

absolute india

VOL. 5, ISSUE 180, NEW DELHI | WEDNESDAY, MAY 11, 2022 | ₹5 | PAGE 08

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM NEW DELHI, MUMBAI AND BHOPAL

NATION > 02

SC proposes keeping sedition law in abeyance till review...



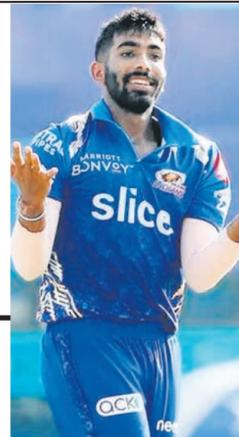
HOLLYWOOD > 06

Stephanie Beatriz inspired by Simu Liu to become an action star...



SPORTS > 07

Bumrah's success down to 'following the best processes'...



THE SANTOOR IS SILENT NOW

Santoor maestro Shivkumar Sharma passes away at 84

Mumbai: The santoor maestro and music composer, Pandit Shivkumar Sharma, passed away after a cardiac arrest at the age of 84 in Mumbai on Tuesday, May 10. He had been suffering from kidney-related ailments for the last six months and was on dialysis. The Jammu-born musician, who elevated the santoor, once a little-known musical instrument from Jammu and Kashmir, to its present exalted global status, will also be remembered for the music he composed with the flute legend, Pandit Hari Prasad Chaurasia, for films such as 'Silsila', 'Lamhe', 'Chandni' and 'Darr'. He is survived by wife Manorama and two sons, one of whom, Rahul Sharma, is also an accomplished santoor player.



50-50 chance of temp hitting 1.5 deg C threshold in next five years: WMO

This study shows - with a high level of scientific skill - that we are getting measurably closer to temporarily reaching the lower target of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The 1.5 degrees Celsius figure is not some random statistic. It is rather an indicator of the point at which climate impacts will become increasingly harmful for people and indeed the entire planet.

Petterri Taalas, Secretary-General, WMO

There is a 50-50 chance of the annual average global temperature temporarily reaching 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial level for at least one of the next five years, a new climate update issued by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said on Tuesday.

There is a 93 per cent likelihood of at least one year between 2022-2026 becoming the warmest on record and dislodging 2016 from the top ranking while the chance of the five-year average for 2022-2026 being higher than the last five years (2017-2021) is also 93 per cent, according to the 'Global Annual to Decadal Climate Update'.



The chance of temporarily exceeding 1.5 degrees Celsius has risen steadily since 2015, when it

was close to zero. For the years between 2017 and 2021, there was a 10 per cent chance of exceedance.

That probability has increased to nearly 50 per cent for the 2022-2026 period.

In 2021, the global average temperature was 1.1 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial baseline, according to the provisional WMO report on the 'State of the Global Climate'. The final 'State of the Global Climate Report for 2021' will be released on May 18.

Back-to-back La Nina events at the start and end of 2021 had a cooling effect on global temperatures, but this is only temporary and does not reverse the long-term global warming trend. 'Any development of an El Nino event would immediately fuel temperatures, as it did in 2016, which is until now the warmest year on record,' WMO said.

IAF URGES MSMEs TO JOIN INDIGENISATION EFFORTS OF FORCE

THE INDIGENISATION

Repair will not only reduce cost and failures but will also ensure better performance of military equipment in the long run. The MSMEs should join the indigenisation efforts of the IAF.

Air Marshal Vibhas Pande, Officer-in-Charge, Maintenance

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Indian Air Force on Tuesday urged the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to join the indigenisation efforts of the force.

Pande said that the definition of indigenisation would have to include a wider perspective in terms of repair, refurbishment, upgradation, increasing longevity and upgradation.

One of the crucial elements in the

sector is repair, which will not only reduce the cost and failure of the equipment, but also ensure better performance in the long run.

Many hits and trials are required, so the need arises of creating a separate manual of indigenisation, which is now a necessity for 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', added Pande.

Speaking on the occasion, Air Vice Marshal P.S. Sarin, Assistant Chief of Air Staff (Maintenance Plans), mentioned that the biggest stepping stone will be repair, refurbishment and



upgradation in the sector for achieving the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, and urged the MSMEs to come forward and join the IAF in its indigenisation efforts.

Chandraker Bharti, Joint Secretary (Aerospace), highlighted that 12,000 MSMEs are currently engaged in developing equipment, but the figure

is very small compared to other nations.

One of the important aspects, he mentioned, is import substitution which will prove expedient in reducing the foreign exchange burden.

He urged all the industry members and stakeholders to come forward and provide handholding to the MSMEs.

Mercy Epao, Joint Secretary, Ministry of MSME, talked about the roadmaps prepared for upscaling the MSME sector.

Reclassification of MSME is one of the significant steps taken by the government in this direction, to make them comparable globally, she said.

Epao also talked about numerous portals like CHAMPION, SAMAD-HAAN, UDHYAM and many more which have been especially designed to cater to the needs of the MSMEs and entrepreneurs in the sector.

All these initiatives will be helpful in upscaling the production and output in the sector, she said.

INDIAN REGULATOR WARNS UBER, OLA

Fix customer complaints else face penal action



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) on Tuesday warned ride-hailing platforms like Uber and Ola to fix rising consumer complaints regarding ride cancellations, cancellation charges, random surge pricing, and long waiting times, or else face penal action.

Sources close to the matter told reporter that the consumer regulator, under its Chief Commissioner Nidhi Khare, gave the ride-hailing platforms 30 days to fix their algorithms related to ride cancellations and surge pricing, else they will be penalised.

The Department of Consumer Affairs is also set to issue new guidelines related to surge pricing and ride cancellations by ride-hailing platforms soon that will give some reprieve to the end users, sources said.

The CCPA grilled cab aggregators over their algorithms related to ride cancellations and surge pricing and directed them to be more vigilant regarding their customers.

The authority had received

numerous complaints of unfair trading practices, such as cab drivers forcing riders to cancel trips that result in the customers paying the cancellation charge.

It was of the view that old customers are being charged exorbitant rates while new riders are being wooed by low fares for the same distance.

Nitish Bhushan, Head of Central Operations, Uber India and South Asia, told IANS that the company is engaged with the Department of Consumer Affairs and appreciates the feedback provided by them.

"We will continue to provide our inputs. We strive to be the platform of choice for riders and drivers alike and continue to invest in technology and customer support to deliver an excellent experience for them," he said.

According to a survey by community-based social media platform LocalCircles last month, 71 per cent customers continue to face ride cancellation issues by drivers of top ride-hailing platforms.

Over 45 per cent of app-based taxi consumers stated they were charged more than 1.5 times in surge pricing despite the threshold being set by the Motor Vehicle Aggregator Guidelines 2020.

The extortionist practices of some drivers to undertake private trips were reported by consumers as a major concern, the report said.

SENIORITY DOES NOT GUARANTEE PARTY TICKET: RAHUL GANDHI

Dahod (Gujarat) | Agencies

Only those who work for and fight for people are guaranteed a Congress party ticket to contest elections, was the clear message from the party's former president and leader Rahul Gandhi.

Gandhi, while addressing the party's tribal leaders in Dahod, spelt out the party strategy for the tribal leaders. "Tribals main issues are forest, land and water, from party workers to senior leaders every one will have to stand with them, fight for them, one has to reach out to them through door to door campaign, cov-

ering each village." He added that only sincere workers and fighters are guaranteed a party ticket, seniority does not guarantee a ticket, no work no ticket.

Giving a morale booster dose, Gandhi said this time the Congress has a better chance to win the elections than 2017. It is up to you to ensure it, if you enter the war field with confidence and faith in yourself that you can win, the Congress will make it. You all need to understand the BJP and the media will run a campaign that the Congress can't do it, you have to prove them wrong, he added.

ESA astronaut makes history with 1st TikTok from space station

- In the video Cristoforetti took her viewers through Crew-4's launch as well as introduced them to the mission's two zero-g indicators, a plush turtle named Zippy and a stuffed monkey called Etta, Space.com reported.
- In the 2,586 Covid-19-infected patients, the frequencies of A, B, O, and AB were 29.93 per cent, 41.80 per cent, 21.19 per cent, and 7.98 per cent, respectively.
- Crew-4 is Cristoforetti's second spaceflight. She previously lived aboard the space station from November 2014 to June 2015.

WASHINGTON | Agencies

The European Space Agency (ESA) astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti has become the first-ever TikTok to post a video from the International Space Station.

Cristoforetti is part of SpaceX's Crew-4 mission, which arrived at the orbiting lab on April 27 for a six-month stay.

"Follow me to boldly go where no TikToker has gone before," the astronaut said in the 88-second TikTok video posted on May 5.

"Etta is short for 'scimmietta', which is Italian for 'little monkey,' of course," Cristoforetti says in the video.

(Etta was the first plush toy that



Cristoforetti bought for her daughter, Kelsey.)

"What questions do you have about life on the space station?" she asked her audience toward the end of the video, even as she floated in front of one of the orbiting lab's windows.

"Tell me in the comments. And remember: Follow me to boldly go where no TikToker has gone before."

Before Crew-4's launch, ESA officials noted that Cristoforetti is the first professional astronaut ever on the platform, "bringing space content and European research to a wider audience."

Rename Qutab Minar as Vishnu Stambh: United Hindu Front



Team Absolute | New Delhi

There was a heavy police deployment outside the Qutab Minar complex in the national capital on Tuesday after a right wing group gave a call to recite 'Hanuman Chalisa' on the premises of the world heritage site.

The origin of Qutab Minar is shrouded in controversy. Some believe it was erected as a tower of victory to signify the beginning of the Muslim rule in India. Others say it served as a minaret to the muezzins to call the faithful to prayer. United Hindu Front (UHF) president Jai Bhagwan Goyal, who had given a call to reach the complex at 12.00 p.m. on Tuesday, said that he has been under house arrest since morning at his residence in Delhi's Shahdara area. "At least 10-15 police personnel are outside my house. They are not allowing me to leave," the UHF president said. Several people affiliated with right wing groups had gathered outside the Qutab Minar even as there was heavy police deployment. They were seen reciting the Hanuman Chalisa (a Hindu religion prayer).

"First stop calling it a Qutab Minar. When Qutab-ud-din Aibak came to India, he demolished Hindu and Jain temples and started calling it Qutab Minar. This is not Qutab Minar, it is Vishnu Stambh. Its name should be immediately changed," Goyal demanded. He further said that several Hindu idols are still present inside the complex and many of them are broken, which is proof that a temple was demolished there.

LOUDSPEAKER ROW: K'TAKA SETS GUIDELINES

Bengaluru: Following the loudspeaker row in the state, the BJP government in Karnataka has swung into action. Minister for Tourism Anand Singh stated on Tuesday that action will be initiated against the temple, mosque and church authorities if they fail to follow the guidelines regarding the use of loudspeakers. There are restrictions on the use of loudspeakers, if local people lodge a complaint action would be initiated. The law which is in place all over the country would be implemented here as well, Anand Singh said.

Anand Singh maintained that the guidelines would be implemented in 7 to 10 days. In case of violations, action will be initiated against the authorities of the religious places, he said.

The decibel limits are being fixed for industrial areas (75 decibels in the morning and 70 decibels in the evening). In commercial areas, it is fixed at 55 decibels and 65 decibels in the morning and night. For residential areas, it is fixed at 55 decibels during the day and 45 decibels at night. In silent zones, it is 50 decibels in the morning and 40 decibels at night, Singh said.

"At least allow us to immerse those idols which are broken and lying inside the complex," said Goyal.



SC PROPOSES KEEPING SEDITION LAW IN ABEYANCE TILL REVIEW, SEEKS CENTRE'S RESPONSE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday gave 24 hours to the Centre to consider, whether the operation of the sedition provision, Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code, could be kept in abeyance till the process of its review is over.

A bench, headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta: "We will give you time till tomorrow morning to take instructions from the government."

The bench, also comprising Justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli, emphasized that its main concern is pending cases, and how the government will take care of future cases.

"Section 124A, as well as future cases can be kept in abeyance till reconsideration takes place," said the bench, asking Mehta to come back to it on Wednesday after taking instructions from the government.

The bench observed: "The question is at the ground level, the police and authorities (are using the law). Can a direction be issued, we are re-examining, do not use Section 124A?"

The Chief Justice told Mehta the court is giving time till Wednesday to take instructions on what will happen in pending cases, and how will the government take care of future cases. "The main contention, meanwhile, is to protect the interest of people," noted the bench.

In an affidavit, the Ministry of Home Affairs has told the Supreme Court that in spirit of



Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav and the Prime Minister's unequivocal views in favour of protection of civil liberties and to shed colonial baggage, the government has decided to re-examine and re-consider the sedition law.

The bench also queried: "Can someone stay in jail for months? Your affidavit says civil liberties... How will you protect those liberties?"

Senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayan, representing one of the petitioners, said it was becoming a "pattern" with the government to seek more time to delay important

cases.

The bench, citing Attorney General K.K. Venugopal's submissions on the misuse of sedition law over the recitation of 'Hanuman Chalisa', added that modification of law takes time, and in the meanwhile, the Centre can issue a directive to states to keep the sedition law in abeyance.

The MHA, in its affidavit, said the Prime Minister has been cognizant of various views expressed on the subject and has also periodically, in various forums, expressed his clear and unequivocal views in favour of protec-

tion of civil liberties, respect for human rights, and giving to the constitutionally cherished freedoms to the people of the country.

It added that the PM has repeatedly said that one of India's strengths is the diverse thought streams that beautifully flourish in the country, and the PM believes that at a time when the nation is marking Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (75 years of Independence), as a nation, it is essential to work harder to shed colonial baggage that passed its utility, which includes outdated colonial laws and practices.

"The government of India, being fully cognizant of various views being expressed on the subject of sedition and also having considered the concerns of civil liberties and human rights, while committed to maintain and protect the sovereignty and integrity of this nation, has decided to re-examine and re-consider the provisions of Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code, which can only be done before the competent forum," said the affidavit.

The top court was hearing arguments on whether a reference to a larger bench is required, as in Kedar Nath Singh judgment (1962), a five-judge bench had retained the section after reading it down.

The top court is hearing petitions filed by Major General S.G. Vombatkere (ret'd) and the Editors Guild of India and others, challenging the constitutional validity of Section 124A which carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

Dhankhar has his way, Dy Speaker to administer Babul Supriyo's oath on Wed

Kolkata: The confusion over singer-turned-politician Babul Supriyo's swearing-in as the newly-elected Trinamool MLA from Ballygunge seems to be finally over as the state government has accepted the condition set by Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar that the oath will be administered by the Deputy Speaker of the Assembly, Asish Banerjee.

Although Supriyo was elected as the new MLA from Ballygunge on April 16, confusion was prevailing over his oath taking ceremony after the Governor cleared the file pertaining to his oath on April 30 on condition that the oath be administered by the Deputy Speaker, Biman Banerjee.

However, Asish Banerjee had refused to administer the oath claiming that with the Speaker being present, it will be an insult to Biman Banerjee if he as the Deputy Speaker administers the oath.

On May 1, Supriyo through a Twitter message had appealed to the Governor for allowing the Speaker to administer his oath. But Dhankhar had tweeted back claiming that a public domain was not the place for placing such a request. Since then, confusion was prevailing over Supriyo's oath ceremony. However, on Tuesday evening, state minister Partha Chatterjee informed mediapersons that the oath ceremony of Supriyo would be held on Wednesday, and it will be administered by the Deputy Speaker as mandated by the Governor.



IMD ISSUES YELLOW ALERT FOR DELHI AS HEATWAVE TO RETURN

New Delhi: The mercury is most likely to rise in the national capital as India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Tuesday predicted heat wave conditions to return in the region from Wednesday.

According to the IMD, the city will see mainly clear sky on Wednesday with the maximum temperature hovering around 40 degree Celsius. Meanwhile, it was a hot day in Delhi on Tuesday with a maximum temperature of 39.5 degree Celsius being recorded at the Safdarjung monitoring station. The maximum temperature at other areas of Delhi was Ayanagar 40, Lodhi Road at 38.7, Palam at 39.4, Ridge at 39.5, Jafarpur at 40, Mungeshpur 40, Najafgarh 40.9, Pitampura 39.6, and Salwan Public School, Mayur Vihar 37 degrees Celsius. As per IMD update at 8.30 p.m., the city was having a relative humidity of 53 per cent.



National database being created to crack down on terror, hawala, narcotics cases

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With the aim to crack down on cases related to terror and its funding, narcotics and fake Indian currency notes and to increase conviction rates, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has stepped in to create a national database, officials in the Home Ministry said.

They said that the Union Home Secretary chaired a meeting last week wherein the heads of the Intelligence Bureau, National Investigation Agency, National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) Central Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement Directorate (ED) participated and discussed the modalities to create an integrated national database. On April 21, Union Home Minister Amit Shah while speaking at the foundation day of NIA, said the MHA has been mulling to create a national database related to inter-



national security covering bomb blasts, terror funding, fake currency, narcotics, hawala, arms smuggling, and terrorism. He had said the database will help the central agencies and police in the states and union terri-

ories in investigations.

According to MHA officials, the NATGRID, IB and NIA are preparing a database of seven major crime fields to help the investigation agencies in probes, based on the data of crimes and criminals involved in it. The NIA will be the custodian of the data related to drug trafficking, terrorist incidents and other cases on an integrated platform and will be available to the probe agencies at a single click. "Once the database is prepared, the probe agencies will have all information about the suspect including his all records related to crimes at one click," the officials said.

The second round of the meeting is expected in June in the Home Ministry where the Union Home Secretary will review the progress with stakeholders. The NIA has been given the responsibility to create the database with the cooperation of other central police agencies.

4 HYBRID TERRORISTS ARRESTED IN SRINAGAR

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir police along with the security forces have arrested four hybrid terrorists of proscribed terror outfit TRF/LeT from Bemina area in Srinagar, officials said on Tuesday.

"Acting on a specific tip-off about the presence of terrorists in Bemina, a checkpoint was set up at the Bemina crossing. Two individuals approaching the checkpoint in a suspicious manner were challenged by the joint party following which they tried to flee. However, they were apprehended by the joint party," the police said.

The apprehended individuals have been identified as Tawoos Rasool Gada and Saleem Jan Bhat, both residents of Usmanabad in Bemina.

"After search, one Chinese pistol, one magazine and 10 live rounds were recovered from their possession," the police said.

NGO bribes case: CBI raids 40 places, detains 7 Home Ministry officials

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The CBI on Tuesday raided 40 places across the country and detained seven Union Ministry of Home Affairs officials for allegedly taking bribe from NGOs in lieu of helping them in renewal of Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act registrations.

The raids were conducted in Delhi, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Mysuru, and other states.

A Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) source said that a hawala connection has also been exposed in the raids through which they sent around Rs 2 crore.

"We have detailed few MHA officials for allegedly helping NGOs which were issued notices for FCRA vio-



lation or those seeking renewal of FCRA registration. FCRA is mandatory to receive foreign funds. Around 40 locations have been raided so far," the source told reporter.

The CBI team have caught the MHA officials receiving bribe redhanded.

A case under various sections of IPC read with sections of Prevention of Corruption Act has been lodged in this respect.

The CBI sources said that more arrests in the case are likely.

50 NDRF TEAMS ON READINESS FOR BENGAL, ODISHA, ANDHRA FOR 'ASANI'

New Delhi: A total of 50 National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) teams have earmarked for West Bengal, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh in view of the Severe Cyclonic Storm Asani.



According to the NDRF officials, 22 teams have already been deployed on the ground while 28 self-contained teams are on alert within the states to tackle the situation as Asani approaches the north Andhra Pradesh coast. Out of 22 deployed teams, 12 teams have been deployed at the coastal districts of West Bengal, nine teams in coastal Andhra Pradesh, and one team in Odisha's Balasore district. The NDRF personnel are conducting awareness drives about do's and don'ts during cyclone and persuading people living on the coast line to shift to safer place/cyclone shelters.

The fishermen have been advised not to venture in the sea for next 48 hours. The IMD is updating the situation to the people through the messages on social media.

The NDRF headquarters is closely monitoring developments and all efforts are being taken to ensure zero casualties and minimum damage to life and property, the officials added.

Ex-BJP MLA threatens a replay of Babri on Gyanvapi

LUCKNOW: | Agencies

Former BJP MLA Sangeet Som has made an objectionable remark on the Gyanvapi mosque controversy.

He allegedly said at a function to mark the anniversary of Maharana Pratap said people should remember 1992 -- the year when the Babri mosque was demolished.

"That was 1992 and this is 2022. The strength of the youth has doubled now and time has come to take another decision," he said.

Som also wrote on his Facebook page that "Aurangzeb made the Gyanvapi mosque. In 1992, it was Babri and now in 2022 it is the turn of Gyanvapi. It is time to take back the temple which was demolished to make a mosque."

Congress spokesman Surendra Rajput said: "This is exactly the gameplan of the BJP, to create unrest and divisions in society. We hope that the BJP realizes the damage it is



doing to the social fabric with such statements. The Gyanvapi issue has been raised and so has the Taj Mahal issue. We are heading for dangerous times."

INDIAN RAILWAYS LAUNCH 'BABY BERTH' FOR INFANTS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Indian Railways introduced a separate 'Baby Berth' (seats for newborn children) in trains on Mothers' Day on February 8 where the infants will now be able to sleep alongside their mother.

The lower berths already reserved for women have been placed next to baby berths so that young children can travel with their mother without any inconvenience. At present these new berths meant for young children have been installed in some trains on a trial basis.

According to official information, two berths have been added in the Lucknow Mail going from Lucknow to New



Delhi. The Railways will not charge any extra fare for the seat meant for infants. The Railways tweeted, saying that after introducing this new facility, women travelling with milk-fed infant will feel at ease. The Railways

has also shared the photo of a 'baby berth' in a tweet, saying that a baby berth has been introduced along with two berths in three-tier AC coach of the Lucknow Mail. Soon, the baby berth facility would be extended

to other trains as well.

Efforts are made by the Railways to provide lower berths to women travelling alone, pregnant women and women travelling with children below the age of five years. The width of the reserved berths of the train is less due to which it becomes difficult for the women to travel with small children. Therefore, arrangements have been made for including a seat for children with the lower berth reserved for women. The Railways has taken due care that the child does not fall from the train seat as well.

At the time of booking a reservation ticket, the name of children aged below five years will have to compulsorily filled and a baby berth will be made available to women.

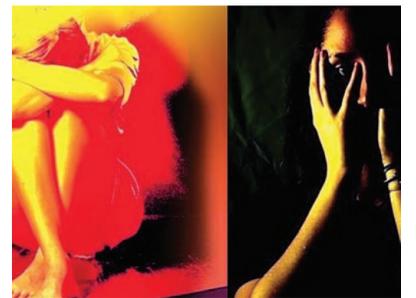
Cong MLA questions Raj police for inaction against minister's son in rape case

JAIPUR | Agencies

Congress MLA Divya Maderna on Tuesday questioned the functioning of the Rajasthan police in her tweets in the rape case registered against Rohit Joshi, son of state PHED minister Mahesh Joshi at Sadar Bazar police station in Delhi. She advocated the protection of the victims family, questioning the police as to why the case was not registered in Rajasthan.

In her tweets she said, "Rajasthan Govt. in 2019 had directed to register FIRs at SP office from June; in case police stations not registering the complaint, the CM had also directed that a departmental inquiry must be done in connection with all the cases where a police station refuses to register FIR."

In another tweet, she said, "Zero FIR filed in Sadar Bazaar police station Delhi is under investigation. But I have serious questions to DGP regarding police administration. Why the FIR was not registered by @PoliceRajasthan," she said tagging the Rajasthan police. "DGP must immediately direct for departmental inquiry against officers who refused to register FIR. The DGP and @PoliceRajasthan should also immedi-



ately provide security cover to the victim and her family as her native residence is in Rajasthan. Our Govt is very sensitive but the police needs to take swift action as this case has raised questions on the working of Raj Police," she added. The FIR against the minister's son Rohit Joshi was lodged in Delhi by a 23-year-old woman, who alleged that the accused raped her multiple times for over a year.



OBC QUOTA: SC ASKS MP POLL BODY TO NOTIFY ORDER TO CONDUCT CIVIC POLLS IN 2 WEEKS

With the Supreme Court on Tuesday directing the states to follow the triple test it laid down in 2021 for reservation to Other Backward Classes (OBC) in local body elections, both the BJP and the Congress in Madhya Pradesh have supported the apex court's decision ahead of the state Assembly polls scheduled in 2023.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The triple test involves the appointment of panels, gathering empirical data quantifying the extent and backwardness local body-wise, and ensuring the reservation does not exceed the 50 per cent ceiling.

The apex court in its judgement directed the Madhya Pradesh State Election Commission to issue a notification regarding panchayat elections within two weeks.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan in his response said the state government will file a review petition against the SC order to hold panchayat elections

as well as on OBC reservation.

"We are yet to study the judgement in detail but we will file a review petition hoping that the panchayat elections are held with OBC reservation," Chouhan added while responding to mediapersons on Tuesday.

The Supreme Court's order came in response to a petition regarding 23,000 unfilled panchayat seats in Madhya Pradesh. The seats remained vacant as the state could not fulfil the triple test.

Earlier in December 2021, the apex court had directed the Madhya Pradesh State Election Commission to re-notify OBC seats in local bodies as general seats and then conduct elections.

Both the BJP and the Congress levelled allegations against each other over the OBC reservation issue, however, both the parties had reached a unanimous consensus not to conduct polls without OBC reservation in the state. A unanimous resolution in this regard was passed by the state Assembly in December 2021.

A bench of Justices AM Khanwilkar, AS Oka, and CT Ravikumar took serious exception to the vacant 321 urban bodies and nearly 23,260 panchayat seats in Madhya Pradesh.

The bench said such conduct is "bordering on the breakdown of the rule of law."

The court directed the poll watchdog to notify the elections within two

weeks.

It made it clear that neither delimitation nor triple test compliance can delay the filling up of the vacant seats.

The court said the seats must be represented by elected representatives after every five years as per the constitutional requirement.

The bench said the triple test formula laid down in a judgment in March 2021 will be applicable to elections on all local bodies across the country and is binding on all states and state Election Commissions.

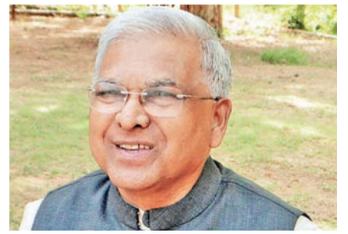
Opposition Congress leader Arun Yadav said his party was apprehensive over the gross negligence of the BJP-led state government towards the OBCs.

Present model of excellent works of tribal development in the country: Governor

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel has said that Madhya Pradesh should present a model of excellent works of tribal development in the country. The development efforts of different and various sectors need to be presented in an integrated format. In this direction, the cell should work in coordination and harmony with various departments. He said that the efforts of tribal welfare should be strengthened in consultation with various departments by fixing days in the week.

Patel was addressing the first introductory meeting of senior officers of Public Health Engineering, Finance, Forest, Tribal Affairs, Public Health and Family Welfare, Rural Development Department, Haemoglobinopathy Mission, Livelihood Mission and members of Tribal Cell at Raj Bhavan. Governor Patel said that cent percent expenditure of tribal budget should be ensured. With the passing of the budget, expenditure should be started in the prescribed plans and programmes. He has made it clear that the budget allocated in the financial year should be ensured to be utilized in the mandatory year. He said that it is necessary to use the funds provided for tribal development on the basis of the principles of social justice. The Governor also discussed about the distribution of forest rights pattas, progress of sickle cell investigation work. He said that pregnant mothers should be tested on priority



for sickle cell disease. Checkups should also be done in Anganwadi centers. This will speed up the testing process. He said that for effective planning of the nature of the disease and prevention efforts, it is necessary to compile the consolidated data of investigation work being done at different levels and areas. He also told about the need to sensitize sickle cell anemia carriers and patients about healthy lifestyle. The Governor congratulated the Tribal Affairs Department on the information about the good results in the competitive examinations by the tribal students.

President Tribal Cell Deepak Khandekar informed that the tribal development budget of the state is the largest in the country. He said that arrangements would be made by the cell for the overall presentation of material achievements in addition to the departmental and budget of tribal development.

Obscene dance at religious festival, municipal official suspended

Team Absolute | Bhopal

An obscene dance performed by a woman during a government-organised event in Madhya Pradesh has prompted the state administration to suspend the chief municipal officer, said an official on Tuesday.

The local administration had organised a programme - 'Maa Mahishasur Mardini Devi Mela' in Shamgarh town, some 70 km from the Mandsaur district headquarters. During the event, an allegedly obscene dance was performed on the stage by a woman. A video of the purported dance programme sur-

faced on social media showing a woman dancing to the tune of an obscene song. The pictures of state cabinet minister Hardeep Singh Dang and Maa Mahishasur Mardini Devi were seen on a banner in the background.

After the incident, Dang had written a letter to Urban Administration Minister Bhupendra Singh demanding action against Mandsaur's chief municipal officer Nasir Ali Khan. In his letter, Dang mentioned that the programme hurt the religious sentiments of people and hence action should be taken against the responsible officials. Subsequently, Mandsaur's chief municipal officer

Nasir Ali Khan was suspended. Sources told IANS that a suspension order was issued by Ujjain's Divisional Commissioner Sandeep Yadav on Monday. An explanation has also been sought from the Mandsaur district collector on this matter. The suspension order said, "The pictures of Maa Mahishasur Mardini Devi and elected representatives were displayed on the stage where the obscene dance was organised. An orchestra programme was allowed freely by the chief municipal officer, Nasir Ali Khan, without knowing its outline. This shows the official's carelessness," the order read.

Install Fire Systems in High-Rise Buildings and Keep Them in Working Condition: Singh

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Install suitable fire systems in high-rise buildings, hotels, educational buildings etc. located in cities and keep them in working condition. Urban Development and Housing Minister Bhupendra Singh has given instructions to the officials of the Urban Development and Housing Department to take necessary action in this regard.

According to Part-4 of the National Building Code (NBC) 2016, it is necessary to obtain Fire NOC and install suitable fire system in buildings of 15 meters or more height of residential use, having two or more basements or having one basement with an area of more than 500 square meters, hotels, educational institutions, commercial, industrial etc. and buildings of mixed use (floor area of any one

floor or more floors over 500 square meters), educational buildings with a height of 9 meters or more and for building for holding meetings or buildings for holding casual meetings etc. Fire authorities have been declared by the government to obtain Fire NOC.

Singh has said that it is mandatory to follow the requirements related to fire safety in these buildings. Information has been received that fire NOC has not been obtained by many high-rise buildings and other mentioned buildings which come under the category of Part 4 of National Building Code and proper and functional fire systems are not installed in the buildings. Keeping in view the occurrence of fire in the summer season, it is mandatory to have a fire system installed in this category of buildings and kept in work-

ing condition.

Keeping in view the provisions mentioned in the rules and the safety of the general public, the Minister has directed that under Section 87 of the Land Development Rules, the campaign should be conducted by the urban bodies for the survey of high-rise buildings located in the city and the buildings mentioned in Part-4 of the National Building Code and a list should be prepared by them. Information should be obtained by conducting site inspection regarding the installation and functioning of appropriate fire systems in these buildings. In the buildings where fire system is installed, it should be ensured to keep the fire system in working condition. If the fire system is not installed in these buildings, then it must be mandatorily installed within the next 15 days. The con-

cerned building owner should be apprised about duly obtaining Fire NOC from the Competent Authority/Fire Authority. The Commissioner / Chief Municipal Officer of the bodies should take action in compliance with these instructions and the compliance report should be submitted to the Directorate of Urban Administration and Development by May 30, 2022. Also, the information in softcopy should be sent to the email ID bpi-ministeroffice@gmail.com. Divisional Joint Director should take continuous inspection of the fire system to be installed in the mentioned buildings located in the urban bodies in his division and action should be taken as per rules. Instructions have been given to strictly follow the instructions.

Use of the knowledge of museology is necessary for the protection of cultural heritage: Samal

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal organized an 'Orientation Program' for newly admitted students of post graduate diploma in Museology, as it plays a significant role in introducing the Museum activities.

Chief Guest of the program was Prof. Prasanna K Samal, Chairman and Head Department of Tribal Studies Indira Gandhi National Tribal University Amarkantak addressing the students he said that IGNU and IGRMS are contributes in the upliftment and development of tribal population and other economically backward classes. PGDM is a professional course. He highlighted the significance of the course in the field of academics and other institutions particularly museums. Roles and responsibility of Museologist is also highlighted stating



that Museums's work as a team. Museums also deals with issues in the society and make use of the knowledge of museology to conserve the cultural heritage at large. Lastly he state that renowned Museologist will come out of this course as it is in IGRMS which is one of the pioneer active museums in a country.

At the beginning of the program, the coordinator Surya Kumar Pandey gave the welcome address and Museum Assistant Geetu Yaikhom gave detailed information about the courses. They were also informed about the rules & regulations, campus safety and the academic calendar. Controller of Examinations Rakesh Bhatt said that

about the various section and their activities, infrastructural facilities, extracurricular activities, learning resources, and the museum culture. They were made to understand their role and responsibilities during museum life. Therefore, in order to give the most accurate view of an institution, there must be both an academic and social component to the orientation program. P Shankar Rao said that Student Orientation Programme plays an important role in a student's transition to a Museum life. Orientation programmes are aimed at familiarizing the students to an unknown campus environment, its faculties and infrastructure. It helps them to find their way in the Museum for the next one year and also encourages them to get better adjusted to the IGRMS environment. Rao motivates the students and wished them Good Luck for their bright and glorious future.

MAN, WHO HOGGED LIMELIGHT FOR HELPING PEOPLE DURING COVID, BOOKED FOR RAPE

▶ A BHOPAL-BASED RESIDENT, WHO BECAME FAMOUS FOR HELPING COVID PATIENTS DURING SECOND WAVE, WAS BOOKED ON THE CHARGES OF RAPING A WOMAN.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A Bhopal-based resident, who became famous for helping Covid patients during second wave, was booked on the charges of raping a woman.

A 27-year-old woman had on Monday evening filed a rape complaint against her landlord Javed Khan (34), police said.

Police station in-charge Manishraj Bhadoria told mediapersons on Tuesday that the woman in her complaint stated that she used to consider Javed as her brother but on March 3, when her husband had gone for the work and her daughter was playing outside, Javed came into her room and raped her.

Javed used to rape her whenever he got a chance, she said in her complaint.

Following the complaint, the police registered a case under section 376 (2-N) and 506 of IPC and launched a

manhunt to arrest the accused.

Javed became famous for converting his bread-winning vehicle, auto rickshaw into a free ambulance service in the city in April, 2021.

It was claimed that he had saved at least 15 lives by timely rushing them free of cost to different hospitals of Bhopal - which was among the top two Covid hotspots of the city.

Javed, the father of three kids (two daughters and a son), had sold his wife's gold necklace for Rs 5,000 to fund his mission of rendering the free auto-rickshaw ambulance to Covid and other patients.

STATE GOVERNMENT UNIVERSITIES WILL PREPARE AN ACTION PLAN FOR 25 YEARS: YADAV

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Higher Education Minister Mohan Yadav said that all the government universities affiliated to the Higher Education Department would work after planning for 25 years for academic expansion, infrastructure development and to become self-reliant, in which a phased program would be prepared for every five years. Universities will also start courses for Agriculture, Medical Paramedical.

Paramedical, courses will be run on the basis of PPP model. Mohan Yadav told in a press conference on Tuesday that online review was done with the Vice Chancellors of all the government universities of the state regarding academic expansion, examination programme, recruitment of professors in universities. In this it has been decided that all universities will prepare an action plan for 25 years for infrastructure development. There are plans to open medical colleges on PPP model at Vikram University, Ujjain, Jiwaji Vishwavidyalaya, Gwalior, Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya, Indore and Barkatullah Vishwavidyalaya, Bhopal. The proposal has been received from Vikram University and after preliminary preparation this proposal will be sent to the Medical Education Department.

Nursing, paramedical courses are also being started in government universities. Four paramedical courses were started in Jiwaji University, Gwalior last year, they are being expanded. He said that the universities would compulsorily organize an alumni meet once in a year and publish an annual souvenir, which would also contain details of the major achievements of the affiliated colleges. Apart from this, they will prepare a report regarding the implementation of the National Education Policy. The Universities will also



work extensively for the promotion of National Education Policy. Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya, Awadhesh Pratap Singh University and Barkatullah University will start courses related to agriculture. All universities have agreed that the results of all examinations will be declared by June 30.

Yadav said that on 13th May 2022, Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi has proposed the launch of Madhya Pradesh Startup Policy Implementation Scheme 2022. All the government colleges and universities have been instructed to ensure maximum attendance of students and provision of projector halls, internet at the college level through YouTube, NIC webcast broadcast.

Yadav informed that Barkatullah University, Bhopal and Vikram University, Ujjain have taken an important initiative to make all the documents of the students available online through Digi Locker. Digitax facility will be available in all universities of Madhya Pradesh till May 30. With the innovation of Digi Locker facility, students will not need to carry their documents with them everywhere. Through Digi Locker, students will be able to get their mark sheet, degree, duplicate mark sheet, migration, transcript etc certificates available anywhere.

All universities will prepare for the ranking of NAAC and NIRE in order to include Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya, Indore among the first 100 institutes of the country and to get A++ grading, an 11-member committee has been constituted and a gap analysis has been done. Advertisements have been issued to fill the vacant posts in 11 universities of the state. But keeping in view the need of NAAC grading, the posts of professors will also be filled by deputation in all the universities. Yadav informed that online review of Center of Excellence being made in universities under Governance and RUSA item was done. 15 Centers of Excellence are being set up in three universities. Centers of excellence will also be set up at Vikram University, Ujjain and Rani Durgavati University, Jabalpur. From the coming session, Jiwaji University, Gwalior, Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya, Indore will also start agriculture courses. In the incubation centers running in 6 universities of the state, work on 19 start-ups have been identified. These centers have also filed 15 new patents. Campus placements in universities are being strengthened more. This year 1600 students got placement in Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya, more than 700 in Vikram University, 147 in Barkatullah University.

CM PLANTED SAPLINGS OF NEEM, PEEPAL AND KARANJ



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted Neem, Peepal and Karanj saplings in the Smart City Garden. Chouhan planted a neem sapling along with senior social worker Govind Malu and his family and also released the book "Tum Prem Ho", a collection of poems by Malu's daughter, Surbhi. Chief Minister along with ABP News anchor Shrivardhan Trivedi planted a Peepal sapling and a Karanj sapling along with the workers of New Lakshya Social and Environmental Society.

Shweta Shrivastava, Aarti Anand, RS Anand and Reena Jain of New Lakshya Society affiliated to Jan Abhiyan Parishad participated in plantation. The society is active in spreading public awareness about the cultural heritage of the state, motivating people for women empowerment, environment protection and tree plantation. Saplings are planted at different places by the members and they are looked after with sensitivity till the plant becomes a tree.

Peepal planted today is a shady tree. It purifies the environment. It has religious and Ayurvedic significance. Rich in antibiotic elements, neem is known as the supreme medicine. Karanj plant is also used in religious works.



EDITOR'S SPECS

OCEANS LOSING 'MEMORY'

Most of the world's oceans are steadily losing their year-to-year 'memory' under global warming, researchers have warned. Ocean memory decline is found as a collective response across the climate models to human-induced warming. As greenhouse-gas concentrations continue to rise, such memory decline will become increasingly evident. The study published in the journal *Science Advances* compared the fast weather fluctuations of the atmosphere to find that the slowly varying ocean exhibits strong persistence, or "memory," meaning the ocean temperature tomorrow is likely to look a lot like it does today, with only slight changes. Ocean memory is found to be related to the thickness of the uppermost layer of the ocean, known as the mixed layer. Deeper mixed layers have greater heat content, which confers more thermal inertia that translates into memory. However, the mixed layer over most oceans will become shallower in response to continued anthropogenic warming, resulting in a decline in ocean memory. Along with ocean memory decline, the thinning mixed layer is also found to increase the random fluctuations of the sea surface temperature. As a result, although the ocean will not become much more variable from one year to the next in the future, the fraction of helpful signals for prediction largely reduces. "Reduced ocean memory together with increased random fluctuations suggest intrinsic changes in the system and new challenges in prediction under warming," said Fei-Fei Jin, an atmospheric sciences professor at the University of Hawaii. Ocean memory loss doesn't just impact the prediction of physical variables, but could also influence the way we manage sensitive marine ecosystems. Besides ocean prediction, forecasting land-based impacts on temperature, precipitation as well as extreme events might also be affected by ocean memory decline due to their dependence on the persistence of sea surface temperature as a predictability source, the team said.

NO OPEC OR A NEW OPEC?

Asad Mirza

After working on devising methods to counter moves by OPEC (Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries), the largest consortium of oil producing nations across the globe, over the last two decades considered detrimental to the US interests and having failed several times, the US lawmakers have at last succeeded in bringing about a legislation, which could effectively counter the OPEC hegemony and any challenge to the American authority on global issues.

The on-going Russia-Ukraine war, which has crossed seventy days, was the key element influencing the US lawmakers in coming together to formulate a piece of legislation, which could effectively handle any actions by the powerful OPEC lobby, both with and outside America.

NOPEC Explained

A US Senate committee on May 5 passed a bill, which could expose the OPEC member states to lawsuits for collusion on boosting crude oil prices internationally besides controlling the production levels by them. The latest bill was moved by senators, Republican Chuck Grassley and Democrat Amy Klobuchar, and was passed 17-4 by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The bipartisan bill, the "No Oil Producing and Exporting Cartels Act of 2021" or "NOPEC", may strip OPEC or its member states owned oil companies from sovereign immunity that has protected them from lawsuits for decades. This means that oil states would no longer be immune from the jurisdiction of the US courts if they breach terms of the bill, if it finally turns into a law.

Now, the bill must pass the full Senate and House and be signed by President Joe Biden to become law. If passed, the US attorney general would be able to sue OPEC or its members, such as Saudi Arabia, in US federal courts. Other producers like Russia, which works with OPEC in wider group known as OPEC+ to withhold output, could also be sued.

Overall, not every US politician seems to be in favour of the bill, and it may face hurdles in the Senate and House. Republican Senator John Cornyn, from Texas, the top oil producing state in the US, opposed the bill, saying it could prompt OPEC to restrict shipments to the US and urges the US companies to produce more oil and gas in America. This completely goes against the US policy of hoarding



its reserves and restricting the extraction of petroleum in the US, keeping an eye on the long-term energy scenarios. American Petroleum Institute, the top US oil and gas lobbying group also opposes NOPEC.

What led to NOPEC?

Saudi Arabia and several other OPEC producers have recently rebuffed requests by the US and other European countries to boost oil production beyond gradual amounts, faced with falling Russian supply after its invasion of Ukraine and sanctions imposed against it.

OPEC+, which cut production when oil prices crashed to historic lows during the Covid pandemic due to decreased oil demand, agreed on 5 May to stick to its existing plans to reverse the curbs with modest increases for another month.

Basically, NOPEC is intended to protect US consumers and businesses from artificial spikes in the cost of petroleum, but some analysts warn that implementing it could also have some dangerous unintended consequences.

In 2019, Saudi Arabia threatened to sell oil in currencies other than the dollar if Washington passed NOPEC, a move that could undermine the dollar's status as the world's main reserve currency, reducing Washington's clout in global trade and weaken its ability to

enforce sanctions on nation states.

Meanwhile, analysts caution that NOPEC could ultimately harm domestic energy companies more. In reality Saudi and OPEC members produce oil much more cheaply than the US companies and if they are forced to flood global markets with more production, then the US oil companies may take a hit.

OPEC is often labelled as a cartel, as its members account for around 40 per cent of the world's crude oil output, about 60 per cent of the internationally traded petroleum is from OPEC and they also possess over 80 per cent of the world's proven oil reserves.

The NOPEC bill, if and when enacted, may immediately and dramatically inhibit actions or statements from OPEC specifically from its de facto leader Saudi Arabia. It would also straightaway leave Saudi Arabia and its oil entity ARAMCO open to being sued under the US anti-trust legislation, and may impact its future investments in the US.

Why now?

The bill it seems was rushed through the Senate Committee, as a poll conducted by CNN last week showed that a majority of Americans think Biden's policies have hurt the economy, while eight in 10 say the government is not doing enough to combat inflation.

Biden faces midterm elections in coming November, thus the window to control inflation is getting narrower for him and if he loses the majority in the House then he might not be able to run for the next presidential elections.

In addition the Saudi Crown Prince MbS and UAE's Crown Prince MbZ have snubbed the Biden administration repeatedly, after their refusal to take calls by the US President to help reduce the prices of oil at the international level. So NOPEC has been rushed through to get back at these two princes particularly and the manner in which the US moves, a much larger action against these middle-eastern countries may take place after the end of the Russia-Ukraine war.

Ultimately, it could be seen as a move by the US administration to strike back at its previous friends turned foes, who on their part are focussed on their internal affairs rather than being seen as being bowed down under the US pressure, thus losing their allegiance at home and status at the international level.

(Asad Mirza is a political commentator based in New Delhi. The views expressed are personal)

international

SRI LANKA'S FLEEING EX-PM, FAMILY TAKE REFUGE AT NAVAL BASE

In the wake of the widespread violence in Sri Lanka that left five people dead, former Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and his family on Tuesday took refuge at a naval base in Trincomalee after leaving Colombo under heavy security.



Colombo | Agencies

In the wake of the widespread violence in Sri Lanka that left five people dead, former Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and his family on Tuesday took refuge at a naval base in Trincomalee after leaving Colombo under heavy security. Rajapaksa, his wife Shiranthi, and their youngest son Rohitha and his

family, left the Prime Minister's official residence, Temple Trees, early Tuesday morning on board an Air Force helicopter and have now taken refuge at the heavily guarded naval base, an informed military source said.

Reports have also revealed that Rajapaksa's second son, Yositha, who was also the former Prime Minister's Secretary, and his family had left the country on Monday.

Following Rajapaksa's resignation on Monday and the ensuing violence started by the pro-government protesters, the anti-government demonstrators surrounded Temple Trees and tried to forcibly enter the premises.

Military were rushed to his protec-

tion and the police fired tear gas and water cannons to disperse the violent mob. In retaliation, the protesters torched vehicles parked outside the residence house and the military resorted to shooting in the air.

At least five people, including an MP, were killed and over 200 others injured as a result of the violence.

The island nation, hit by the most severe economic crisis since gaining independence in 1948, is currently without a government and Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena has urged President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to summon Parliament immediately.

With a severe financial crisis due to dollar crunch and inflation, protests that started on March 31 have been continuing throughout the

country demanding the Rajapaksas to resign.

In the wake of the protests, the cabinet resigned but Mahinda Rajapakse formed a new cabinet under his leadership.

With lack of fuel and gas and hours-long power cuts, people took to the streets and demanded that the immediate resignation of the government.

Meanwhile, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has urged the opposition to form an all-party government, but the latter has refused to do so until he steps down.

On Monday, trade unions launched an indefinite nationwide strike demanding the President to resign.

Pakistan currency at all-time low against dollar

The Pakistani currency depreciated by Rs 0.60 to an all-time low of Rs 188.66 against the US dollar in the interbank market on Tuesday, as looming uncertainty over the resumption of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan programme took a toll on the local unit, Geo News reported.



Karachi | Agencies

The Pakistani currency depreciated by Rs 0.60 to an all-time low of Rs 188.66 against the US dollar in the interbank market on Tuesday, as looming uncertainty over the resumption of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan programme took a toll on the local unit, Geo News reported.

The local currency surpassed its April 7 record low of Rs 188.18.

Currency dealers believe that a delay in the IMF programme, lack of immediate financial support from friendly countries, depleting for-

eign exchange reserves and surging trade deficit kept the pressure on the domestic currency. The new government's reluctance to remove subsidies on fuel and electricity -- which are the pre-conditions for the revival of the IMF programme -- dampened investors' sentiment.

Moreover, investors are concerned about the falling foreign currency reserves -- as the inflows from remittances and export proceeds are not sufficient to meet the market demand -- and growing external debt payments and soaring imports. This is putting pressure on the rupee, Geo News reported.

Warnings of global food shortage as missiles hit Odesa

The Ukrainian port of Odesa has been hit by missile strikes. One person was killed and five injured when a shopping centre and a depot were hit, Ukraine's armed forces say, BBC reported.

Odesa (Ukraine):

The Ukrainian port of Odesa has been hit by missile strikes. One person was killed and five injured when a shopping centre and a depot were hit, Ukraine's armed forces say, BBC reported.

President Zelensky has warned that Russia's blockade of his country's Black Sea ports threatens global food supplies, the report added. European Council President Charles Michel,

who was forced to take shelter as he visited Odesa, warned that badly needed supplies are stuck.

Ukraine and the EU have discussed taking "immediate measures to unblock Ukraine's ports for grain exports" after Russia's blockade of Ukraine's Black Sea ports has forced its grain exporters to look for alternatives to move their cargo.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky said he discussed preventing "a global food crisis triggered by Russia's aggressive actions" during talks with European Council President Charles Michel on his visit to Odesa, BBC reported.

The invasion has crippled its export capacity, with Russia destroying transportation infrastructure and blockading Odesa, the main port for grain exports.

"In the port of Odesa, I saw silos full of grain, wheat and corn ready for export," Michel said.

Ferdinand Marcos Jr. wins Philippines prez election: Preliminary results

Ferdinand Marcos Jr., the son of late leader Ferdinand Marcos, has won the presidential election over his main rival, incumbent Vice President Maria Leonor Robredo, with 83.1 per cent of unofficial votes counted, preliminary results revealed on Tuesday.

Manila | Agencies

Ferdinand Marcos Jr., the son of late leader Ferdinand Marcos, has won the presidential election over his main rival, incumbent Vice President Maria Leonor Robredo, with 83.1 per cent of unofficial votes counted, preliminary results revealed on Tuesday.

The latest tally said Marcos Jr. garnered 26,681,414 votes over Robredo's 12,736,644 cast in the election on Monday, reports Xinhua news agency.

In a video message, Marcos Jr., popularly known as Bongbong, thanked "all of those who have been with us in this long, sometimes very difficult journey for the last months".

"I want to thank you for all you have done for us. There are thousands of you out there, volunteers, parallel groups, political leaders, that cast their lot with us," he said.



However, Marcos urged his supporters to be vigilant until the last vote is counted, saying the counting is still underway.

"The counting is not over yet. Let's wait for the full counting to finish 100 per cent. We need to be vigilant," he

added.

Marcos' running mate, Sara Duterte-Carpio, the 43-year-old daughter of outgoing President Rodrigo Duterte, also won the Vice Presidential race, garnering 26,701,951 votes from the 83.1 per cent counted votes.

The Commission on Elections, which will start counting the votes on Tuesday, is yet to release the official tally of the election. The poll body will only canvass votes of the senatorial candidates.

Congress will canvass the votes of presidential and vice-presidential candidates when it resumes session on May 23. Filipinos voted to elect a new President, Vice President, 12 of the 24-seat Senate, and over 300 members of the House of Representatives.

Poll body data showed that 65.7 million voters registered for the 2022 elections. Over 18,000 national and local positions are up for grabs.

'Big decision' expected as Pak PM Shehbaz set to meet Nawaz in London

Islamabad | Agencies

A "big decision" is on the cards as Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will be meeting his elder brother and PML-N supremo in London, media reported.

Senior PML-N leader Shahid Khaqan Abbasi - who is already in London - confirmed the visit, with sources saying that PM Shehbaz will likely leave for the visit tonight, Geo News reported.

Ex-prime minister Abbasi said that Prime Minister Shehbaz and other party leaders had requested Nawaz Sharif to call a consultative meeting, but did not specify when the recently-elected premier would be reaching the English capital.

But in contradiction to Abbasi's statement, sources said PML-N supremo

Nawaz had summoned an urgent meeting of the party's leadership in London.

According to the sources, Nawaz has to consult the party leadership over some important issues he has reservations over and the PML-N is expected to make a "big decision", which is why he rejected the proposal to have an online meeting, Geo News reported.

The party sources further reported that during the meeting, a discussion regarding the strategy on the prices of petroleum products will be held with Nawaz and former finance minister Ishaq Dar.

The discussion holds special importance as a delegation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is expected to begin talks with Pakistani officials on May 18 in Doha.



MAHARASHTRA ANNOUNCES STATE FUNERAL FOR SANTOOR MAESTRO SHIVKUMAR SHARMA

► **CHIEF MINISTER UDDHAV THACKERAY SAID PT SHIVKUMAR SHARMA INTRODUCED SANTOOR TO THE WORLD. HE MESMERISED PEOPLE NOT ONLY IN INDIA BUT ALSO ACROSS THE WORLD WITH HIS MUSIC.**

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Pt Shivkumar Sharma will be accorded a state funeral, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's office said in a statement on Tuesday as he and Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari led other leaders in condoling the death of the Santoor maestro. The Santoor virtuoso died in Mumbai on Tuesday following a heart attack. He was 84. "Pt Shiv Kumar Sharma will be cremated with state honours. The chief minister has given the order in this regard," the CMO said in a statement. Chief Minister Thackeray said Pt Sharma introduced santoor to the world. He mesmerised people not only in India but also across the world with his music.

"Santoor reached where Indian music reached. This is the contribution of Pt Sharma's continuous sadhana (disciplined and dedicated practice)...the Indian music field can never forget Pt Sharma's contribution," the statement quoted Thackeray as saying.

The Chief Minister described Pt Sharma as the "pride" of the Indian music field.

Koshyari too expressed pain and shock over Pt Sharma's death.

In his condolence message, the governor said, "the news of the demise of Pt Shiv Kumar Sharma is shocking. Pt Shiv Kumar Sharma was instrumental in taking Santoor and Indian classical music to the global stage."

The governor described the Santoor maestro as "a great artist, guru, researcher, thinker and above all a kind-hearted human being."

"Pt Shiv Kumar Sharma mentored many disciples and enriched the world of music with his multifarious contributions," Koshyari said.

NCP chief Sharad Pawar said that he was "deeply saddened" by Pt Sharma's death.

"The Padma Vibhushan awardee will always be remembered for his distinguished contributions in the field of music. My heartfelt condolences to his family and admirers. RIP," Pawar tweeted.

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar also paid tributes to Pt Sharma among others.



Rana MRI row:

Shiv Sena lodges police complaint against Lilavati Hospital

The Shiv Sena on Tuesday lodged a complaint with Bandra Police Station against the reputed Lilavati Hospital for alleged irregularities in the MRI scans performed on independent MP Navnit Kaur-Rana.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Shiv Sena on Tuesday lodged a complaint with Bandra Police Station against the reputed Lilavati Hospital for alleged irregularities in the MRI scans performed on independent MP Navnit Kaur-Rana.

A delegation of party Spokespersons Dr. Manisha Kayande and ex-Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar along with Anil Kokil and Rahul Kanal, submitted a written complaint raising various points and 'special treatment' to the woman MP, vis-A-vis the Lilavati Hospital.

The plea questions how the hospital administration permitted the MP Navnit to take a mobile phone or camera and click pictures inside the MRI scan room, posing risks to the patient (Navnit) and the hospital itself.

Pointing out to the published rules of the hospital that photography is not permitted inside the premises, they questioned the security lapses that reportedly occurred at the huge medical facility. "There is an oxygen plant located behind the MRI room... The safety of

the Lilavati Hospital would have been at threat if some accident had taken place. Who would have taken responsibility for this," Dr. Kayande told mediapersons.

The delegation also demanded to know how the personal bodyguards of MP Navnit were seen walking around the hospital premises with weapons, and sought a probe based on the CCTV footage. "As per hospital rules, nobody is allowed to enter the premises with any kind of weapons. So how was the bodyguard carrying a gun sauntering around the hospital and the MRI room," demanded Pednekar. The Sena team urged the police to probe the role of the hospital administration in all the negligence that emerged during the MP's visit there last week. The development came a day after the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) H-West Ward slapped a show-cause notice on Lilavati Hospital seeking a detailed explanation in 48 hours. On Monday, after pictures of the MP in the MRI room went viral during the weekend, the delegation had visited the hospital and had a detailed discussion with the management.

Loudspeaker row:

Don't test out patience: Raj tells Uddhav Thackeray

In a letter addressed to the chief minister, Raj, who perhaps for the first time addressed his estranged cousin as "Uddhav Thackeray", said over 28,000 MNS workers have been served preventive notices, while thousands have been extorted

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Slamming Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray over the loudspeakers-on-mosques issue, MNS president Raj Thackeray on Tuesday cautioned the Shiv Sena-led MVA government against "testing the patience" of his party in the matter.

In a letter addressed to the chief minister, Raj, who perhaps for the first time addressed his estranged cousin as "Uddhav Thackeray", said over 28,000 MNS workers have been served preventive notices, while thousands have been extorted. "This (police action) is for what? To not remove loudspeakers from

mosques that are leading to noise pollution?" he questioned.

He said the police are looking for leaders of Maharashtra Navnirman Sena as if they are Pakistani terrorists or 'Razakars' under the erstwhile Nizam rule.

"It makes me ponder whether the same high-handedness was shown by the police to find out terrorists or arms hidden in mosques," the MNS chief wondered. He said Marathi people and Hindus are watching this stance of the state government.

Raj Thackeray had earlier given the May 4 ultimatum to the state government to remove loudspeakers atop mosques and warned that

'Hanuman Chalisa' will be played outside mosques at a higher volume if it is not done. "I have only one thing to tell the state government. Do not test our patience. No one has come with the ('tamrapat') copper plate of power. Even you have not, Uddhav Thackeray," Raj stated.

On Raj Thackeray's ultimatum, the state government had said that the Union government should come out with a policy on the use of the public address system.

The Thackeray cousins share a frosty relationship, especially since Raj's exit from the Shiv Sena, founded by his uncle the late Bal Thackeray, in 2005.

Sharad Pawar on 2-day Belagavi visit, lang row likely to resurface

► **NCP PRESIDENT AND FORMER MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER SHARAD PAWAR IS SCHEDULED TO PARTICIPATE IN VARIOUS PROGRAMMES ORGANISED IN THIS BORDER DISTRICT OF THE STATE ON TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY.**

Team Absolute | Belagavi

NCP president and former Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar is scheduled to participate in various programmes organised in this border district of the state on Tuesday and Wednesday.

His visit assumes significance against the backdrop of recent exchange of barbs by Maharashtra

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, brother of Sharad Pawar, and Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai.

Ajit Pawar has claimed Belagavi as part of Maharashtra which evoked a sharp response from CM Bommai. The language row is likely to crop up during Pawar's visit. Pawar will begin his two-day trip by inaugurating the statue of freedom fighter Kittur Rani Chennamma, who fought against Britishers and martyred at Ankali village near Chikkodi town.

He is also expected to participate in various programmes organised in Chikkodi taluk throughout the day. On Wednesday, the leader will attend programmes at Maratha Bank in Belagavi and Shikshana Samithi Jyothi College. Pawar shares good bondage with local politician and businessman Prabhakar Kore since three decades. He often visits Belagavi to take part in programmes organised by the Karnataka Lingayat Education Society (KLE) run by Kore. Sharad Pawar has maintained a silence on the border dispute or language row between Karnataka and Maharashtra.

Dhule sessions court grants pre-arrest bail to Narayan Rane

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A sessions court in Dhule on Tuesday granted pre-arrest bail to Union minister Narayan Rane for a surety of Rs 15,000 in connection with a 'hate speech' FIR over his alleged remarks on Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray last year.

Advocate Aniket Nikam appeared for Rane and arguing the anticipatory bail before principal district judge RH Mohammad said that the offence under section 153 (B) Indian Penal Code (IPC) is not made out as Rane had not appealed to any particular group or class to take law in their hands.

Nikam also argued that the state has filed different First Information Reports (FIR) on the same incident at different places. Even the sections invoked are different at different places and hence all of it "smacks of political malafides," said Nikam.

He also argued that Rane is a cabinet minister and there is no question of him absconding or not being available for probe.

The police never called him for investigation and now they want his anticipatory to be rejected after he filed it, contended Nikam adding "This all is

not acceptable in the eyes of law," Nikam said. Prosecutor JD Sonawane opposed the plea of anticipatory bail saying it was a serious case and no relief ought to be given and his custody is required as his utterances had caused tension in the whole city.

The court, after hearing both, granted Rane, a BJP leader, relief and imposed a condition for him to attend police station as and when required.

This is the first anticipatory bail granted to Rane out of six FIRs against him. Rane had last moved the Bombay HC to quash the FIR against him filed on August 24, 2021 in Dhule by a Shiv Sena member for alleged hate speech following his press conference held the previous day where the BJP leader was critical of Uddhav Thackeray.

Rane said he never had any intention to cause or promote any hatred between communities or against the CM as alleged.

The HC bench of justice PB Varale and justice S M Modak issued notice on his quashing petition and said "in way of an interim order, State is directed not to take any coercive steps against the petitioner for the period of two weeks only. Meantime, the petitioner may avail appropriate remedies available to him...for his liberty."

Early monsoon on the horizon, Maharashtra mills race against time to finish crushing

The sugarcane crushing season of 2021-22 has been marked by bumper cane, with the state expected to cross all records of sugar production. As of May 9, the state has crushed 1,288.52 lakh tonnes of cane and produced 134.28 lakh tonnes of sugar. Of the 198 mills which had started operations, 106 have ended their season.

Team Absolute | Pune

Forecast about early onset of monsoon has added to the worries of the sugar industry in Maharashtra as 23 lakh tonnes of cane are yet to be crushed. Speaking to The Indian Express, Sugar Commissioner Shekhar Gaikwad said five mills in the state will have to continue their crushing till the first week of June, right till the monsoon arrives.

The sugarcane crushing season of 2021-22 has been marked by bumper

cane, with the state expected to cross all records of sugar production. As of May 9, the state has crushed 1,288.52 lakh tonnes of cane and produced 134.28 lakh tonnes of sugar. Of the 198 mills which had started operations, 106 have ended their season.

With 23 lakh tonnes of cane remaining, the final sugar production figure is expected to cross 135 lakh tonnes.

As per the sugar commissioner's estimates, almost all mills in the state will end their season by May end. But five mills across Beed, Jalna and Osmanabad will continue their operations till the second week of June. With monsoons expected to arrive earlier than usual, mills have to finish harvesting and crushing operations as soon as possible. This will be the first time in the history of the sugar industry in Maharashtra that the state will see crushing till the very beginning of the monsoon.

Gaikwad said the state government has drawn up diversion plans to ensure mills finish crushing before the monsoon arrives. This season, the monsoon is expected to arrive earlier than usual so the industry is worried about farmers losing their cane crop, in which case the state government will have to pay for standing crop.

According to the plan, 1 lakh tonnes of cane from Jalna will be diverted to six mills in Ahmednagar, Parbhani, Buldhana and Aurangabad for crushing.

Similarly, 75,000 tonnes of cane will be diverted from Osmanabad to Solapur, and 61,000 tonnes of cane from Aurangabad will be diverted to other areas. In Satara, Jarandeshwar mill, which was at the centre of a controversy due to action by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) against it, is expected to crush 30,000 tonnes of cane.

Maha Education Society's ex-President held for money-laundering

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday said that they have arrested Mahadev Ramachandra Deshmukh, the ex-President of Shri Chhatrapati Shivaji Education Society (SCSES) of Maharashtra, in a

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday said that they have arrested Mahadev Ramachandra Deshmukh, the ex-President of Shri Chhatrapati Shivaji Education Society (SCSES) of Maharashtra, in a money-laundering case pertaining to fraud with MBBS students to the tune of Rs 29 crore.

The ED initiated its money-laundering investigation on the basis of an FIR registered by Vaduj police station in Maharashtra's Satara against Deshmukh and others. It has been alleged that the management had collected funds in cash from the students for admission in an MBBS course into a college, namely the Institute of Medical Science and Research whereas it was not eligible for the course.

The ED learnt in the investigation that Kolhapur-based Society, a charitable trust engaged in educational activities, had received permission to run a medical college for academic years 2012-13 and 2013-14 for 100 seats per annum (85 seats government

quota and 15 seats management quota).

However, in 2014, the Admission Regulatory Authority rejected the permission for admission in MBBS for the academic year 2014-15. Though admission permission was granted only for 200 students, from 2012-13 to 2015-16, but Deshmukh fraudulently and illegally collected Rs 29 crore in cash from more than 550 students in the guise of donations for admission in MBBS but 350 of these students were left in the lurch. "Various agents were appointed on commission basis by Deshmukh for luring prospective candidates for admission on payment of donations," the official said. The ED produced Deshmukh before a court which sent him to the agency's custody till May 18.

The ED learnt in the investigation that Kolhapur-based Society, a charitable trust engaged in educational activities, had received permission to run a medical college for academic years 2012-13 and 2013-14 for 100 seats per annum (85 seats government

Travelling bus to impart jobs, entrepreneurship skills to 4K

In a unique initiative, a travelling bus will impart skills for jobs, innovations and entrepreneurship to 4,000 youths in 36 districts of the state in the next 40 days, officials said here on Tuesday.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a unique initiative, a travelling bus will impart skills for jobs, innovations and entrepreneurship to 4,000 youths in 36 districts of the state in the next 40 days, officials said here on Tuesday.

Skill Development Minister Rajesh Tope flagged off the Rajyavyapi Udyamita Yatra bus for the venture, taken up in collaboration with a NGO YouthAid Foundation, from the Vidhan Bhavan.

"The Covid-19 pandemic has dis-



rupted the livelihoods of many urban, rural and tribal poor populations. It is our commitment to help them by creating opportunities to re-start and revive business activities," said Tope. He said that over the next 40 days, the bus will undertake the 4,000-km long yatra throughout the state to ensure a state-wide outreach to people who are in dire need of appropriate livelihood options. YouthAid Foundation founder

Mathew Mattam said that its trainers will meet and train 4,000 entrepreneurs through the entire route, connect with over 40,000 people and impart skills in different sectors. "They shall be trained to start micro-businesses, encourage people who have ideas but don't know how to go about implementing their business innovations, create an entrepreneurial mindset and create awareness in schools and college," said

Mattam. "The objective is to encourage and develop local entrepreneurs, businesses and markets and mentor the youngsters to become job-seekers' instead of merely being 'job-seekers', with a target to create 10-lakh entrepreneurs by 2030 and contribute to inclusive socio-economic growth," said Mattam. The Yatra will comprise a three-day entrepreneurship training program in all districts for which YouthAid Foundation will provide details on legal compliances, government schemes, link them with the entrepreneurs after they complete training and marketing help to start at least 4,000 micro-enterprises by December 2022. Post-Yatra, the trained pool of entrepreneurs will get support from YouthAid Foundation and the state government to help create self-employment opportunities at the local, village levels and reduce migration to urban centres, said Tope.

After 6 hrs of runway repairs, Mumbai Airport back on track

► **AFTER A 6-HOUR LONG SCHEDULED CLOSURE OF THE CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI MAHARAJ INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT OPERATIONS FOR PRE-MONSOON RUNWAY REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE, NORMAL FLIGHT OPERATIONS RESUMED AGAIN ON TUESDAY EVENING, AN OFFICIAL SAID.**

Team Absolute | Mumbai

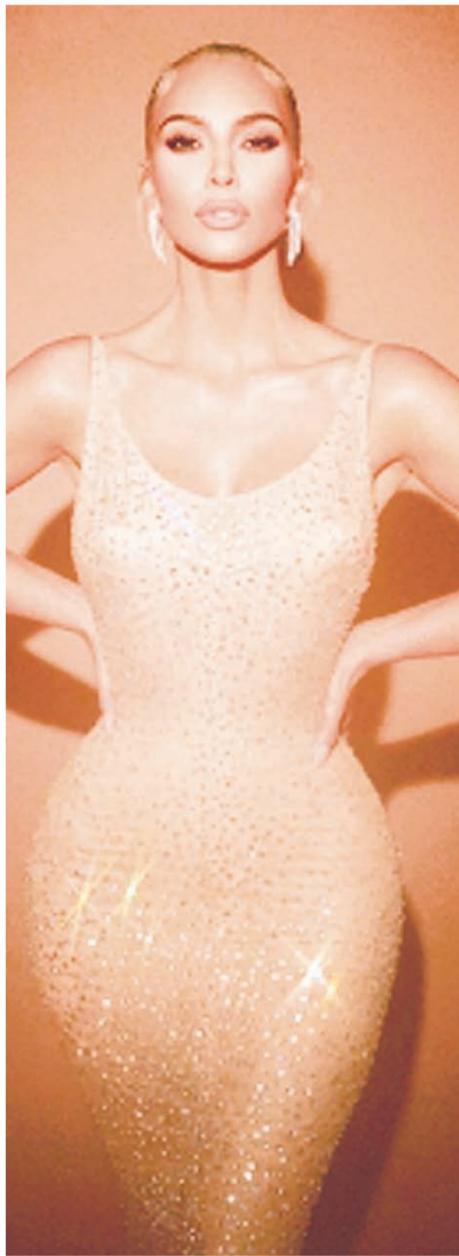
After a 6-hour long scheduled closure of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport operations for pre-monsoon runway repairs and maintenance, normal flight operations resumed again on Tuesday evening, an official said. The CSMA is the world's busiest single-runway airport with over 770 flight movements daily.

As announced earlier, the work started at 11 a.m. on both the runways - RWY 14/32 and RWY 09/27 - which were closed for all flights till the work was completed at 5 p.m. The runway repairs and maintenance were necessitated as Mumbai gets upto

700mm rainfall in monsoons and to keep it prepared for any adversities.

The works involved measures in waterlog-prone areas, opening 2,000 drains and duct banks and cleaning them, health check of the runways both mechanically and manually by trained specialised to detect superficial cracks, disjoints and texture.

Around 5,000 aeronautical ground lights on the two runways and taxiways were serviced and checked, electric cables were segregated, repairs carried out at the intersection of the two runways, plus 1,300 ground markers which provide directional guidance to aircraft were repainted for better visibility during the monsoon.



MARILYN MONROE'S HAIR GIFTED TO KIM KARDASHIAN WAS FAKE

Los Angeles | Agencies

Reality TV star Kim Kardashian was given a fake lock of Marilyn Monroe's hair, claimed by an expert of the Hollywood icon. According to aceshowbiz.com, Scott Fortner, a historian and collector of the 'Some Like It Hot' star, refuted that Kim was presented with a real piece of Marilyn's hair by Ripley's 'Believe It Or Not'.

This comes after they presented the 41-year-old Kim with a "silver box that contained an actual lock of Marilyn's iconic platinum hair" at a fitting for her look at the 2022 Met Gala; the sparkly nude illusion gown, designed by Bob Mackie, which the 'Gentleman Prefer Blondes' star wore to serenade President John F. Kennedy on his 45th birthday in 1962. Fortner, collector of the The Marilyn Monroe Collection, responded to the company's Instagram post with a fact check. He wrote, "News Alert: Marilyn Monroe Hair Gifted to Kardashian by Ripley's is Fake."

Referencing Ripley's own website, Scott pointed out alleged falsehoods presented, such as a screenshot of an article that promised "an exclusive look" of Kim getting ready stated that the lock of hair "has been authenticated by John Reznikoff" and that it was chopped off by hairstylist Robert Champion. Fortner believed that Monroe's stylist on that night was Kenneth Battelle and explained his reasoning with a receipt.

He wrote in the caption, "One could assume the hair given to KK was part of this lot of hair that was cut by Robert Champion 'just prior to her MSG performance.'"

"News Flash: Robert Champion did not cut and style Marilyn's hair for the JFK gala. It was actually the one and only 'Mr. Kenneth' who had the honours," he continued his argument. "Battelle is responsible for Marilyn's famous hairstyle from that night, as documented by a receipt from Lilly Dache Beauty Salon."

Fortner has since spoken out about Kim's decision to sport the dress at the Anna Wintour planned bash since the dress was made to "precisely match every curve" of Marilyn's frame.



Los Angeles | Agencies

English actor Simon Pegg and British-American actress Minnie Driver are on board for the dark comedy 'Nandor Fodor and The Talking Mongoose', from writer-director Adam Sigal. The film has entered production in Leeds, reports 'Deadline'. As per 'Deadline', the film based on true events will follow Nandor Fodor, the Hungarian-American psychoanalyst, known as the father of parapsychology, on his search to discover the real Talking Mongoose, 'Gef'.

While Pegg will essay the role of Nandor, Driver will play his assistant Anne, who journeys with him into uncharted territory, with Tim Downie, Ruth Connell, Paul Kaye, Gary Beadle and Drew Moerlin rounding out the cast.

'Deadline' further states that Sasha Yelaun and Dominic

Simon Pegg, Minnie Driver signed for 'Nandor Fodor and The Talking Mongoose'

Burns will be producing the film alongside Karl Hall and Matt Williams for Future Artists Entertainment. The fan-owned entertainment company Legion M, Tip-Top Productions, Chelsea Newell, James Di Giacomo, Danny Bohnen, Rob McGillivray and Ben Stranahan will serve as executive producers on the project.

Sigal said in a statement accessed by 'Deadline': "'Nandor Fodor and The Talking Mongoose' is such a unique story that I couldn't believe it was true. There's nobody else other than Simon who could embody this character and take us on this insane journey and I can't wait to get started."



'Avatar: The Way of Water' teaser is majestic and visually spellbinding

Los Angeles | Agencies

After playing in theatres, the teaser of the much-awaited epic sci-fi film, 'Avatar: The Way of Water' has debuted online. The film, which is set to drop in theatres on December 16, 2022, has been directed by James Cameron and is set more than a decade after the events of the first part.

The film, which centres on returning Jake Sully, played by

Sam Worthington, along with Na'vi Neytiri, played by Zoe Saldana, and their family, boasts of spellbinding footage that includes shots of Pandora's bright blue water - both above and below the surface; Toruk, the flying creatures introduced in the first film; and new whale-like animals.

The film, which has been in the making for more than ten years, has been produced by Cameron and Jon Landau, the film stars Zoe Saldana, Sam Worthington, Sigourney Weaver, Stephen Lang, Cliff Curtis, Joel David

Moore, CCH Pounder, Edie Falco, Jemaine Clement, and Kate Winslet.

20th Century Studios India will release 'Avatar: The Way of Water' in English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam, in cinemas.

The first instalment is the top-grossing film of all-time at the worldwide box office as it minted \$2.84 billion. It's recognised as a pioneer for bringing in the digital 3D era and introducing new production tools and techniques in areas such as performance capture and virtual production.

STEPHANIE BEATRIZ INSPIRED BY SIMU LIU TO BECOME AN ACTION STAR

Los Angeles | Agencies

'Encanto' star Stephanie Beatriz has teamed up with McDonald's for 'Spotlight Dorado', a short film contest for Latino talent.

"McDonald's has a long history of fostering community. Not only do they essentially feed the community, but they also are trying to sort of put a spotlight on and empower and amplify Latino voices," Beatriz told 'Variety'.

"Spotlight Dorado' is going to be a multi-year platform that does that. For this year, they're specifically focusing on film, which is really, really thrilling."

The competition is open to US-based Latino writers, directors and producers, with a submission deadline of June 3. Three finalists will be awarded a production budget of \$75,000 and receive mentorship from industry leaders, including Beatriz and 'Raya and the Last Dragon' director Carlos Lopez Estrada. "It's really hands on," Beatriz said.

"It doesn't feel like, in some instances like it can be a corporation going, 'Let's put this money here' and kind of leave it, but this is doing something that Gloria Calderon Kellett has talked a lot about."

"You can't just give the job to someone, you have to give the job and then show them and teach them how to keep moving forward in their industry with that momentum. 'Spotlight Dorado' is doing that."

Beatriz recalls that when she was starting out, Latino mentors were "few and far between."



ANDREW GARFIELD'S 'NEVER LET ME GO' BEING ADAPTED INTO A SERIES

Los Angeles | Agencies

A new series based on the 2010 dystopian romantic tragedy film 'Never Let Me Go' is in the works at a television network.

Andrew Macdonald and Allon Reich, who served as producers on the original film, will executive produce the series, reports 'Variety'.



The film, which was adapted from Kazuo Ishiguro's novel of the same name, was helmed by Mark Romanek from a screenplay by Alex Garland. The cast included Carey Mulligan, Keira Knightley and Andrew Garfield.

As per 'Variety', the film follows Kathy played by Mulligan, Ruth played by Knightley and Tommy

essayed by Garfield, who meet as childhood friends at an English boarding school called Hailsham and learn that they are clones, created to serve as organ donors in a "breakthrough" medical plan to help extend the human lifespan. Together, the three navigate love, friendships and art while preparing for their inevitable deaths.

ELIZABETH OLSEN DEFENDS MARVEL MOVIES

Los Angeles | Agencies

Elizabeth Olsen, who is currently getting a lot of positive response for her role as Wanda Maximoff in the recently released 'Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness', has strongly defended Marvel films from filmmakers such as Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola, who have earlier bashed Marvel movies, reports 'Variety'.

The actress told 'The Independent' that she gets frustrated when people make Marvel movies "seem like a lesser type of art."

She said, "I'm not saying we're making indie art films, but I just think it takes away from our crew, which bugs me. These are some of the most amazing set designers, costume designers, camera operators - I feel diminishing them with that kind of criticism takes away from all the people who do award-winning films, that also work on these projects."

As per 'Variety', Scorsese infamously compared Marvel movies to theme park rides while discussing how superhero movies have reshaped exhibition in a way that's harmful to non-superhero movies. Coppola was quoted in 2019 calling Marvel movies "despicable," although he later clarified that he wasn't talking about Marvel movies specifically, but referring to how the film industry now values commerce over art.

However, Coppola shaded Marvel movies in a February interview with 'GQ' magazine. Coppola told 'GQ' magazine, "There used to be studio films. Now there are Marvel pictures. And what is a Marvel picture? A Marvel picture is one prototype movie that is made over and over and over and over and over again to look different."



Christine Quinn



IPL 2022

GUJARAT TITANS BEAT LSG BY 62 RUNS, QUALIFY FOR PLAYOFFS

Pune | Agencies

Leg-spinner Rashid Khan claimed 4/24, and Ravishrinivasan Sai Kishore (2/7) and Yash Dayal (2/24) complemented his efforts as Gujarat Titans bundled out Lucknow Super Giants for 82 in 13.5 over to script a 62-run victory in a low-scoring encounter in IPL 2022 and clinched their berth in the playoffs.

Rashid Khan and the Gujarat bowlers got into the act after Shubman Gill (63 not out) struck a fighting half-century to help Gujarat Titans reach 144/4 in 20 overs, a score that turned out to be enough on a pitch on which the ball was gripping and coming off slow.

Gujarat bowlers sent down some good line and length and struck at regular intervals as Lucknow Super Giants never recovered from the blows as they slumped to a big defeat.

Rashid Khan claimed his first four-fer in IPL 2022 as he claimed the wickets of Deepak Hooda (27), Krunal Pandya (5), Ayush Badoni (8) and Jason Holder (1) in 3.5 overs.

The leg-spinner from Afghanistan got into the act after



pacers Mohammed Shami, who again got Lucknow skipper and his India teammate K.L. Rahul (8) cheaply, and Yash Dayal sent back Quintan de Kock (11) and debutant Karan Sharma (4) to reduce Lucknow Super Giants to 33/3 in 6th over. Rashid enticed Krunal Pandya and Ayush Badoni to step out of the crease and Wriddhiman Saha got the crease and Wriddhiman Saha got the batsmen stranded in no-man's land. He then bamboozled Jason Holder with a well-disguised leg-break and the West Indies batter just missed it and was rapped on his back leg.

In between, Marcus Stoinis

was run-out going for a non-existent second run and Lucknow were down to 70/8. Deepak Hooda, who had held one end up till now, tried to give Rashid the charge in a desperate attempt but his sweep shot ballooned high for keeper Wriddhiman Saha to complete a well-judged catch. Avesh Khan struck two successive sixes off Rashid Khan before he was given out caught behind on DRS after Saha convinced Hardik Pandya to go to the video umpire, who detected a faint edge. Lucknow thus slumped to their lowest total of IPL 2022 and the first below-hundred score of

the event as Gujarat Titans emerged deserved winners. Earlier, Gill waged a lone battle as other Gujarat batters found the going tough against a disciplined LSG bowling attack after skipper Hardik Pandya won the toss and chose to bat first.

Brief scores:

Gujarat Titans 144/4 in 20 overs (Shubman Gill 63 not out, David Miller 26, Rahul Tewatia 22 not out; Avesh Khan 2/26) beat Lucknow Super Giants 82 all out in 13.5 overs (Deepak Hooda 27; Rashid Khan 4/24, Ravishrinivasan Sai Kishore 2/7)

UBER CUP BADMINTON

Indian women's team in quarters with 4-1 win over US



Bangkok | Agencies

The Indian women's badminton team sealed its place in the Uber Cup 2022 quarter-finals after registering a 4-1 win over US in their Group D tie, here on Tuesday.

Double Olympic medallist PV Sindhu got the ball rolling for India, beating the 95th ranked Jennie Gai 21-10, 21-11 in the first singles clash.

The Indian shuttler dominated the match right from the beginning and raced to 16-4 lead in the first game. There was no looking back from there on for Sindhu as the world No. 7 sealed off the contest with ease in 26 minutes.

Thereafter, Tanisha Crasto and Treasa Jolly doubled India's advan-

tage with a solid 21-19, 21-10 victory over Francesca Corbett and Allison Lee. The Indian duo was trailing 5-11 in the opening game but produced a fine comeback to take the lead.

The second game was a much more straightforward affair as Crasto and Jolly cruised to a 12-0 lead before closing the match off in 34 minutes.

Aakarshi Kashyap then confirmed the tie for India with a 21-18, 21-11 win over Esther Shi.

Lauren Lam and Kodi Tang Lee pulled a point back for Team USA, edging out Simran Singh and Ritika Thaker 12-21, 21-17, 13-21 in the second doubles match of the tie.

However, youngster Ashmita Chaliha completed the 4-1 score-

line for India after accounting for Natalie Chi 21-18, 21-13 in the final rubber of the day.

The victory on Tuesday, coupled with their 4-1 win over Canada on Sunday, ensured India a top-two finish along with South Korea in the Uber Cup Group D and in extension, a berth in the top-eight. India and Korea will meet on Wednesday to settle the group winners.

Earlier, the Indian men's team had secured their quarters berth in the Thomas Cup and will also be in action on Wednesday for their final Group C encounter against Chinese Taipei.

Notably, both the Indian men's and women's teams were ousted in the quarterfinals of the Thomas and Uber Cup 2020 held last year.

UEFA confirms new format for Champions League from 2024 season

Nyon (Switzerland) | Agencies

Following consultations with stakeholders in the game, the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) executive committee on Tuesday confirmed a new format for the Champions League from the start of the 2024-25 season.

The reformatting group stage would still grow from 32 to 36 teams starting in 2024 but the number of rounds will only jump from six to eight per team rather than 10.

The Europa League will also follow the format of the new Champions League with eight matches in the league stage. There had previously been a plan that each team would play 10 games at that point of the competition as part of the new "Swiss model".

"The eight matches of the



UEFA Champions League will be played over the ten European weeks foreseen by the decision made in April 2021. The UEFA Champions League, UEFA Europa League, and UEFA Europa Conference League will all enjoy one week of calendar exclusivity," UEFA said in a statement.

"The four additional places created by the increase from 32 to 36

teams in the league phase of the UEFA Champions League will be allocated," it added.

Commenting on the decisions, UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin said, "UEFA has clearly shown today that we are fully committed to respecting the fundamental values of sport and to defending the key principle of open competitions, with qualification based on sporting merit, fully in line with the values and solidarity-based European sports model.

"Today's decisions conclude an extensive consultation process during which we listened to the ideas of fans, players, coaches, national associations, clubs, and leagues to name but a few, with the aim to find the best solution for the development and success of European football, both domestically and on the international club stage," he added.

INJURY SCARE FOR NEW ZEALAND AHEAD OF TEST TOUR OF ENGLAND

Auckland: Ahead of the New Zealand cricket team's departure for England to play a three-match Test series, the Black Caps suffered a setback with their batter Henry Nicholls suffering a calf injury during training, which could rule him out of the tour.

The Kiwi head coach, Gary Stead, revealed that the 30-year-old batting stalwart had sustained the injury to his right leg at the pre-tour camp in Mount Maunganui. He is set to undergo a scan after picking up the injury during running drills on Monday.

The series will begin with the inaugural Test at Lord's from June 2. The second Test will be played at Trent Bridge from June 10, while the final Test will be at Headingley, Leeds from June 23.

"He's having an MRI scan later today (Tuesday), so we'll know more after that as to the extent of it," Stead said. "But he's got it strapped up and I guess the next 24 to 48 hours will give us an indi-

cation of how serious that is," said Stead.

Nicholls has been a vital cog in New Zealand's Test squad of late, averaging 40.38 in 46 Tests with eight centuries.

In the current cycle of the ICC World Test Championship (WTC), the middle-order batter has 280 runs in six matches, including a hundred that came in Black Caps' most recent Test series against South Africa. In the previous edition of the WTC which New Zealand won, he finished as the third-highest run-getter for his team with 592 runs in 11 matches at an average of 39.46.

Hosts England are currently at the bottom of the WTC table with a point percentage of 12.50, while New Zealand are sixth with 38.88.

The series also marks the beginning of the new era of Test cricket for England, with Ben Stokes undertaking his first assignment as Test captain.

Olympic silver medallist Paul Tanui to take part in 10K Bengaluru 2022

Bengaluru | Agencies

Kenya's Rio 2016 Olympic Games 10,000m silver medallist Paul Tanui and his compatriot Nicolas Kipkorir Kimeli, who was fourth in 5000m at Tokyo Olympics last summer will be among the top attractions at the Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) World 10K Bengaluru 2022 to be run on May 15.

The full elite field for the 14th edition of the World Athletics Elite Label

Race was revealed here on Monday.

Prestigious additions already named include Muktar Edris, Kibiwott Kandie, and Tadese Worku in the men's race; Hellen Obiri, Irene Cheptai, and Joyce Tele in the women's race.

Tanui's road racing record is rather modest, his personal best of 28:39 was when he finished sixth in the 2019 10K at Bangalore, but on the track, the Japan-based runner has an outstanding record and has a best of

26:49.41.

In addition to his Rio silver medal, Tanui has three World Athletics Championships 10,000m bronze medals to his name as well as a World Cross Country Championships silver medal.

His younger compatriot Kipkorir Kimeli was the 2017 African U20 10,000m champion on the track and will arrive in Bengaluru in very good shape after running 12:55 for 5km on the road last month.



Jadeja looked out of place as CSK skipper, says Ravi Shastri

Mumbai | Agencies

Former India coach Ravi Shastri has said that Ravindra Jadeja is not a natural captain, and looked completely clueless during his stint at the helm with Chennai Super Kings in IPL 2022. Shastri added that Dhoni should lead CSK next year too if he's fit and ready to play.

After a string of failures, Ravindra Jadeja had to relinquish CSK's captaincy to old guard M.S. Dhoni who stepped down from the leadership role at the start of the season.

"Ravindra Jadeja is not a natural captain. He hasn't captained at any level. So, to give him the responsibility I thought was a little hard on him," Shastri said during ESPNcricinfo's T20 Time Out.

"People might want to judge Jaddu (Jadeja), but it's not his fault. He hasn't captained anywhere. He looked like a fish out of the water, totally out of place and he's far better off playing as a player. Because he's one of the best around in the business, when it



comes to all-rounders," he added. "So let him just focus on his cricket. That [decision to give him the captaincy] cost CSK a few games early on. If you see the form they're in now, if they had this going early on, they'll be right up there in the mix." After registering four wins in 11 matches CSK are currently placed ninth and need to win all their three remaining games to stand a chance to force a playoff possibility.

HOLDER RESTED AS WEST INDIES ANNOUNCE SQUAD FOR ODI TOURS OF NETHERLANDS, PAKISTAN

Barbados | Agencies

Nicholas Pooran has been named the new white-ball skipper of the West Indies for the upcoming One-day International series against the Netherlands and Pakistan, even as charismatic all-rounder Jason Holder has been rested for the away tours.

West Indies will tour Netherlands and Pakistan to play three-match ODI series against the two sides respectively. Their series against the Netherlands will be the first ever between the two sides. The two series will be a part of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Super League.

The assignments will also be a big chance for Pooran to stamp his authority after the retirement of his predecessor Kieron Pollard.

Three new faces have got chance in the 15-member squad -



- fast bowlers Jayden Seales and Shermion Lewis, as well as batter Keacy Carty. Carty has become the first player from St. Maarten to be selected for the West Indies Men's side.

On Carty's inclusion, chief selector Desmond Haynes said, "We were impressed with Carty and the way he goes about his innings, we saw several glimpses of his ability the way he played against England earlier this year for the CWI President's XI. We hope that giving him this opportunity he will recognise the importance of representing the West Indies.

"We also have a very good group of young fast bowlers who have demonstrated their ability and we want to use these two tours to give them opportunities in the 50-over format."

Haynes was also all praise for Seales and Lewis, stating that the Windies were building a side with the future in mind.



PAYAL: I WAS MORE DESERVING THAN MUNAWAR FARUQUI

Shachi Chaturvedi | Mumbai

Payal Rohatgi (born 9 November 1984) is a Hindi film actress and reality TV star. In 2008, she competed in the reality show Bigg Boss. In 2022, she was a contestant in reality television show Lock Upp, where she came out as a runner up. In an exclusive interview with AbsoluteIndiaNews, she talks about every thing, from her time in prison to her personal life.

Who was Your biggest support?

My greatest supporter was my companion, Sangram Ji because I knew he was outside defending me, and by the end, I realised how much my followers had backed me up and raised their voices whenever it was needed.

Do feel people have bullied you?

Yes, I believe I was bullied, and everyone has seen it. People presume it was my strategy to be known as the lone warrior, but the truth is that I've always tried to build strong relationships, but it backfired on me. I've discovered that I should avoid making emotional investments in reality shows.

People gave you derogatory remarks, how did you cope with that pressure, alone?

I knew I didn't belong with these words. My thought process has been "Sachai pareshan ho Sakti hai parajit Nahi" (Truth can be troubled, but not

defeated), and I have stuck to it throughout. Those words have never meant anything to me. I am sad that people thought they can bully me because I am sorry no one can bully me.

How will you explain the reality show now v/s then?

Reality shows have evolved in recent years. The real and the fake are easily distinguishable. One cannot fabricate relationships with 24*7 streaming. With social media, things have become clearer. Do you think you were more deserving than the winner?

Yes, I believe I was more deserved and a true badass, but everything happens for a reason, and I believe God has bigger plans in store for me. I will not question the outcomes as I gave my hundred per cent.

What are your future plans?

I'm hoping to work as an actor or a reality show star again. I truly want to get back in front of the camera, whether it's for a movie, a web series, or anything else, depending on what role comes my way.

When are we hearing the wedding bells?

Sangram Ji has stated his birthday. So, most likely, we'll tie the knot in July 2022.

Absolute India News posed some tense questions to Lockupp runner-up Payal Rohatgi in an interview. Payal has answered every question, from her time in prison to her personal life.

Priyanka Chopra Resumes work after welcoming her baby girl home



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Priyanka Chopra, who welcomed her baby girl home two days back, has now resumed work. The actress shared a photo on Instagram earlier today from the Citadel shoot. Sharing the picture, Priyanka wrote, "Back to work #citadel @amazonstudios @abgoilms." Priyanka Chopra looked stunning in an all-red outfit in the picture. She completed the look by keeping her make-up subtle and donning minimal accessories. Talking about the series, Citadel is a spy series which stars Priyanka in the lead with Game of Thrones actor Richard Madden. For the uninitiated, Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas embraced parenthood in January as they welcomed a baby girl via surrogacy. Recently, on the Mothers Day, the actress shared a glimpse of her baby girl and revealed that she was admitted to NICU for 100 days.

DEEPIKA PADUKONE IS OFF TO CANNES TO COMPLETE HER PANEL DUTIES

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Deepika Padukone, who made news recently as the lone Indian on the jury of the 75th Cannes Film Festival, left Mumbai last night for the French Riviera. Deepika Padukone, the world-renowned actor, producer, and humanitarian, looked absolutely lovely as she headed off to Cannes to begin her jury most famous film festivals and one of the world's most highly covered cultural events, has a hectic two weeks ahead of her from May 16 to 28. She'll be there for the duration of the festival. Diva is one of eight members of the jury at the 75th Cannes Film Festival, which is presided over by French actor Vincent Lindon. She is joined by Iranian filmmaker Asghar Farhadi, Swedish actress Noomi Rapace, actress Rebecca Hall, screenwriter producer Rebeca Hall, Italian actress Jasmine Trinca, French director Ladj Ly, American director Jeff Nichols, and Norwegian director Joachim Trier as they discuss the best global films that look to push the creative envelope, enhance the development of cinema, and promote the development of the global film industry.

Alia a hypocrite?

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Alia Bhatt is the latest target of social media trolls for her hypocritical behaviour. On the sets of Kapil Sharma Show, the actor was caught denying having sugar. Bhatt, on the other hand, has been promoting candy and fruit drinks for years.

On Internet users are questioning this double speak, asking "Hey Alia, so should we eat sugar, or not?"

Others went so far as to tag ASCI, wondering if the celebrity was breaking any advertising rules. On social media a collage of two scenes was shared, with Bhatt on the left refusing sugar and on the right supporting Frooti, Dark Fantasy, Coca-cola, and Perk.

Alia Bhatt was slammed in several tweets for misleading people and being a "hypocrite."

Celebrities are occasionally chastised for advocating items they don't believe in, on Internet. Akshay Kumar was brought into the janta ki Internet court for endorsing Vimal Elaichi, despite previously condemning tobacco and associated product endorsements. Actors like Amitabh Bachchan have experienced similar criticism in the past for similar reasons.



SHARMILA TAGORE TO RETURN TO FILMS AFTER 11 YEARS!

Narration. Also, the story is heartwarming and beautifully written. This family drama is very layered and absorbing. And I am sure many will enjoy watching it together with their loved ones in the comfort of their home." Sharing his thoughts actor Manoj Bajpayee said, "For me, there were many reasons to sign the film. Firstly, the narrative of the film was extremely candid and relatable. Secondly, sharing screen space with Sharmila ji was such an honor and above all, Rahul always came across as an intelligent talent and a man of integrity! What more could I ask for?" Director Rahul Chittella, commenting on his choice of story and cast said, "Gulmohar is an intimate story about family and home - the only two things that have ever mattered, more so now than ever. I'm very excited to wrap the shooting with such an incredible ensemble of actors and crew members, all of who are collaborating with utmost purity to tell this story! We can't wait to bring it to the audiences soon!!"



Mukti Mohan