministers handed him their resignations on Thursday to facilitate the exercise aimed at giving a new look to the ministry ahead of 2024 elections.

The Chief Minister, who will reconstitute the Cabinet on April 11, is likely to retain 4-5 experienced leaders and for the remaining berths, pick new faces who have been waiting in the wings.

All the ministers tendered their resignations to the Chief Minister immediately after the cabinet meeting ended.

Venkatramaiah said the Chief Minister had already made it clear while constituting the Cabinet in 2019 that there will be a new Cabinet after two-and-a-half years. "In fact, the



ministers got some grace period," he said.

Another outgoing minister Kodali Nani said the Chief Minister hinted that some of the outgoing ministers will be continued while the services of the rest would be utilised for the party. Jagan Mohan Reddy, who is also the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) chief, explained to the ministers that the purpose of the whole exercise is

to bring the party to power again.

He wanted the ministers to leave it to him to decide where and how to use their services. The ministers unanimously agreed to this and tendered their resignation.

Outgoing minister Botsa Satyanarayana said it was the prerogative of the Chief Minister and YSRCP chief to decide whom to retain and whom to drop. "It's the collective responsibility of all to ensure that party comes back to power. The Chief Minister will soon chalk out an action plan to take the government's schemes to people," he said.

He said while reconstituting the cabinet, Jagan Mohan Reddy will ensure regional and caste equations.

Meanwhile, arrangements are in full swing for the swearing in function of the new cabinet on April 11. The Chief Minister is expected to meet Governor Biswa Bhusan

Harichandan and hand over the resignation letters of his cabinet colleagues.

The Chief Minister had Wednesday met the governor. During the 45-minute meeting, he is understood to have explained his plans to reconstitute the Cabinet.

The YSRCP stormed to power in 2019 with a landslide majority, bagging 151 seats in the 175-member Assembly.

Jagan Mohan Reddy had formed the Cabinet with 25 ministers. In 2020, two of them -- Pilli Subhash Chandra Bose and R. Mopidevi Venkataramana -- resigned after they were elected to Rajya Sabha. They were replaced by C.S. Venugopala Krishna and Seediri Appalaraju.

Including the Chief Minister, the strength of the state cabinet stayed at 26, which is the maximum strength of the Council of Ministers.

OVER 30% INDIAN DISTRICTS PRONE TO EXTREME FOREST FIRES: CEEW

New Delhi: More than 30 per cent of Indian districts are vulnerable to extreme forest fires even as its instances in India have risen by over 10 times in the past two decades, a new study released on Thursday said. In the last month alone, significant forest fires have been reported from Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, notably from Sariska Tiger Reserve. An independent study by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) has also found that Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Maharashtra are the most prone to high-intensity forest fire events caused by rapid change in the climate. As global temperatures rise, instances of high-intensity forest fires have surged across the globe, especially in areas with dry weather. The CEEW study 'Managing Forest Fires in a Changing Climate' also found that over the last two decades, more than 89 per cent of total forest fire incidences have been recorded in districts that are traditionally drought-prone or have been witnessing weather swapping trend i.e., flood-prone areas turning drought-prone and vice-versa. Kandhamal (Odisha), Sheopur (Madhya Pradesh), Udhham Singh Nagar (Uttarakhand), and East Godavari (Andhra Pradesh) are some of the forest fire hotspot districts that are also showing a swapping trend from flood to drought. This study analysed multi-decadal (2000-09/2010-19) spatio-temporal data to identify the states vulnerable to high-intensity forest fires and their correlation with the varying microclimate.

Akhilesh questions handling of Gorakhnath temple attack case

Lucknow | Agencies

Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav has questioned the handling of the Ahmed Murtaza Abbasi case, related to the attack on Gorakhnath temple.

In a statement, he urged the state government to "consider that the father of the accused has said that his son was of unsound mental health and 'unstable' state of mind".

"Murtaza's father has said his son has a psychiatric problem. I think that aspect has to be looked into. The BJP is the party which drags the matter unnecessarily," Akhilesh said.

The statement, has expectedly, drawn a sharp



reaction from the BJP which said that the SP chief was more concerned about vote bank appeasement than about national security.

Meanwhile, Akhilesh also accused the BJP of creating

disturbances in the pan-chayat and legislative council elections and called the saffron party a 'serial killer of democracy'. "BJP is a serial killer of democracy. How votes are looted in a democ-

racy -- BJP has become an expert party. Many candidates in Kannauj could not file nominations. In Etah, the police chief and the district magistrate together did not let the nomination be filed. The same thing happened in Farrukhabad," he said. On rising prices of petrol and diesel, the SP president said that what he had said, is now happening. "I had said that the price of petrol and diesel will increase, the same thing happened after the elections. Along with the impact of inflation, unemployment is also hitting people who are committing suicide," Akhilesh said. Akhilesh said that bulldozers are being run at those who dare to stand up to the government.

OMAR ABDULLAH QUIZZED BY ED IN PMLA CASE



New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday questioned former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir Omar Abdullah in connection with a Prevention of Money Laundering case pertaining to alleged irregularities in sanctioning loans by Jammu and Kashmir Bank. The ED case is on the basis of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)'s case in which the probe agency accused Mushtaq Ahmad Shaikh, the former chairman of J&K bank and others of wrong doings. It was alleged that in 2010 the management of J&K Bank bought a property in Mumbai's Bandra Kurla from Akruiti Gold Builders allegedly at an exorbitant price of Rs 180 crore. The CBI had said that it was a well-planned conspiracy by the accused. On the basis of this, the CBI in 2021 filed a case against the management of the bank and its chairman.

Govt ran away from discussion on price rise, unemployment: Cong



Team Absolute | New Delhi

As Parliament was adjourned sine die on Thursday, the Congress alleged that the government ran away from debate on price rise, farmers and unemployment issues during the Budget Session.

Jairam Ramesh tweeted, "Rajya Sabha adjourned 2 days early even though Oppn was ready to pass WMD & Antarctica Bills. To suit its political convenience, Modi gov't ran away from discussion on price rise, broken promises to farmers, and Labour Minister didn't even reply to debate on

labour & (un)employment!" he said. The Congress has been raising the issue of price rise in both the Houses, but the government did not agree to have a discussion on the issue.

Both the Houses of Parliament were adjourned sine die on Thursday. The Budget session of Parliament thus concluded a day ahead of schedule.

As the Lower House met for the day, Speaker Om Birla made the valedictory reference, summing up the proceedings of the session. He later adjourned the House sine die.

The eighth session of the 17th Lok Sabha had a total work productivity of 129 per cent, said Speaker Om Birla while informing the members about the work done in the session. He said further that the session began on January 31 and a total of 27 sittings were held which lasted for about 177 hours 50 minutes. Birla thanked all members for their conduct for the successful Budget Session.

The Rajya Sabha too clocked a productivity of 99.80 per cent during the Budget Session that concluded on Thursday while it missed the 100 per cent landmark by just 10 minutes only. "This has been the third best productivity of the House during the last 14 Sessions since the Monsoon Session (243rd Session) of 2017," the Rajya Sabha Secretariat said in a statement.

Muslim sculptors, mango traders face the heat of Hindu activists in K'taka

Bengaluru | Agencies

After campaigning against the hijab, halal and banning Muslim traders in temple fairs, Hindu organisations in Karnataka now are planning a campaign to ban Muslim mango traders and sculptors from making idols of Hindu Gods.

The Hindu organisations have also prepared to challenge the issue of halal certification in the country in the court. These organisations are prepared to wage a legal battle questioning the system of halal certification against the Food Safety and Standards Association of India (FSSAI), the governing and monitoring body of food business in India.

Sources said that the list of halal products was being prepared. The halal certification is illegal and the only authority to certify food is FSSAI. The matter will be taken to the court about halal certification, sources said.



Though the ruling BJP tried to distance itself from banning mango traders, it is maintaining silence on other issues. Opposition Congress and JD(S) are slamming the ruling BJP for these developments and

AIMIM Chief Asaduddin Owaisi has stated that the Karnataka government was enforcing untouchability on Muslims. Melukote Cheluvanaraya Swamy temple Shanic Srinivasan on

Thursday said that he will take up a campaign across the state to ban Hindu idols being sculpted by Muslim sculptors. "The idols of Hindu gods sculpted by Muslim artists can't be installed in the Hindu temples, it is against the traditions. I will tour the state and bring awareness in this regard," he had stated. Sri Ram Sena has also extended the support to ban installing of idols in temples that are sculpted by Muslims and given a call for temple authorities not to get any idols made by the Muslim sculptors.

Meanwhile, the campaign to ban Muslim traders in mango trade has gained momentum in the state. The Hindu activists are running an online campaign to take back the mango wholesale trade dominated by the Muslim businessmen. Chandru Moger, Hindu Janajagruthi Samiti coordinator appealed to Hindus to buy fruits from only Hindu vendors and boycott Muslim traders.



MP HC CANCELS STATE SERVICES 2019 PRELIM, MAINS EXAM RESULTS

HAVE BECOME CHIEF MINISTER ONLY TO SUPPORT IN CRISIS
RELIEF OF 30 THOUSAND RUPEES PER HECTARE WILL BE GIVEN FOR MORE THAN 50 PERCENT CROP LOSS

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh High Court on Thursday cancelled the results of the State Services Examination (SSE) 2019, conducted by the MP Public Service Commission (MPPSC).
Setting aside a new rule by the state government restricting meritorious candidates of the reserved category to their respective quota seats, it has directed the MPPSC to conduct the exam and complete the recruitment process according to previous rules.
In their 89-page order, the bench of Justices Sujoy Paul and Dwarkadish Bansal held the state government's February 17, 2020 amendment to the

MP State Services Examination Rules 2015 as ultra vires.
"Resultantly, the recruitment process must be conducted and completed in consonance with the unamended examination rules of 2015," it said.
The examination rules of 2015 were amended by the government in February 2020, paving the way for separate category-wise merit lists of successful candidates. This meant that the meritorious candidates of scheduled caste (SC), scheduled tribe (ST), other backward classes (OBC) and economically weaker section (EWS) categories could not be selected for unreserved seats despite getting equivalent marks as unreserved candidates.
Nearly 60 MPPSC aspirants had challenged the state government's rule in the High Court.
Despite the matter being in court and the state government ready to change the contentious rule, the results of the SSE 2019 preliminary and mains examination were declared by the MPPSC in December 2020 and December 2021, respectively following this rule.
Currently, the MPPSC is conducting interviews with the candidates selected

from the mains exam.
This issue was put before the court, hearings were completed on March 31 and orders were reserved. On Thursday, the detailed orders were issued.
"The court held that the February 2020 rules brought of the MP government were in violation of the Indra Sawhney judgment of Supreme Court (of 1992) where it was clearly mentioned that the meritorious students of reserved category shall be migrated to open category seats," said Rameshwar Singh Thakur, one of the advocates representing nearly 60 petitioners in the matter.
The MPPSC, in November 2019, had advertised 571 vacancies including those of posts in state administrative and police services, Finance and Revenue Departments and others. After the preliminary results, an objection was taken to the fact that the MPPSC had issued a list of 3,613 successful candidates in the general category for 137 vacancies - far exceeding the rule of 15 times the seats'. Later, while declaring the mains results, the MPPSC amended the number of unreserved vacancies to 203 and the total number of vacancies to 637.

It is our duty to fill happiness and enthusiasm in the lives of differently abled children: CM

BETTER MANAGEMENT OF LIVELIHOOD OF DIFFERENTLY ABLED AND NORMALIZING THEIR LIFE IS MUST
CHIEF MINISTER CHOUHAN LAUNCHES SPECIAL OLYMPIC BHARAT MADHYA PRADESH PROGRAMME

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that it is our duty to bring happiness and enthusiasm in the lives of children with disabilities. Children with disabilities can do wonders in the world, if



they get some support. The term Divyang given by Prime Minister Modi shows the comprehensiveness of his thinking. Chouhan was addressing the opening ceremony of Special Olympics Bharat, Madhya Pradesh.
Chouhan said that this is a commendable effort in the direction of identifying the capabilities of the differently abled and conducting activities for their all-round development. Referring to the film song "Apne liye jive to kya jive, tu ji ae dil zamane ke liye," Chief Minister said that

it is necessary to make efforts for better management of livelihood of the differently abled and to make their life normal. Chouhan has said that if happiness spreads on the faces of differently abled children, our lives become successful and meaningful.
Chouhan planted an orange sapling in the People's Medical College premises at the venue. The programme started with kanya puja and lighting of the lamp. Chief Minister honored the players who made the state proud at the inter-

national level and also inspected the screening camp. He handed over appointment letters to Daulat Singh, Ajay Dhanak, Mohammad Rehman, Sunil Billore, Anil Patel and Sushri Fiza. The purpose of Special Olympics is to provide an opportunity to the mentally challenged persons to showcase their physical and mental abilities through competitions, so that they can secure their place in the society. Also they can get acceptance in the society with their disabilities. To commemorate the completion of 75 years of independent India, contribution is being made to the Amrit Mahotsav by conducting health check-up of 75 thousand mentally challenged persons from 75 districts of the country. Health check-up programmes are being conducted for mentally challenged persons in Ujjain, Tikamgarh, Bhopal, Jabalpur and Indore in the state.

Chief Minister expresses concern over the movement of elephants in Shahdol

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has expressed concern over the loss caused by the movement of elephants in Shahdol district. Chouhan took a meeting at the residence office regarding the updated situation and the precautions being taken. Chouhan directed Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains and Principal Secretary Forest Ashok Varnwal to keep an eye on the situation and take all necessary precautions.
It was informed in the meeting that the movement of elephants usually increases during the Mahua season. A Forest Department team is moving



along with the herd of elephants while taking precautions. Villagers are being alerted. A warning has been issued to the villagers by the district administration. Also, for the safety of the families living in isolated houses, arrangements have been

made for their stay in Panchayat buildings. Training has also been provided to the residents of the area in the past, in collaboration with voluntary organizations and Wildlife Trust of India to deal with such a situation.

CM PLANTED HARSINGAR AND KARANJ SAPPLINGS

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan today planted saplings in Smart City Garden along with the personnel of DNN News Channel and Fly Foundation.

Chouhan along with DNN staff planted a sapling of Harsingar. Chouhan along with Divya Yadav, Sushri Aadya Shrivastava and Devki Pawar of Fly Foundation planted a sapling of Karanj. Fly Foundation is active in activities related to providing educational counselling to deprived children, promoting women empowerment and environment-protection. It also conducts awareness programmes through digital medium. Harsingar (Parijat) plant planted today is the best medicine. According to medical experts, it is used to cure many diseases. Karanj plant is considered important in Ayurvedic medicine. Karanj plant is also used in religious works.



Convention for Participation in Development and Sharing Experiences of CSOs

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A convention will be held at Kushabhau Thakre International Convention Centre (Minto Hall) Bhopal from 8 to 9 April for participation in development and sharing the experiences of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). The conference will be inaugurated by Governor Shri Mangubhai Patel on April 8 at 10 am. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will address the convention on April 9.
Vice Chairman of Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of

Good Governance and Policy Analysis Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi has informed that in-depth discussions will be held on various topics in the convention. In this, important suggestions will be given for the all-round development of the state by social organisations, NGOs and representatives who have done remarkable works at the state and national level. On the first day of the convention, there will be parallel sessions on new areas of health and nutrition, education, skills and livelihood, agriculture and development as well as

financial inclusion and banking. On the second day there will be a session on the topic of Development Communication and Writing. Subject experts will express their views in these sessions.
The objective of the convention is to develop a strong network, trust and partnership among the institutions and stakeholders striving for the development of the state. It will also focus on identifying multi-pronged solutions to common challenges through an inclusive and participatory development model.

NIA to investigate case of JMB terrorists, process of handover begins

Team Absolute | Bhopal

NIA will investigate the case of Jamaat-e-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) terrorists caught in Bhopal. The NIA team will soon come to Bhopal and start questioning them. Home Minister Narottam Mishra has confirmed this news by tweeting. All JMB terrorists are lodged in Bhopal Central Jail in judicial custody. The judicial custody of them ends on April 8.
NIA team will investigate the JMB terrorist case caught in Bhopal. NIA's letter has arrived in this regard. Due to the international connections of terrorists, all the agencies along with the NIA were investigating the matter at their level from the beginning. Now NIA can take the case diary from ATS for further investigation of this matter.
Noyably, the judicial custody of 4 terrorists including 3 Bangladeshi is ending on 8th April. On the night of 12

March, ATS arrested 4 terrorists from Aishbagh area. One of them is from Bihar and three terrorists are from Bangladesh. They were plotting big bomb blasts in Madhya Pradesh including the capital Bhopal. Before he could succeed in his plan, ATS arrested him. On their behest, two other terrorists were also arrested.
The four terrorists were living in a rented house in Bhopal's Aishbagh area. ATS is interrogating Salman, who got the rented house. Salman is a computer mechanic by profession. Jihadi literature found with terrorists is in digital form. Apart from this, jihadi literature has also been found in 10 thousand pages. The terrorists had prepared their own separate jihadi literature in the name of religious texts. Through this, he was preparing his sleeper cell by brainwashing the youth. Their conspiracy was to carry out major terrorist acts at places like Bhopal's Mantralaya, Vidhan Sabha Bhawan and Birla Mandir.

Ahead Of 2023 Assembly Polls, Congress Chalks Out Religious Itinerary

CONGRESS HAS SENT MESSAGES TO ALL ITS BLOCK-LEVEL UNITS ASKING THAT PROGRAMMES LIKE RECITATION OF RAM KATHA AND ENACTMENT OF RAM LEELA BE HELD ON RAM NAVAMI.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Congress in Madhya Pradesh has asked its units across the state to organise special events and prayers on the occasions of Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti, evoking mocking guffaws from the BJP camp. The ruling BJP is celebrating Ram Navami with special events in religious places like Chitrakoot and Orchha. Earthen lamps will be lit in every Ram temple in the state.
The Congress, meanwhile, has sent messages to all its block-level units asking

that programmes like recitation of Ram Katha and enactment of Ram Leela be held on Ram Navami. On Hanuman Jayanti, there should be readings from the Sundar Kand and Hanuman Chalisa, directed Chandraprabhash Shekhar, vice-president in-charge of the organization, in his letters.
Senior leader and former Chief Minister Kamal Nath will also issue a message on Ram Navami and hold a religious programme on Hanuman Jayanti at Chhindwara.
The ruling BJP has ridiculed the move as "hypocrisy", declaring that Congress leaders had termed Lord Ram as an imaginary character. Assembly polls are due in the state next year.
The Congress's plan of action has had some in-house critics as well.
Bhopal MLA Arif Masood questioned the letter, saying, "What was the need for our party to start this new tradition of issuing directions to all its units to celebrate festivals of any community? Why



aren't similar letters being issued for celebrating Ramzan and observing Good Friday and Easter also?" By issuing such letters the Congress is giving the ruling BJP ammunition to target it, he said.
"Such developments inclined towards celebration of festivals of one community are bound to pain the minorities," he added.
Senior BJP leader and home minister Dr Narottam Mishra took a dig at the MLA saying, "This is nothing but 'acche din' as Congress leaders are going to the temple... Masood is not able to digest that Congress leaders who used to organise 'iftar' parties are now visiting temples". The Madhya

Pradesh Congress has been much criticised for pursuing what has been dubbed "soft Hindutva."
Ahead of the last state elections in 2018, the CPM had warned that "If the Congress thinks it can defeat the BJP by... soft Hindutva tactics, it is mistaken."
"The attempt to prove that the Congress was genuinely more Hindu than the BJP witnessed a flurry of temple visits by Rahul Gandhi in the three states; the manifesto of the Congress in Madhya Pradesh talked of 'gaushalas', commercial sale of 'gau mutra' and building a 'Ram Van Gaman Path Yatra', an editorial in the CPM mouthpiece "People's Democracy" had read.
Two years later after its government had collapsed with the defection of Jyotiradiya Scindia and his loyalists the Congress was seen pursuing a "Har Har Mahadev, Ghar Ghar Mahadev" campaign, distributing miniature idols of Lord Shiva or Shivlings among voters ahead of by-polls to 25 assembly seats.

Medical knowledge sharing mission launched for the first time in the country



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Medical Education Minister Vishwas Kailash Sarang has said that innovations are being made continuously in the field of medical education. Yet another step has been taken in the chain of these innovations by launching of the 'Medical Knowledge Sharing Mission'. The mission will bring the latest technology, innovations and research of medical education and medical treatment at the national and international level to the medical students and doctors of Madhya Pradesh.
While inaugurating the Medical Knowledge Sharing Mission office, Sarang said that work will be done on various dimensions in the mission. MoUs will be signed with various

Continuous innovations being made in medical education in Madhya Pradesh Medical Education Minister Vishwas Sarang shares information

medical institutions (government and private) of the country and abroad for education, research and treatment. Programmes like training, capacity building, knowledge exchange, exposure visit programme etc. will be prepared for medical students and doctors. A knowledge exchange interactive digital platform will be developed to enable medical students and practitioners to share their experiences, research work and other innovations digitally with each other.
Sarang informed that work will be done on the use of latest technologies (Artificial Intelligence-AI) and modern software based on Google and Microsoft in the field of medical education and medical system.
Sarang informed that medical and academic exchange will take place with government and private medical institutions like Shankar Netralaya Chennai, Tata Cancer Hospital Mumbai, Fortis Gurgaon and Apollo Hospital along with use of medical robotics in the field of super specialty surgery for use of medical robotics, medicine system and treatment of serious diseases. MoUs will be signed with Columbia University of America for bone marrow transplant and with Emory University for medical research and treatment of infectious diseases. Eminent doctors of various disciplines of the country and abroad will sign an MoU for the treatment of complex diseases of the patients of the state, in which arrangements for health camp, medical consultation facility and surgery will be made in the Medical College hospital.
Sarang informed that training and workshops will be conducted for medical students and doctors on the ongoing innovations in the field of medicine, new medical methods and medical research etc. in the country and abroad. In the

Knowledge Exchange Exposure Program, arrangements will also be made for knowledge exchange exposure visits for medical students and doctors of government medical colleges in the country and abroad. The doctors and medical students of M.P. will be able to participate and extend support at the national and international level, which will result in specific training to enhance their competence.
Sarang informed that the doctors of the country and abroad will be together on the digital platform. By developing a digital platform, doctors and medical students of the state, as well as doctors working in famous medical institutions of the country and abroad after getting medical education from the state, will be registered on the digital platform and connected. The research work and innovations being done in the medical field will be published digitally. There will be provision for blogs, discussions and competitions for discussion and information regarding the latest medical techniques and genres. Educational activities and related videos etc. digital material will be made available on digital platforms, social media, YouTube etc.
Sarang informed that work will be done in the field of diagnosis and treatment by primary screening of patients with Artificial Intelligence based technology. Diabetic retinopathy can be identified at the primary stage of the disease itself. With the help of AI-based software developed by Google, the effect of diabetes on the eyes can be recognized at the primary level in the retina scan. This will help in preventing blindness as a complication of diabetes. With the joint collaboration of Google and Shankar Netralaya, AI based testing and treatment can be made accessible to medical students

and doctors of medical colleges of the state through Medical Knowledge Sharing Mission. Apart from this, early detection of TB, brain stroke, brain tumour, heart disease, cancer including liver, prostate, bladder, colon cancer, breast cancer, bone cancer and thyroid using AI technology and dimensions of examination of patients will be developed through AI based digital pathology.
Sarang informed that various algorithms of investigation and treatment will be prepared with software based machine learning by collecting the data of examination and treatment of patients in medical college hospitals, which will help doctors and medical students to treat patients.
Sarang informed that with the help of the latest aspect of medical technology 'virtual technology based VR devices, virtual technology based training will be provided to the medical students they will be able to get closer to the experience of performing real medical procedures and trained well in clinical diagnosis and surgical skills.
Sarang informed that the use of 3D printing makes it possible to provide medical professionals and medical students a new way of treating patients in multiple ways. With the use of 3D printing, better medical results can be achieved in surgery by creating replicas in the context of the development of prosthesis, teeth, bones and specific diseases of various organs.
Sarang informed that an incubation center would be developed in Gandhi Medical College for research and development of new medical devices through Medical Knowledge Sharing Machine, so that new medical devices could be developed according to the need of the patients.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Taste buds tingle in festive season

It is past midnight in Chowk, known as the food hub of Lucknow. Shops are open and people are thronging the various outlets that are setting the taste buds tingling. Hindus are fasting during Navratri and Muslims are observing 'Roza' but that does not stop either of them from satiating their taste buds. "I am fasting during Navratri so I cannot take non-vegetarian food but I come here to savour the vegetarian and sweets food items that are available during Ramzan," says Rithik Swarup, a young bank officer. Among his favourites are pink Kashmiri chai, 'Gond ka halwa', Shahi Tukda and 'Kulhad kheer that comes in earthen pots. Some food hubs have even started making special Navratri food like 'Sabudana kheer' that is embellished with 'malai' and 'rabri'. Bharat Lal, who sells this kheer at Akbari Gate, says that his customers come at night and get the kheer packed for the following day. Tullu Sweets of Nazirabad's special Shahi Tukda is available only during Ramzan. It takes about eight hours to prepare the delicacy and we make 50 pieces daily which are sold out in an hour. More than Muslims, he has Hindu customers lining up for the delicacy. Rahim kulcha and 'nihari' are among the most famous non-vegetarian delicacies of Lucknow. Mansoor Ahmad, the shop owner, says that sales have been affected because of Navratri because Hindus are avoiding non-vegetarian food. In Aminabad, another food hub, shops remain open till well past midnight to cater to Hindu as well as Muslim customers. "We have special kulfi and sharbats for those fasting during Navratri. The sharbats are made from khus (Poppy seeds) and kheer is made with 'samak rice'," says Badri Lal whose three generations are in the business. For Muslims, Badri prepares dishes with 'sabza' seeds that are a natural coolant.

TRANSFORMING GOLD INVESTMENTS IN INDIA

Sameer Patil

Gold has always been an essential part of the socio-economic-cultural ethos of every Indian. As an investment, it has always carried with it the tendency of invoking a sense of sentimental attachment. Despite its tremendous significance, gold investments did not keep pace in terms of ease of buying, storing, and safety. These factors motivated BSE to create a transparent and efficient investment mechanism for gold.

BSE'S ROLE IN DEVELOPING INDIA'S GOLD MARKET:

BSE has been in the forefront pursuing the case for EGRs. It has made several presentations to the government and regulator on the process workflow. This included interface with Shri Shaktikanta Das ji, the then secretary in Ministry of Finance, and seeking participation of banks, vaults, wholesalers, retailers, importers, and exporters, etc. that forms the ecosystem.

BSE's first commitment fructified on October 1, 2018, when it became India's first universal exchange by adding gold derivatives to its product portfolio. With a view to further widen and deepen the Bullion markets, on the suggestion of BSE, framework to introduce 'options on spot' prices of commodities instead of futures prices was permitted. BSE launched the first 'options in goods' contracts on gold mini and silver kg based on spot prices from June 1, 2020.

BSE became India's first exchange to comply by India Good Delivery Standard on its commodity platform by adopting Bureau of Indian Standard (BIS) notified standards - IS 17278:2019, for delivery of gold and silver. This was in line with Prime Minister's vision of 'Make in India' and 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' of a self-reliant nation.

With this step, BSE wished to highlight its commitment and priority towards own good delivery standard and emerge as the price-setter instead of a price-taker in

bullion trade. BSE has also consistently executed seamless delivery gold across all contracts in both LBMA and IGDS standards at its designated vault in Ahmedabad.

BSE has also played a pivotal role in the success of India International Bullion Exchange (IIBX), where BSE's wholly-owned subsidiary - BSE Technologies, is the technology provider. BSE's subsidiary India INX and India ICC hold 20 per cent stake in the IIBX.

SPOT TRADING IN GOLD:

BSE has made several presentations to government and regulators on how the spot trading process in gold can work, and how the participants of various types including banks, vaults, wholesaler, retailer, importers, exporters etc. will participate in this ecosystem. BSE was also part of Niti Aayog committee on transforming India's gold sector, after which the Government of India, in the budget of 2018-19, had announced its intent to establish a system of regulated gold exchanges in the country. Further, in the Union Budget 2021-22, Hon'ble Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman ji announced the setting up of a gold spot exchange, and that Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) will be the designated regulator for the proposed gold exchange.

Subsequently in its board meeting held on September 28, 2021, SEBI has introduced two new investing instruments - electronic gold receipts (EGR) and silver ETFs. The instrument representing gold i.e., EGR, and will be having trading, clearing and settlement features akin to other securities that are currently available in India. It is to the testament of SEBI that several new and innovative products including EGRs have been launched in a short time frame.

WHAT ARE EGR'S:

Currently, India allows trading only in gold derivatives and gold ETFs, unlike several other countries which have spot exchanges for physical trade in gold. Post approval from the SEBI board,



Indian investors will soon see a new class of security known as EGR that will be available for trading on the stock exchanges like BSE. Like shares, these EGRs will be held in demat form and can be converted into physical gold when needed. This is part of SEBI's plan to allow trading of spot gold on the exchange platforms.

To enable trading in physical gold, it is proposed that gold in the form of a depository receipt (backed by physical gold) shall be traded and settled on stock exchanges. The entire trading will be done in three tranches that include conversion from physical gold to EGRs, trading of EGRs and again conversion of EGR back to physical gold. BSE will plan to launch EGRs of different variants and denominations ranging from 1 KG to 1 gram to attract investors and participation of all classes in a phased manner.

The source of supply of the physical gold to be converted into EGR will be the fresh deposit of gold, coming into the vaults, either through imports or through stock exchange(s) accredited domestic refineries. A client can also convert physical gold to EGR by depositing physical gold at the designated delivery centre. Exchanges shall empanel Vault Service Providers (VSPs) based on guidelines prescribed by SEBI. Similarly, clients can redeem EGRs back to physical

gold, and the process is complete. An interface will be developed between the vault managers (of physical gold), depositories (that hold EGRs in demat) and stock exchanges and clearing corporations that clear the trade.

BENEFITS:

Such a product will cater to all market participants which means that buyers and sellers on the exchange shall include individual investors, as well as commercial participants along the value chain like the importers, banks, refiners, bullion traders, jewellery manufacturers and retailers. This can play transformative role in developing India's gold market encompassing the entire ecosystem and create a vibrant gold ecosystem in India by enabling actual fungibility of gold, which is the need of the hour. The regulator also allowed EGRs interoperable between vault managers to enable ease of withdrawal of gold from the vaults.

The idea of spot trade via EGR will lead to one nation one price of gold. The standard gold that will be traded under EGR will help in creating uniform price structure of gold across the country. At present there is no gold price in the country. This can reduce the existing market

inefficiencies that exist in bullion trade and may act as a bridge in integrating spot gold trade with derivatives markets and create a transparent platform for bullion trading.

A single point trading for both spot and derivatives would provide scale, liquidity, and better pricing for all market participants by bringing down cost and cycle time significantly. Trading in EGRs will also greatly contribute to the existing programmes for gold monetisation such as Gold Monetization Scheme (GMS), Gold Bonds and Gold Deposits.

NEXT STEPS:

BSE is also well known for its technological prowess and has always been the fastest-to-go, in a seamless manner, for all new products including commodities. BSE has the technology for such trading of EGRs and has received in-principle approval from SEBI. Mock trading and testing of systems are currently underway, and BSE is ready to launch EGR as a separate segment.

(Sameer Patil is the Chief Business Officer at BSE, and Director at India INX and ICC)

international

YOON VOWS TO STRENGTHEN DETERRENCE AGAINST N KOREA'S NUCLEAR, MISSILE THREATS

Seoul | Agencies

President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol vowed on Thursday to strengthen deterrence against North Korea's nuclear and missile threats during a visit to a US military base, his spokesperson said. Yoon flew by helicopter to Camp Humphreys in Pyeongtaek, 70 km south of Seoul, amid heightened tensions in the wake of North Korea's test-firing of an intercontinental ballistic missile last month and concerns that Pyongyang could carry out a nuclear test, Yonhap news agency reported. "Strong deterrence through the Korea-US military alliance and combined defence posture cannot be emphasised enough in a grave international security situation surrounding the Korean Peninsula, including North Korea's ICBM launch," Yoon was quoted as saying by



spokesperson Bae Hyun-jin. Bae said Yoon "stated his determination to further increase the solidarity of the South Korea-US alliance and strengthen deterrence and the response posture against North Korea's nuclear and missile threats." The base, located some 70 km south of Seoul, serves as the headquarters of the 28,500-strong US Forces

Korea (USFK) and the US-led UN Command. During the visit, Yoon met Gen Paul LaCamera, commander of USFK and the South Korea-US Combined Forces Command (CFC), as well as Deputy CFC Commander Gen Kim Seung-kyum. "The freedom and prosperity the Republic of Korea enjoys today were made pos-

sible by the dedication and sacrifice of the numerous soldiers gone before us," he said as he thanked the troops under LaCamera's command.

LaCamera responded that it would be a dereliction of duty to not do everything to bring stability to the Korean Peninsula, Bae said. He emphasised the importance of the "iron-clad alliance" and thanked the South Korean people for making the construction of the base possible.

The CFC is currently in the process of relocating to Camp Humphreys from Yongsan in Seoul, the same area that Yoon is pushing to move the presidential office to. Past presidents-elect, including Park Geun-hye, Lee Myung-bak and Roh Moo-hyun, visited the CFC in Yongsan but not the base in Pyeongtaek. Yoon called Camp

Humphreys the "heart of the South Korea-US military alliance" and noted that it was his first visit to a military base since his election.

After touring the facilities, he shared a meal with South Korean and American troops at the canteen and took photos with them before

returning to Seoul Air Base, just south of the capital, Bae said.

In a press release later, the USFK said Gen LaCamera provided Yoon with an overview of his commands' "ironclad" commitment to strengthening the bilateral alliance and providing a "robust" combined defence posture for peace on the Korean Peninsula. It also noted Yoon conversed with American and South Korean troops about their responsibility to defend South Korea "against any threat or adversary."

South Korea holds talks with Sweden, Finland

Seoul | Agencies

South Korea's top diplomat had one-on-one talks on bilateral ties, the Russia-Ukraine war and Korean Peninsula affairs, with his Swedish and Finnish counterparts in Brussels, Seoul's foreign ministry said on Thursday.

Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong is on a visit there to attend a

meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) foreign ministers. He is the first South Korean foreign minister to join such a high-profile NATO session, as the country has been invited as an

Asia-Pacific partner of the multilateral alliance. In Chung's talks with Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde on Wednesday (local time), the two sides agreed to expand substantive cooperation



to such fields as information and communications technology (ICT) and startups, Yonhap news agency reported.

Chung then had a meeting with Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto and agreed to continue broadening partnerships in startups, the defence industry and the environmental sector.

Haavisto expressed hope for the early launch of direct flight services

between Helsinki and South Korea's port city of Busan, which has been delayed due to the Covid pandemic, the ministry added.

Chung also briefed the Swedish and Finnish ministers on the security situation in Korea, and they reaffirmed support for Seoul's efforts to resume a dialogue involving Pyongyang. They exchanged views on the Ukraine issue as well.

Deputy Speaker's ruling was erroneous, says Pak Chief Justice

New Delhi | Agencies

Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial on Thursday said that it was clear that the April 3 ruling of National Assembly Deputy Speaker Qasim Khan Suri, which dismissed the no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Imran Khan, was erroneous, Dawn reported.

"The real question at hand is what happens next," he said, adding that now the PML-N counsel and the Attorney General of Pakistan (AGP) Khalid Jawed Khan would guide the court on how to proceed. "We have to look at the national interest," he said, adding that the court would issue a verdict in the day.

He made the remarks as a five-member bench, headed by CJP Bandial and comprising Justice Ijazul Ahsan, Justice Mazhar Alam Miankhal, Justice Munib Akhtar and Justice Mandokhel resumed hearing the suo motu case concerning the legality of the deputy speaker's ruling and the subsequent dissolu-

tion of the National Assembly by the president on the PM's advice.

The AGP -- who was the last to give his arguments -- began by informing the court that he would not be able to give details of the

recent meeting of the National Security Committee in an open courtroom. He asserted that the court could issue an order without questioning anyone's loyalty, Dawn reported. He argued that the prime minister was the "biggest stakeholder" and, therefore, had the power to dissolve the National Assembly. "The prime minister does not need to give reasons for dissolving the Assembly," the AGP contended, the report said.

He also pointed out that the Assembly would stand dissolved if the president did not make a decision on the prime minister's advice within 48 hours. He argued that voting on the no-confidence motion was not the fundamental right of a lawmaker.

US reinvigorating trilateral cooperation with S. Korea, Japan to promote security

Washington | Agencies

The US seeks to ensure peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region partly by reinvigorating its trilateral cooperation with South Korea and Japan, US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman said.

On Wednesday, Sherman also highlighted the importance of the Indo-Pacific region, noting it is home to more than half of the global population and over 60 per cent of the global economy.

"The US is a proud Indo-Pacific nation. Our future is entwined more closely with the Indo-Pacific than with any other part of the world," the deputy secretary said in a House Foreign Services Committee hearing on restoring American

leadership in the Indo-Pacific, Yonhap news agency reported.

"Our vision -- a vision we share with our Allies and partners across the region -- is to ensure the Indo-Pacific remains free and open, and becomes more interconnected, prosperous, secure, and resilient," she added.

To this end, the US is working to strengthen its alliances and partnerships with other countries in the region, she noted.

"America's network of alliances and partnerships is one of our greatest strengths. That is why we are prioritising strengthening our collaboration in a variety of forums," said Sherman. "We elevated the Quad, created AUKUS, appointed a Special Presidential Envoy to

our COFA negotiations with the Freely Associated States, and reinvigorated trilateral diplomacy with Japan and the Republic of Korea."

Sherman underscored growing threats to peace and security in the region. "Threats to our security are evolving, and our security approach must evolve with them. We are strengthening and deepening our five treaty alliances and other vital partnerships across the Indo-Pacific and working to enhance our capabilities," she said.

The remarks come after North Korea fired its first intercontinental ballistic missile in over four years on March 24. Pyongyang has also conducted 11 other rounds of missile launches this year, including seven rounds in January alone that marked

the largest number of missile launches in a single month. Sherman underscored the need to take "strong action" against North Korea's missile provocations. "The transition team for President-elect Yoon of South Korea is here, and this is very much up in part of their discussions with everyone with whom they have met, which is to ensure that we take some strong action to let the North know that they can't just keep doing this without any consequences, that we take actions that show we have a credible deterrence against any attack by North Korea," she said, referring to the US-South Korea policy consultation delegation sent by President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol. Sherman met the seven-member South Korean delegation on Monday.



INS VIKRANT 'CROWD-FUNDS SCAM': MUMBAI POLICE BOOK BJP'S SOMAIYA, SON

The Mumbai Police have registered a case against Bharatiya Janata Party activist Kirit Somaiya and his son Neil K. Somaiya in connection with the alleged siphoning of around Rs 57 crore collected through 'crowd-funding' to save the decommissioned aircraft carrier Vikrant, here on Thursday.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Mumbai Police have registered a case against Bharatiya Janata Party activist Kirit Somaiya and his son Neil K. Somaiya in connection with the alleged siphoning of around Rs 57 crore collected through 'crowd-funding' to save the decommissioned aircraft carrier Vikrant, here on Thursday.

a case against Bharatiya Janata Party activist Kirit Somaiya and his son Neil K. Somaiya in connection with the alleged siphoning of around Rs 57 crore collected through 'crowd-funding' to save the decommissioned aircraft carrier Vikrant, here on Thursday. The Trombay Police filed the case following a complaint by a retired Indian Army soldier Baban B. Bhosale, invoking Indian Penal Code Section 406, 420 and 34 against the father-son duo and others. The development comes a day after Shiv Sena MP and Chief

Spokesperson Sanjay Raut made the sensational allegations that an amount of Rs 57-crore collected from the masses under the guise of saving Vikrant, which bowed out of service in 1997 and later scrapped, was siphoned off by Somaiya. However, Somaiya has stoutly denied the allegations and said he was prepared to face any probe in the matter, even as a large number of Shiv Sainiks staged protests against him in Chembur. Raut said that the revelations came in an RTI application filed by an activist Dhirendra Upadhyaya to the Maharashtra Raj

Bhavan, which sent its reply last month. "The RTI replies have revealed that not a single paisa was submitted to the Raj Bhavan as promised by Somaiya. This is a big issue. It's 'The Vikrant Files', and bigger than 'The Kashmir Files'. The Vikrant involves national security and the sentiments of the masses," Raut pointed out. Earlier, late on Wednesday, Bhosale accompanied by Shiv Sena MLA Sunil Raut and other party workers went to Trombay Police Station to submit the complaint on which the follow-up action was initiated on Thursday.

Somaiya, along with BJP ally Republican Party of India (A) activists had launched collection drives at major spots in Mumbai to save Vikrant and promised to hand over the amount to the then Governor K. Sankaranarayanan.

Terming them as 'traitors' Raut demanded that Somaiya and BJP must reply whether the amount collected in 2013-2014 in the name of the movement to save Vikrant was given to Raj Bhavan or not, and if not, then where has the amount collected gone.

Hindi poet-lyricist Maya Govind passes away in Mumbai at 82

Maya R Govind, well-known Hindi poet-lyricist-singer who penned many memorable songs for Bollywood films, passed away following a prolonged illness at her Juhu home here on Thursday morning, a family friend said.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maya R Govind, well-known Hindi poet-lyricist-singer who penned many memorable songs for Bollywood films, passed away following a prolonged illness at her Juhu home here on Thursday morning, a family friend said.



She was 82 and the end came at around 9.30 am after battling with her ongoing treatment since over two months for brain and kidney related issues. Govind's funeral was performed at the Vile Parle Crematorium here on Thursday afternoon.

Among the handful of women lyricists - who made it big in the domain of males - Govind wrote songs for around 350-plus films, ranging from romantic to off-beat, soft to sensuous numbers, working with leading music directors and film producers of her era. She also penned title songs for tele-serials and authored several books.

Born in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, Govind, who was married to poet-author-lyricist Ram Govind, worked as a teacher and with the All India Radio before moving to Mumbai in the early 1970s to try her luck in Bollywood.

From 1970s-2000s, she penned many memorable numbers and chart-busters for various films, carving her niche in the film industry. Some of her hit songs include "Gutter, Gutter" and "Na Unnees Se Kam Ho" (Dalaal), "Darwaza Khula Chhod Aayi" (Najayaz), "Aankhon Me Base Ho Tum" (Takkur), "Lounda Badnaam Hua" (Rock Dancer), "Sun Sun Gorai" (Daman), "Gale Me Laal Tie" (Hum Tumhare Hai Sanam). As a stage performer in her younger days, she bagged the coveted Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for Best Actress in 1970 for her performance in Vijay Tendulkar's play, "Khamoshi: Adalat Jari Hai!", besides other honours for her Bollywood songs.

Actresses Asawari Joshi, Swagata Shah join NCP

The glamour quotient of Nationalist Congress Party shot up as well-known actresses Asawari Joshi and Swagata Shah joined the party here on Thursday.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The glamour quotient of Nationalist Congress Party shot up as well-known actresses Asawari Joshi and Swagata Shah joined the party here on Thursday.

They were warmly welcomed to the party fold by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, NCP general secretary Shivajirao Garje, MLA Sunil Shelke, chief spokesperson Mahesh Tapase, state spokesperson Umesh Patil, the NCP Film & Culture Department President Babasaheb Patil and others.

While Asawari has made her mark in Marathi and Hindi films and teleserials, Swagata has carved a niche in Gujarati and Hindi serials and theatre.

In her brief address, Asawari said that with



guidance from the party leadership, she would work against the runaway inflation gripping the country to ensure essentials are available to the masses at affordable rates.

On the occasion, Pawar said that the Maha Vikas Aghadi government has extended assistance to over 3,000 artistes, including the exponents of the folk dance, 'Tamasha', through the NCP Welfare Trust. Besides Asawari and Swagata, prominent BJP leaders from rural Pune and Raigad along with a large number of party workers and their supporters entered the NCP. Other important film artistes who are with NCP include Savita Malpekar, Dr Amol R. Kolk, Priya Berde, Vijay Patkar, Vaishali Made, Surekha Punekar and more, in the past few years.

Indian digital consumers become more protective about personal data

As digital consumption rises exponentially in India, the consumers have become more protective of their personal data and are better evolved than their global counterparts in terms of awareness while shopping online, a new report revealed on Thursday.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

As digital consumption rises exponentially in India, the consumers have become more protective of their personal data and are better evolved than their global counterparts in terms of awareness while shopping online, a new report revealed on Thursday.

The trend has been captured in the

backdrop of the post-pandemic era, which has increasingly seen a rise in digital consumption across segments including grocery, fashion, health and beauty, consumer electronics travel, sports and fitness, crafts and creative and alcoholic beverages.

"Seventy-five per cent of the Indian consumers (59 per cent globally) are evolved and are more aware and protective of their personal data," said Somick Goswami,

Partner at PwC during the India D2C (direct-to-consumer) summit here. With relaxation in post-pandemic restrictions, their consumers are also likely to take a cross-channel view with intertwining between offline and digital transactions "with 73 per cent likely to visit shopping malls", Goswami noted. The rise in D2C in India has been facilitated by payment gateways, with experts attributing 99 per cent

success ratio being key to selecting the payment gateway and managing the transaction expense ratio.

The fast-growing D2C market is seen as a \$100 billion opportunity.

To date, only 5 per cent of the 600 companies in the D2C segment have achieved the Rs 100 crore revenue milestone while 20 per cent and 75 per cent of those companies have revenue between Rs 20-Rs 90 crore and below Rs 20 crore, respectively, which may see consolidation going forward. Tata Consumer's Nutrikorm, ITC's Store.in and Hindustan Unilever's The U Shop are among 600 Indian companies that have forayed into the D2C market after the success of Nykaa. Experts said that new-age companies are now attracting higher valuation compared to conventional FMCG companies, with a 10 per cent revenue shift seen towards D2C by 2025.

CGST MUMBAI ARRESTS 1 FOR ISSUING FAKE INCOME TAX CREDIT OF RS 18CR

Central Goods and Services Tax officials posted with Mumbai South have busted a fake income tax credit (ITC) network and arrested a proprietor of a firm for availing and passing on of fake ITC of Rs 18 crore by allegedly using bogus invoices of Rs 98 crore.

Mumbai: Central Goods and Services Tax officials posted with Mumbai South have busted a fake income tax credit (ITC) network and arrested a proprietor of a firm for availing and passing on of fake ITC of Rs 18 crore by allegedly using bogus invoices of Rs 98 crore.

The official produced the accused before the concerned court which has remanded him to 14-day judicial custody on the request of the officials. As per the company's profile it has an office in Shahdara area of Delhi.



'Reconsider...': Pawar's plea to centre over gas price hike

The Maharashtra government had slashed Value Added Tax (VAT) on natural gas as on April 1, leading to CNG price falling by ?6 and PNG by ?3.50/standard cubic metre.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra deputy minister Ajit Pawar on Thursday urged the centre to re-consider increasing prices for CNG (compressed natural gas) and PNG (piped natural gas), which were hiked across the country from Tuesday midnight. In Mumbai CNG price increased by ?7 per kg to settle at ?67 per kg and that of PNG by ?5 per kg to ?41 per standard cubic metre.

"I do not want to impose more taxes. Rather, we (Maharashtra government) reduced tax on gas. With the state, the centre should also reduce the tax. The central government imposes more tax than the state and it should reconsider this," Pawar told reporters.



The Maharashtra government had slashed Value Added Tax (VAT) on natural gas as on April 1, leading to CNG price falling by ?6 and PNG by ?3.50/standard cubic metre.

However, state-run Mahanagar Gas Limited increased prices this week, saying that the increase in selling price of natural gas and LNG, or liquefied natural gas, had led to the hike. "The selling price of domestically-produced natural gas has been increased by 110 per cent

by the Government of India with effect from April 1, 2022. Further, cost of regasified LNG, which is being blended to offset the shortfall in availability of domestic gas for CNG and D-PNG segments, are at historically high levels. This combination has resulted in a significant increase in the cost of gas being procured by MGL," the MGL statement said. Earlier, Maharashtra's Maha Vikas Aghadi government had waived tax of ?1,000 crore on LPG and CNG in the state budget to give relief to people. Ajit Pawar, who also holds the finance and planning department, on March 11, said the state would make drastic cuts in the VAT on natural gas - from 13.5 per cent to 3 per cent. The move was to make CNG cheaper in the state. The substantial cut was also expected to bring relief to the consumers of domestic piped CNG as well as vehicle owners. India also witnessed its 14th hike in fuel prices in 15 days on Wednesday. Petrol and diesel prices have gone up by ?10 per litre each in the past 16 days. The government is facing opposition parties' fury over the hike in fuel and gas prices.

3 KILLED, 7 INJURED IN WATER TANKER-BUS COLLISION

Three people were killed and seven others were injured after a bus and a water tanker collided in Maharashtra's Washim district.

Pune | Agencies

In a tragic incident, a collision between a hotel bus and a private water tanker in Maharashtra's Washim district claimed the lives of three people, including the drivers of vehicles. Seven people were injured in the accident. The accident occurred near the Akola Naka area in Washim City in the morning hours when a privately operated bus for a hotel, travelling from Pune to Yavatmal collided head-on with a water tanker while heading in the opposite direction on Samrudhi



Highway. The impact of the collision was so severe that the two vehicles crashed into one another, leading to the deaths of the drivers of the tanker, the bus and one other person. Amongst the bus passengers, the 7 injured have been admitted to District General Hospital in Washim.

Azaan row: Sanjay Raut says Maharashtra already has rule on decibel level

Earlier, Sanjay Raut castigated Raj Thackeray's call to take down loudspeakers from mosques and said the law of land prevails in Maharashtra.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut on Thursday said the Maharashtra government already has a rule stipulating the decibel level of azaan played through loudspeaker amid the ongoing row over Azaan that started in Maharashtra and has rocked Karnataka as well. "Maharashtra home ministry has a guideline on what the decibel level should be while observing Azaan," the Shiv Sena MP said.

Last week, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena chief Raj Thackeray create a furore after he warned that his party workers will be playing Hanuman Chalisa in front of mosques in Maharashtra. It did not remain an empty threat and MNS workers in Thane played Hanuman Chalisa in front of its office in Kalyan town. "Why loudspeakers in mosques are played at such high volume? If this is not stopped, there will be speakers outside

mosques playing Hanuman Chalisa at higher volume," Raj Thackeray said asking whether there were loudspeakers when the religion was founded. The row spread to Karnataka as Karnataka minister KS Eshwarappa reacted to Raj Thackeray's call and said Azaan being played through loudspeaker has been an issue for students, patients and the elderly for a long time. "This is my view on banning loudspeakers. This isn't a competition between Muslims calling for prayers through loudspeakers and Hindus chanting Hanuman Chalisa. And because of the Azaan, it is an issue for students, patients and the elderly," he said. Karnataka chief minister Basavaraj Bommai said the high court order has even specified the sound decibel level and it is not only for azaan but for all loudspeakers. Though the high court order is old, mosques in Karnataka have started receiving notices from the police to use the loudspeakers within the permissible decibel levels amid the row.

MAHARASHTRA REVIEWING BIDS FOR ITS LARGEST COAL IMPORT TENDER IN YEARS

The Maharashtra State Power Generation Co Ltd (MAHAGENCO) said it has received bids from companies including Adani Enterprises, Chettinad Logistics.

Mumbai: A utility owned by India's richest state Maharashtra is reviewing the "cost reasonability and financial viability" of the bids received for a two million tonne coal import tender, the power producer told Reuters on Thursday.

The Maharashtra State Power Generation Co Ltd (MAHAGENCO) said it has received bids from Adani Enterprises, Chettinad Logistics, Gandhar Oil Refinery and Mohit Minerals for the tender, its largest in at least 3 years. Maharashtra is India's most industrialized state and its biggest power consumer.



Maharashtra launches e-learning solutions for students who returned from Ukraine

Maharashtra Medical Education Minister Amit Deshmukh also said efforts are underway to ensure that MUHS has its own college.

Pune | Agencies

Maharashtra Medical Education Minister Amit Deshmukh Thursday launched an e-learning solution for medical students who have returned from the war-torn country of Ukraine and also launched a mobile information app of the Maharashtra University of Health Sciences (MUHS), Nashik. A live demo was provided to the students and their parents who were present at the virtual launch. "I am very happy and congratulate the MUHS V-C and her team for expediting the

work on developing a foster care kind of course for students who have returned from Ukraine. Today (Thursday) is the World Health Day and on this occasion, it is a timely effort by the MUHS to

It has been envisaged that MUHS should have its own college. However, in the interim period, the civil hospital at Nashik has started functioning from the Maharashtra Post Graduate Medical and Research Institute where faculty has been recruited and 30 odd doctors have joined.

"The aim is to eventually look at dual MD and PhD programmes and instead of being a run-of-the-mill institute, the effort is to promote it as a school of integrated health," Lt Gen (retd) adhuri Kanitkar, Vice Chancellor of MUHS, told The Indian Express. Earlier, Lt Gen Kanitkar said at

least 900 students who returned from Ukraine have registered for the e-learning solution and there is room for more. It is not possible to amalgamate that system here. So, with the help of our experts and Elsevier, a noted medical publisher, the digital content has been prepared for a three-month course. This gives an opportunity to the students to study at their convenient time and convenience. Students have to register on the MUHS website and then access the content," Lt Gen Kanitkar said. We will open a facilitator chat forum for difficulties and also provide practical workshops. Our experts will also be available for one-on-one consultations to address difficulties that students may face. We are also planning to make another app only for students' issues, schemes and grievances.



'I WOKE UP TO A MILLION TEXTS!'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Kim Kardashian found out her sister Kourtney had got married in Las Vegas via a message on the family group chat. Kourtney, Kim, sisters Khloe and Kendall Jenner and their mom Kris Jenner stopped by Jimmy Kimmel Live! on Wednesday night to promote their new Hulu reality series, and talk soon turned to Kourtney's drunken wedding to Travis Baker. Over the weekend, Kourtney and Travis shocked their fans when they confirmed they had a 'practice' wedding at a chapel in Las

Vegas after attending this year's Grammy Awards. Jimmy Kimmel asked if the family were aware of eldest sister Kourtney's nuptials, with Kris admitting: 'I knew, and Khloé knew.'

'I was on FaceTime,' Khloé said, before Kim admitted, 'I was sleeping.' Kim explained that the famous family have a group chat to keep up with one another, and she found out from the excited chatter when she woke up on Monday morning.

'She put it in the group chat,' Kim continued. 'Like, "Oh, hey guys, by the way...I got married last night!" And I woke up to like, a million texts.'

Kim Kardashian admits she was sleeping during sister Kourtney and Travis Barker's Vegas wedding while Khloe watched via FaceTime

JoJo Siwa exits Will Smith-backed film 'Bounce'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Dancer and digital sensation JoJo Siwa will no longer be making her feature film debut with the screen adaptation of 'Bounce', reports 'Variety'. Insiders familiar with the project said that Paramount Pictures has also removed the project from its development slate.

Siwa told Variety at the GLAAD Media Awards that she is no longer attached to the movie adaptation of the YA book by Megan Shull. She said, "That project got put on hold, and then went away. It wasn't the one."

As per the sources of 'Variety', the project fell apart months ago and its demise is not related to Smith's assault of comedian Chris Rock at this year's Academy Awards. First announced in the summer of 2020, the film was brought to the studio by producer Caleb Pinkett ('Cobra Kai', 'Charm City Kings').

His sister Jada Pinkett Smith and Will Smith were reported to be attached as producers at the time, before the formation of their content company Westbrook. One person familiar with Westbrook said Pinkett Smith and her husband were not leads on the project, rather lending support to Caleb Pinkett. The project also made waves last July when Siwa, who came out as pansexual months prior,



revealed that the script for "Bounce" included a kissing scene with a male costar. 'Variety' later reported that the studio happily removed the kissing scene in light of Siwa's objection.

The Wilds' Season 2 trailer raises the stakes for its test subjects



The late Jamie Tarses of FanFare and Dylan Clark of Dylan Clark Productions also serve as executive producers. The series is co-produced by Amazon Studios and ABC Signature, part of Disney Television Studios.

Los Angeles | Agencies

The trailer for the second season of the young adult web series 'The Wilds' was released on Thursday. It gives a sneak peek of the girls trapped on a mysterious island and a look into what has been part of the experiment all along: the boys thereby raising the stakes higher in the second season.

In the upcoming season, survival hangs in the balance for the group of teenage girls stranded on a deserted island, after the explosive discovery that what's happening to them is an elaborate social experiment. The season introduces more test subjects - another island of teenage boys who must also fight for survival.

The series has been created by Sarah Streicher, who also serves as an executive producer alongside showrunner and executive producer Amy Harris.



BRITNEY SPEARS OBJECTS TO PAYING HER MOTHER'S LEGAL FEES

Los Angeles | Agencies

Britney Spears has denied her mother Lynne Irene Bridges' request to pay \$663,202 in attorney's fees, with regards to her conservatorship, which ended in November last year, reports 'Variety'. The objection marks the latest move in Britney's ongoing and drawn-out legal battle. As per 'Variety', the singer's attorney, Mathew Rosengart, filed new documents with the court ahead of a Wednesday hearing - where no decision was made. Rosengart stated in a filing (accessed by 'Variety') with the Los Angeles Superior Court, "Britney Spears has for decades been her family's sole breadwinner, supporting her entire family. Lynne Spears and her counsel seek payment of legal fees and costs - from Britney Spears - of more than \$660,000." The filing further states that that there is "no legal authority" as Lynne was not an official party involved with the conservatorship. "Britney Spears opposes the Petition in its entirety." Attorneys for Lynne Spears filed their petition on November 1, 2021, seeking legal fees to be paid by Spears, while Britney's conservatorship was terminated on November 12, 2021.

'ALL THE OLD KNIVES': MASTERFULLY PLOTTED, COMPLEX, AND IMMERSIVE SLOW BURN

FILM REVIEW
TROY RIBEIRO
 (Streaming on Prime Video)
Duration: 102 minutes
Director: Janus Metz Pedersen
Cast: Chris Pine, Thandiwe Newton, Laurence Fishburne, Jonathan Pryce, Gala Gordon, Corey Johnson, Colin Stinton, Ahd Kamel, David Bedella
Rating: ***



From its tense opening to its edgy end, 'All The Old Knives' is a film that captivates the viewer. Masterfully plotted, director Janus Metz Pedersen manages to create a patient thriller from Olen Steinhauser's screenplay, which is adapted from the novel of the same name, authored by Steinhauser. The film stars Chris Pine as Henry Pelham and Thandiwe Newton as Celia Harrison, both CIA officers and star-crossed lovers whose relationship was shattered by a terrorist hijacking that occurred eight years earlier.

Henry travels from Vienna to Carmel-by-the-Sea, California, to meet Celia, where she now resides with a husband and two children. The two of them meet over dinner as Henry, who is still stationed at the CIA office in Vienna, learnt from Ilyas Shishani (Ori Shuka), one of his contacts, who confessed before his death that the hijackers of the ill-fated Flight Turkish Airline 127 were successful because of a mole in the CIA.

Still reeling under this high-profile incident, Pelham's boss Vick Wallinger (Laurence Fishburne), keen on discovering who the mole was, assigns Pelham to check on retired Bill Compton (Jonathan Pryce), who now lives in London, and Celia Harrison, who after the Austrian debacle, decided she's had enough and left the agency to settle down to live an ordinary life in California.

Narrated in a non-linear manner, the plot unravels at a slow pace, in an unusual fashion, around the dining table where Henry is eager to clear her name but perhaps more intensely interested in discovering why she had left him behind in Austria.

The film expertly manipulates the mood and atmosphere by juxtapositioning scenes from the past with those

in the present. Pine and Newton are compelling actors and share great on-screen chemistry, albeit one potentially born out of lust, but it is strong enough for the viewers to wonder alongside Henry why exactly did she run and run so far away. Since the narrative revolves around the duo, the rest of the supporting cast hardly has any scope to display their performances.

On the visual front, DOP Charlotte Bruus Christensen's frames are impressive. She combines her skill sets and palettes intriguingly and solidifies two distinct vibes across the film's timelines. The visuals and the soundtrack are meshed effortlessly by Mark Eckersley's astute editing.

Overall, the film is a fascinating slow-burn, complex and immersive.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Alexandra Daddario



IPL 2022

LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS BEAT DELHI CAPITALS BY SIX WICKETS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A disciplined bowling performance followed by a solid knock by Quinton de Kock helped Lucknow Super Giants beat Delhi Capitals by six wickets in an IPL 2022 match at the D.Y. Patil Stadium, here on Thursday.

After winning the toss and opting to bowl first, Lucknow Super Giants produced a clinical bowling performance to restrict Delhi Capitals to 149/3 in 20 overs. Opener Prithvi Shaw (61 off 34) gave Delhi a flying start, taking them to 52-0 in the powerplay. However, once he got out, Delhi lost the wickets of Warner (4) and Rovman Powell (3) in quick succession and were in a spot of bother. But, skipper Rishabh Pant (39 not out off 36) and Sarfaraz Khan (36 not out off 28) then batted till the end, rescued Delhi and helped them post a modest total of 149/3 in 20 overs. Ravi Bishnoi (2/22) was the most successful bowler for Lucknow while Krishnappa Gowtham (1/23) also picked one wicket.



In reply, K.L. Rahul and Quinton de Kock gave Delhi a solid start. Rahul (24) got out after the powerplay but De Kock smashed a fine fifty to keep his team in the game. Just when it seemed that de Kock was on course for a century, the South African opener fell for 80 with LSG needing 28 off 25 balls. The Delhi bowlers then bowled a few disciplined overs and brought the equation to 19 runs off 12 balls. However, Krunal Pandya (19 not out off 14) and Ayush Badoni (10 not out off 3) held their nerves, remained unbeaten and took Lucknow over the victory line, with six wickets in hand and two balls to spare. Kuldeep Yadav (2/31), Shardul Thakur (1/29) and Lalit Yadav (1/21) were the wicket-takers for Delhi.

Brief scores:

Delhi Capitals 149-3 in 20 overs (Prithvi Shaw 61, Rishabh Pant 39 not out; Ravi Bishnoi 2/22) lost to Lucknow Super Giants 155-4 in 19.4 overs (Quinton de Kock 80, K.L. Rahul 24; Kuldeep Yadav 2/31) by 6 wickets.

KOREA OPEN

Sindhu, Srikanth storm into quarters; Lakshya, Bansod crash out

Suncheon (South Korea) | Agencies

Top Indian Shuttlers -- PV Sindhu and Kidambi Srikanth -- advanced to the quarter-finals but Lakshya Sen and Malvika Bansod crashed out after losing their second round matches at the Korea Open Badminton Championships 2022 at the Palma Stadium, here on Thursday.

Sindhu, seventh in the badminton world rankings, defeated world No 26 Aya Ohori from Japan 21-15, 21-10 in the second round of her women's singles event. This was her 12th win over her Japanese opponent in as many matches.

In the last eight, two-time Olympic medalist PV Sindhu will face Thailand's world No 11 Busanan Ongbamrunphan, whom the Indian defeated in the Swiss Open final last month.

In the men's singles, World Championship silver medalist Srikanth beat Israel's Misha Zilberman 21-18, 21-6.

Former world No 1 Srikanth had to work hard in the first game but eventually managed to win it. However, the Indian shifted gears in the second game, surging to a massive 12-0 lead before Misha Zilberman could open his account. Srikanth shrugged off the challenge effortlessly to wrap up the match in 33 minutes to set up a clash with local hope and former world No 1 Son Wan-ho.

However, India's highest-ranked men's singles player Lakshya Sen lost to world No 24



Shesar Hiren Rhustavito of Indonesia 20-22, 9-21.

The World No. seven pairing of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty defeated Singapore's Hee Yong Kai Terry and Loh Kean Hean 21-15, 21-19 in 36 minutes to also advance to the quarter-finals of the men's doubles event.

Meanwhile, unseeded Malvika Bansod went down to world No 10 Pornpawee Chochuwong 8-21, 14-21 in the second round of women's singles.

HOCKEY NATIONALS

Rohit scores seven as Haryana thrash Assam 21-1

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Hockey Haryana rode on seven goals by Rohit to thrash Assam Hockey 21-1 in the 12th Hockey India Senior Men National Championship 2022 here on Thursday.

The tournament witnessed high octane action on Day 2 as the Hockey Unit of Tamil Nadu and Hockey Association of Odisha too registered big wins.

In the first match of the day in Pool G, the Hockey Unit of Tamil Nadu ran out 4-0 winners against Hockey Madhya Pradesh. Sundarapandi (33', 59'), Dinesh Kumar (3') and Saravana Kumar (40') delivered the goals for the Hockey Unit of Tamil Nadu.

It was Hockey Haryana that laid down the marker with a 21-1 victory over Assam Hockey in Pool H.

Rohit (17', 19', 22', 32', 38', 39', 47') led the charge with seven goals to his name, followed by Deepak (5', 55', 59'), Pankaj (12', 55'), Prince (27', 28'), Deepak (34', 46'), Pankaj (44', 52'), Mohit (36', 50') and Pardeep Rana (57'), who all added to the score sheet with their efforts. Mohd Salman Khan (34') pulled one goal back for Assam Hockey. In the second Pool H match of the day, the Hockey Association of Odisha



emerged with a convincing 10-0 win against Goans Hockey. Captain Sudeep Chirmako (38', 52', 55', 57') led from the front with four goals, while Amandeep Lakra (45', 49'), Prajukt Nag (9'), Rajin' andulna (31'), Anur'h Kujur (47') and Matiyas Dang (59') also chipped in with goals.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Real Madrid stun Chelsea with 3-1 win

London | Agencies

Real Madrid have one foot in the door of the UEFA Champions League semifinal after Karim Benzema, with a stunning hat-trick, bullied Chelsea 3-1 here on Thursday.

Benzema opened the scoring in the 21st minute as he got a great cross from Vinicius and headed it into the back of the net to give the visitors a 1-0 lead at Stamford Bridge.

Three minutes later he did it again as this time it was Luka Modric with a super service to Benzema who again managed to head the ball into the net to double Real Madrid's lead.

Kai Havertz dragged Chelsea back into the contest from nowhere before half-time, but the luckless Edouard Mendy gifted Benzema his hat-trick goal with an undersold pass.

A minute into the second-half Real Madrid regained its two-goal lead as Benzema was able to intercept a weak pass from Mendy the keeper who was out of his net and managed to shoot the ball into the empty cage.

The prolific striker moved his competition goal return to 13 in just seven



matches. Benzema took his season's tally to 37 goals in 36 matches for Real, handing his side a major chance of making the semifinals in their bid to land a 14th Champions League title.

The final whistle blew after five minutes of added time and Real Madrid had pulled off an impressive win on the road thanks to another hat-trick from their star striker Karim Benzema.

VILLARREAL WIN QUARTERFINAL FIRST-LEG THRILLER 1-0 AGAINST BAYERN MUNICH

Madrid: Villarreal claimed a 1-0 lead at home against Bayern Munich in their Champions League quarterfinal first-leg tie here on Wednesday. Arnaut Danjuma's eighth-minute goal gave the Spanish Europa League champions the win and Unai Emery's men were unlucky not to take an even greater lead to Munich next week. Villarreal were looking confident and looking to take the game to Bayern, who had plenty of the ball, but didn't seem to have much idea what to do with it, reports Xinhua.



HOCKEY PRO LEAGUE

India women's team faces new-look Netherlands in doubleheader

Bhubaneswar | Agencies

The Netherlands are the reigning champions at the Olympics, Women's FIH Pro League and World Cup. Therefore even their 'B' team will pose a big challenge for India women's team when they face-off in an FIH Pro League doubleheader here on Friday and Saturday.

Though the Indian team has improved a lot in recent times and performed brilliantly to finish fourth in the Tokyo Olympics, the Dutch will still start the favourite in the upcoming matches at the Kalinga Stadium despite leaving out the entire group that won them the gold medal at the Tokyo Olympics last year.



The Netherlands, who will be playing in India for the first time, are currently leading the FIH Pro League standings with 17 points from six matches. They have registered five outright wins and one in the shoot-out. India, on the other hand, have 12 points from six matches, the same as Argentina but are placed fourth behind as they have three outright wins as compared to four for the South Americans. They also have an inferior goal difference -- seven as against 10 for Argentina.

Thus, the two matches on Friday and Saturday present India a good opportunity to capitalise on their superior experience and home conditions to bag some points against the World No. 1 team.

AICFB NATIONAL CHESS

Six-time champion Kishan Gangoli maintains lead

Pune | Agencies

Six-time champion Kishan Gangoli (4.5 points) of Karnataka outdistanced the field by half a point when he defeated Ashwin Makwana (3.5 points) of Gujarat in the fifth round of the 15th AICFB National Chess Championships for visually challenged players, here on Thursday.

Six players Swapnil Shah, Milind Samant (both Maharashtra), Soundarya Pradhan, Subhendu Patra (both Orisa), R.Gopi (TN) and Saiyam Shah (Guj) are following Kishan with four points each.

Kishan displayed his class while outwitting Ashwin Makwana in Dutch Defence. Ashwin employed Dutch Defence but Kishan saddled him with bad pieces and put pressure and forced him to resign after 40 moves. Favourite Aryan Joshi (3.5 points)



once again could not break his chain of draws when he was held to a draw by Sam Peniel (3.5 points) of TN in Sicilian Defence. Top-seeded Darpan Inani (3.5 points) made his comeback with an easy win over Mrinalini Pande (2.5 points) from the black pieces.

13-year-old Riya wins Ladies Open Amateur Golf Championship



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The 11th edition of the DGC Ladies Open Amateur Golf Championship 2022 saw 13-year-old Riya Jadon walking

away with the title score of 232 (78, 80, 74) in a closely-contested final with her older sister Lavanya (age 15) snapping at her heels at a score of 234 (76, 79, 79). Riya also won the Junior

Girls Trophy. Over a hundred women golfers took part in this year's tournament, which resumed at the Delhi Golf Club after a two-year hiatus. Usha International vice-president Anju Munjal, who was present during the presentation ceremony, said, "As part of our ethos of promoting an active and healthy lifestyle, Usha is proud to have supported golf platforms that have paved the way for juniors and amateurs as champions in the making. Today, many are now 'professional' lady golfers, and we are delighted that some of them are here with us today."

IPL 2022: Mumbai Indians did not have a Plan B, says Graeme Swann

Pune | Agencies

Former England off-spinner Graeme Swann believes that Mumbai Indians did not have a plan B when bowling to Kolkata Knight Riders' Pat Cummins in match 14 of IPL 2022 at MCA Stadium in Pune.

Mumbai seemed to have the upper hand when Andre Russell got out to leave Kolkata at 101/5. But Cummins changed the fortune of the match as he slammed six sixes and four fours in his whirlwind knock of an unbeaten 56 off just 15 balls. Cummins also slammed 35 runs off Australia teammate Daniel Sams' 16th over as he equalled KL. Rahul's record for fastest



IPL fifty in 14 balls. "Tymal Mills bowled at excellent pace. (Jasprit) Bumrah bowled well. They all bowled well. But in T20, it just needs one bit of brilliance... or a

ten-minute brilliance to change the game. It's probably the worst thing that could happen to Mumbai," Swann was quoted as saying by cricket.com.

At the same time, Swann was completely surprised that Mumbai lost a match from a near-victory situation. "They've lost a game, they should've won. I'm surprised as anyone that it was taken away from them in such quick time. It's hard to bowl to someone who batted like Cummins did. But it seems as if though, they did not have a Plan B."

Earlier, with the bat, Suryakumar Yadav sparked with a 36-ball 52 as Mumbai reached 161/4 in 20 overs. He was also aided by young Tilak Varma's unbeaten 22-ball 38 and Kieron Pollard providing finishing fireworks with a five-ball 22. It was Yadav's first match after recovering from a hairline fracture in thumb.

Manushi Chhillar roped in by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for World Health Day

'THRILLED TO LEND A HELPING HAND'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Manushi Chhillar, who is set to get the biggest launch in Bollywood opposite superstar Akshay Kumar in Yash Raj Films' big ticket historical Prithviraj, always lends her voice towards important social issues. She is one of the most woke millennial youth icons of our country and has now been roped in by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for World Health Day.

UNDP has closely followed her impactful work on diverse issues.

From advocating for menstrual hygiene and HIV/AIDS through 'Project Shakti', to being actively engaged with several social causes including gender-based violence and COVID-19 awareness campaigns, they have witnessed the creative ways through which Manushi has drawn fans and audience's attention to topical causes. She will work with UNDP starting from World Health Day and also on the World Immunization Week on 7th April 2022 and from 24th to 30th April 2022 respectively.

Manushi, who won the Miss World crown for India 17 years after Priyanka Chopra grabbed the coveted honour, says, "It is a huge honour for me to be associating with United Nations Development Programme

on several important issues that needs our immediate attention. UNDP is doing ground-breaking work across the world on healthcare and immunization. I will do my best to rally audience's and bring attention to these important issues."

She adds, "Vaccination is the need of the hour to protect lives and I'm looking forward to doing my bit to spread this message across the length and the breadth of the country. I want to work relentlessly to drive home UNDP's agenda for India in the months to come, starting with World Health Day today. Working and caring for others gives me a lot of joy so I'm thrilled to partner with UNDP and lend a helping hand to those in need.



I ALWAYS DO FILMS TO BE WATCHED WITH FAMILY: YASH

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The much-awaited pan-India film KGF: Chapter 2 starring Yash, Sanjay Dutt, Raveena Tandon and Srinidhi Shetty in the lead roles is all set to release on April 14, 2022 in theatres. At an event in Mumbai, KGF 2 team launched a new song 'Falak Tu Garaj Tu' in Hindi. Moreover, director Prashanth Neel also announced that the advance bookings of the film will start from tomorrow.

During the press conference, Yash spoke about KGF being a mass entertainer and shed light on the action sequences involved in the film. He said, "When we say action, it is stylized. It is not something where you feel awkward. I always do films that I feel I can watch it with my family. Because the purpose of the film is fulfilled when family audience enjoy it. Despite being entertaining, there should be a strong content. So if you see the thought process in this film, every dialogue will have a thought process where you can relate to any profession." Further Yash also praised Sanjay Dutt for his dedication and getting to learn a lot from him. Sanjay Dutt spoke about the story, emotions and his co-stars being the best part of the film. Raveena Tandon also shared about how elated she was to be a part of the film.

We need to spare some time for ourselves every day: Bhumika Chawla

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Bhumika Chawla who will be next seen in the film Operation Romeo shares her thoughts on World Health Day which is on 7th of April. She starts with the awareness factor and says, "First and foremost we need to spare 15 minutes to 1 hour a day for ourselves every day. Irrespective of whether you are in sports, education, acting, art, medical or in any field can spread awareness on health by posting articles or important authentic health-related videos." Speaking about mental health which is probably the most important concern in the last few years, Chawla adds, "I firmly believe that health is not just physical but mental and emotional also. While we exercise to stay fit physically we need to also do things that keep us peaceful and happy. Life in big cities is always fast-paced. One must take time out in the morning to pray, meditate, and do certain physical activities. Just look at the trees or go to the beach or a park nearby. The pandemic did make people realise that health is wealth. Though humans by nature have poor memory and forget. This is a lesson we should remember - "I don't go to gyms much. People can eat better without spending more. In fact, spending more on eating unhealthy food is not a great idea. One can exercise anywhere if one wishes to - no need for an expensive gym membership to maintain fitness. I don't diet. Having weak willpower will let all of us down in our decisions to eat healthy exercise or do things that make us feel better.

Somy shares her experience of working with sex trafficking survivors

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A new documentary series 'Fight or Flight' is all set to bring Somy Ali's journey and how the Bollywood actress-turned-activist helped thousands of men, women, and children from domestic violence and sex trafficking. She will also be discussing her own journey as she herself suffered as a young woman. In the premiere episode it will be shown how Somy works alongside law enforcement to bring a woman and her son to safety from an alleged volatile abuser, meets with a sex trafficking victim who wants to rebuild her life entirely, and assists a woman in a fight for financial freedom. So, the docuseries will feature her journey and experiences from entertainment industry to running a non-profit organisation 'No More Tears' and through it the way she managed to help victims of sex trafficking and domestic abuse.



MAHESH BABU BELIEVES HE NEED NOT ACT IN HINDI MOVIES

Team Absolute | Hyderabad

Telugu star Mahesh Babu, who will next be seen in 'Sarkaru Vaari Paata', was present at a public event in Hyderabad on Thursday. On being quizzed about Mahesh's Bollywood entry, he expressed that he has no intention to do a movie, at least in the near future.

Mahesh Babu said, "There is no need to do direct Hindi movies. Because, Telugu movies are being watched by people across the country, there is no need that I act in Hindi movies in specific." Mahesh says that he is committed to doing films in Telugu and his film with Rajamouli will be his first pan-India release. Despite being chased by Bollywood for years, Mahesh has never made a Hindi film.

Mahesh-starrer 'Sarkaru Vaari Paata' will release on May 12. Directed by Parasuram Petla, the movie is billed to be a commercial drama.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Huma Quraishi