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MAHA CRISIS: REBELS CLAIM SUPPORT OF 37 MLAS, SENA LEFT WITH 17

THE SHOW IS ON

“We are not frightened by all this. We know what they are doing and we also are aware of the laws and procedures. Let them send any number of letters or notices, we are not bothered.”

Eknath Shinde, Rebel Leader

“We will fight it out... Now Sharad Pawar has taken the lead and we shall follow his strategy. So far, the support claimed by the rebels is only on paper. They have not yet come to Mumbai and the numbers will change after they return. Those who have gone will have to repent.”

Sanjay Raut, Spokesperson, Shiv Sena



'MAGIC NUMBER OF 37 MLAS WILL ONLY WORK IF THEY MERGE WITH BJP'

New Delhi: The political upheaval in Maharashtra is becoming intense, with each passing day -- the rebel group led by minister Eknath Shinde has submitted a list of his 37 MLAs to Assembly Deputy Speaker Narhari Zirwal. However, talking to correspondent, former Lok Sabha Secretary General P.D.T. Achary said: "As far as the magic number (two-thirds of the members of the legislature party)... if the group of 37 MLAs decide to merge with the BJP in Maharashtra, the magic will work. If not, then the magic will be lost

and they are liable to be disqualified. Only a merger with the BJP will save them (from the anti-defection law)." Achary said for a merger there are two conditions: Shiv Sena, the original party merges with the BJP, secondly, the two-thirds of the MLAs agree to the merger. He clarified that 37 MLAs cannot function as a group. On Shinde's claim for being the real Shiv Sena, Achary said: "Claim for being the real Shiv Sena will be decided by the Election Commission... EC will decide which faction is the Shiv Sena."

CONGRESS PROTEST OUTSIDE GUWAHATI HOTEL, ASK REBELS TO LEAVE ASSAM

Guwahati: A large number of Assam Congress workers staged a protest outside the Radisson Blu hotel on the outskirts of Guwahati on Friday where over 40 Maharashtra MLAs led by rebel Shiv Sena leader Eknath Shinde are camping since Wednesday. Assam Congress President Bhupen Kumar Borah said that the presence of Maharashtra MLAs in Guwahati, who have been kept in a hotel for alleged horse-trading to topple an elected government, and the continued media coverage of the same, has not gone down well with the Assamese people and is creating an unhealthy atmosphere.

They have pitched a tent, with more Sena legislators trickling in and unconfirmed reports of around 4 Sena MPs also jumping into his boat. In Mumbai, the MVA NCP-Congress have thrown their full weight behind Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and will help him fight the crisis till the end.

Gujarat riots not pre-planned, inaction by officials can't be criminal conspiracy: SC

The Supreme Court made these observations while junking the appeal filed by Zakia Jafri, wife of Congress leader Ehsan Jafri who was killed during the violence at Ahmedabad's Gulberg Society in 2002, challenging the SIT's clean chit to the then Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi and others during the riots in the state.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday said the SIT investigation into 2002 Gujarat riots revealed that no material was discovered, pointing to a meeting of minds in the higher echelons, or the political establishment conspired with other persons to cause riots or turned "Nelson's eye" when the riots broke out.



A bench, headed by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar said: "The materials gathered during the investigation, in no way link any 'meeting of the minds' in any of the nine (9) cases investigated by the SIT or for that matter, other incidents alleged in the complaint or the protest petition. The riots across the state had taken place spontaneously, immediately after the

Godhra train carnage." It noted that there is no chain or any perceivable link or connection in these occurrences during the relevant period, which ought to be the quintessence, had it been a case of larger conspiracy at the highest level. "Indeed, the factum of conspiracy can be inferred, but absent any perceivable link, much less about the meeting of minds of all concerned, it is not open to assume conspiracy in the air," it added. The bench noted that the SIT had not found any conspiracy, linking separate and disparate acts of arson and looting or outrageous claims made in sting operations or individual utterances/publications of purported hate speech, to any singular larger conspiracy or planned event.

Seized drugs valued at Rs 2,362cr burnt in Mizoram

Aizawl | Agencies

The Mizoram Police on Friday at a public function burnt various smuggled and seized drugs valued at Rs 2,362 crore in the international market, officials said.



A senior police officer said that ahead of the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on Sunday, a large-scale disposal of seized drugs was carried out using the incinerator at Trinity Hospital in Silaimal Melthum in Aizawl.

Over 934 kg drugs including 18.24 kg heroin, 753.04 kg highly addictive methampheta-

mine tablets, 87 kg pseudoephedrine were burnt in the presence of Mizoram Home Minister Pu Lalchamlana and Director General of Police Devesh Chandra Srivastava among others.

PRESIDENTIAL POLL:

Draupadi Murmu files nomination

Team Absolute | New Delhi

NDA candidate Draupadi Murmu on Friday filed her nomination for the post of President in the presence of



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, senior BJP and alliance leaders. Murmu filed her papers in the chamber of the Rajya Sabha Secretary General and the Returning Officer in the Parliament House complex. According to sources, before filing her nomination, Murmu spoke to Sonia Gandhi, Sharad Pawar and Mamata Banerjee

besides leaders of several opposition parties and sought their support. However, the Congress, NCP and Trinamool Congress, along with other opposition parties have already announced Yashwant Sinha as their joint candidate for the Presidential election. Sinha is also preparing to file his nomination on June 27.

RGV'S TWEET TRIGGERS ROW

Hyderabad: Controversial filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma triggered another row with his tweet on NDA's Presidential candidate Draupadi Murmu, angering the BJP which lodged police complaints against him.



RGV, as the filmmaker is popularly known, had made the controversial tweet on June 22. It reads "If Draupadi is the President who are the Pandavas? And more importantly who are the Kauravas?"

Police said they would take necessary action on the complaint after seeking legal opinion. Meanwhile, RGV on Friday clarified his remarks. "This was said just in an earnest irony and not intended in any other way... Draupadi in Mahabharata is my favourite character but since the name is such a rarity I just remembered the associated characters and hence my expression. Not at all intended to hurt sentiments of anyone," he tweeted.

US SUPREME COURT OVERTURNS FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT TO ABORTION

Washington: The US Supreme Court on Friday overturned the fundamental right to abortion granted by an earlier order in the Roe v. Wade case nearly 50 years ago. The 5-4 order of the overwhelmingly conservative nine-justice bench is expected to change American social life as it exists now.

The court has left abortion rights to be determined individually by the 50 states. Sixteen states and the District of Columbia have state laws protecting abortion and will remain unaffected by the Supreme Court order.

About 17 states do not have any explicit laws either upholding abortion rights or prohibiting abortion, according to one study and nearly half of all 50 states are expected to make abortion difficult or impossible. Women from states with a ban or restrictions may be able, however, to travel to other states for the procedure.

Rahul Gandhi's office in Wayanad vandalised by SFI students



Thiruvananthapuram | Agencies

Activists of Kerala's ruling CPI-M's student wing, SFI, vandalised Congress leader and local MP Rahul Gandhi's office in Wayanad on Friday, and also assaulted a staffer, even as police stood by, the Congress alleged. A staff member at Gandhi's office was beaten up, said Congress' Wayanad district President N.D. Appachen. The protesters were apparently angry as Gandhi, who is the Wayanad

MP, failed to act on the issue of 'buffer zone' of eco-sensitive areas. They shouted slogans that Wayanad doesn't need a 'visiting' MP. The hilly district of Wayanad has various ecologically fragile places. Reacting to the incident, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said: "Kerala is a place where people can protest in a democratic manner, but under no circumstances, should it (the protest) turn violent and if it does, then it's not acceptable. Strict action will be taken against the wrongdoers."

PAKISTAN PM ANNOUNCES 10% 'SUPER TAX' ON LARGE-SCALE INDUSTRIES

Islamabad | Agencies

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday announced that to control the "storm of inflation", the government would be imposing a 10 per cent "super tax" on large-scale industries, the media reported. In his address, the premier discussed the "tough" economic decisions taken by the incumbent coalition government, as Pakistan edges towards a default, the Express Tribune reported.



The premier stated that the revenue generated from the "super tax" would be beneficial for "poverty alleviation" in order to support the burden of inflation on the masses. Sectors which will be subject to the tax include: steel, sugar, cement, oil, gas, fertilisers, LNG terminals, banking, textile, automobile, cigarettes, chemicals and beverages.

▶ WITH 1,934 CASES, INFECTION NUMBERS IN NATIONAL CAPITAL DELHI DOUBLED IN THE LAST 24 HOURS. IN KARNATAKA, 856 FRESH CASES AND ONE DEATH OCCURRED ON THURSDAY.

▶ MAHARASHTRA ACCOUNTED FOR THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF COVID-19 CASES AT 5,218, WITH DAILY CASES JUMPING BY 60 PER CENT COMPARED TO THE PREVIOUS DAY.

▶ STATES LIKE KERALA, KARNATAKA, UTTAR PRADESH, TELANGANA, HARYANA, TAMIL NADU, WEST BENGAL, AND GUJARAT ARE REPORTING MORE THAN 1,000 CASES DAILY.

EXPLAINED: WHAT'S DRIVING COVID SURGE IN INDIA

“The cases are rising because of Omicron and its sub-variants as there are several sub-lineages of the circulating virus. The most circulating subvariant at the moment are of BA.2, and there are a few cases of BA.4 and BA.5. Though they are just the sub-variants, they also have their sub-lineages. It is important to know that those who are vaccinated are not 100 per cent protected against the virus as our immunity begins to wane after six months... vaccinated people also have the probability of getting re-infected.”

Rachel V. Thomas | New Delhi

Newer Omicron strains, waning immunity, and breakthrough infections among vaccinated are the major reasons for the current Covid peak seen in India, including the national capital, said doctors on Friday.

According to the Union Health Ministry data update on Friday, India recorded 17,336 new Covid-19 infections and 13 new deaths in the last 24 hours. The active caseload stands at 88,284.

Expert said the mass vaccination is protecting people against developing any severe complica-

tions - the reason why most people are only suffering from upper respiratory symptoms, not lower respiratory symptoms like Covid pneumonia, and hospitalisation is also low at the moment.

However, in some states including Delhi, and Maharashtra, there has been a marginal increase in Covid-related hospitalisation.

An analysis by the country's Covid genome sequencing facility Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) reports that Omicron BA.2 sub-variant was detected in over 83 per cent of the samples sequenced in May and June, media reports said.

While the percentage of BA.1, BA.3, BA.4 and BA.5 has been found in less than 10 per cent samples, Omicron and its sub-lineages have been the dominant circulating variant in India from January 2022. In May, the proportion of Omicron sublineages BA.2.12.2, BA.1.1.529, BA.3, BA.4, BA.5 increased, the report said.

Meanwhile, the Health Ministry has directed officials to continue to focus on surveillance and whole genome sequencing to scan any possible mutations while stressing on adequate testing and effective monitoring to assess the spread of Covid-19 in a timely manner.



WBSSC SCAM: DEPRIVED PETITIONER TO REPLACE TERMINATED DAUGHTER OF MINISTER



KOLKATA | Agencies

The Calcutta High Court on Friday directed that a deprived petitioner in the case related to the West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC) recruitment scam be appointed in place of the daughter of a state minister, whose service was recently terminated fol-

lowing court order.

Recently, the Calcutta High Court had ordered termination of service of Ankita Adhikari, the daughter of Minister of State for Education, Paresh Chandra Adhikari, as a higher secondary political science teacher in a state-run school, since she secured the job without qualifying in the merit list and without

appearing for the personality test.

The single-judge bench of justice Avijit Gangopadhyay ordered the termination based on a petition by Babita Sarkar, who was deprived to make room for Ankita.

On Friday, justice Gangopadhyay ordered that Babita be appointed to the post vacated following Ankita's termination by June 30. At the same

time, Gangopadhyay also ordered that the salary amount paid to Ankita during her 41-month tenure be also paid to Babita.

As per the order, the payment process on this count to Babita should be completed by July 10.

Earlier, Gangopadhyay had ordered Ankita to return the salary she drew during her 41 months of services to the court in two instalments. She has already paid the first instalment.

Incidentally, Babita's was ranked 20th in the merit list. However, later she came to know that Ankita was named in the 20th spot following which her own ranking was pushed to the 21st position.

Instead of accepting it as an irony of fate, Babita started a prolonged battle and finally on Friday the court order went in her favour.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is conducting an inquiry into the recruitment scam.

Ankita's father Paresh Chandra Adhikari and former Education Minister and Trinamool Congress Secretary General Partha Chatterjee have already been questioned by the CBI sleuths in this matter.

IAF begins registration process under Agnipath recruitment scheme



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Indian Air Force on Friday started the registration process for recruitment under the Agnipath scheme.

In a notification, the IAF gave important dates for interested candidates to apply under the scheme.

The registration process which began on Friday (June 24) will continue till July 5.

The online examination will be held on July 24.

The candidates will be selected on the basis of online test, physical fitness test (PFT), adaptability test-I, adaptability test-II and medical examination.

The age group must be between 17.5 years to 21 years. "Candidates born between 29 December 1999 and 29 June 2005 (both days inclusive) are eligible to apply. In case, a candidate clears all the stages of the Selection Procedure, then the upper age limit as on date of enrolment is 23 years," said the IAF notification.

"Agniveerayvu will be enrolled in the Indian Air Force under Air Force Act 1950 for a period of four years. Agniveerayvu would form a distinct rank in the Indian Air Force, different from any other existing

ranks. Indian Air Force is not obliged to retain Agniveerayvu beyond the engagement period of four years," said the IAF notification.

The notification added further that the Agniveerayvu will not have any right to be selected for further enrolment into the Indian Air Force. Selection of the Agniveerayvu for further enrolment, if any, shall be at the discretion of the Indian Air Force, it added.

The first batch of Agniveerayvu would be enrolled by December and training would commence by December 30.

WW-II veterans' pensions held up in West Bengal; veterans claim its a raw deal

KOLKATA | Agencies

The Trinamool Congress and its supremo Mamata Banerjee may be fighting the Agnipath scheme tooth and nail, but not all is well with ex-servicemen in West Bengal where the party is in power for over 10 years now.

Several World War-II veterans, as well as some widows, have said how they do not receive their monthly pensions on time.

Ex-service men (ESM) also complain about how they receive no preference during recruitment to the state police force or other departments. The West Bengal government had earlier announced that 5 per cent of recruitment in the police would be earmarked for ESM.

"Its been over two months now since I received any pension. I have no other means of livelihood. At my age, the best I can do is pluck some vegetables from our garden and

sell them outside. That way, I manage to earn a few rupees a day that I need to pay for some rice and lentils to stay alive," the widow of a WW-II veteran said.

She is nearly 90-year-old and doesn't want her name made public.

"They will stop paying if I complain. I prefer to wait," she added.

Her husband was part of the Burma campaign and the famous Battle of Kohima. He was injured and returned home a paraplegic. She has been making both ends meet since then. Her husband died a few years ago and she is no longer able to work as she used to.

West Bengal has 376 World War-II pensioners, including 38 widows. An official in the state finance department said that pension couldn't be paid as funds were not allocated.

There was no comment from the Rajya Sainik Board that operates under the state government.

TELANGANA GOVT JOB TO BROTHER OF YOUTH KILLED IN SECUNDERABAD FIRING

Hyderabad | Agencies

Hyderabad: The Telangana government on Friday issued orders for providing government job to the brother of army job aspirant Damera Rakesh who was killed in Railway Police firing at Secunderabad railway station during the protest against new army recruitment policy Agnipath.

As per the announcement already made by Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Naidu to provide a job to the family of the deceased, Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar issued a Government Order (GO) to appoint Damera Rama Raju, elder brother of Rakesh.

The Chief Secretary has asked the Warangal District Collector to appoint Rama Raju in a suitable post as per eligibility against any available vacancy in the district.

The GO was issued exactly a week after Rakesh was killed in the firing. The Chief Minister had announced Rs 25 lakh ex-gratia for Rakesh's family the same day.

The 22-year-old hailed from Daberpeta village of Warangal district of Telangana.

Rakesh, an army job aspirant, was one of the youth who were protesting at Secunderabad station on June 17 against the Central government's army recruitment scheme Agnipath.

Int'l child porn case Delhi court takes cognisance of offence against accused

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi court on Friday took cognisance of offence against three accused persons who were allegedly part of a WhatsApp group that shared and uploaded child pornography.

They were charge-sheeted in 2019, after the German authorities informed the Indian probe agencies that they have convicted Sasche Treppke there, a member of the same online paedophile group.

The accused trio -- Zuhab Ali from Delhi, Vinoth Kannan from Chennai, and Joydeep Roy from Howrah -- are among the seven Indians in the 29 WhatsApp groups comprising 483 users.

Though they were charge-sheeted in the case, the accused were not arrested for the crime.

"As per the averments in the charge sheet, the digital devices of the accused persons which were seized during the investigation were found containing child pornography con-

tents," Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Anjani Mahajan noted. The court further said perusal of the charge sheet and annexed documents reveal that the allegations against the accused persons and the material on record are prima facie sufficient to proceed with the case. Accordingly, the court took cognisance of the offence, as per Section 190 of the CrPC, for offence under 67 B of IT Act (Punishment for abusing children online) and issued summons against the accused.

Tapan Deka to be new IB chief, RAW chief Goel gets year's extension

Team Absolute | New Delhi

IPS officer Tapan Kumar Deka was on Friday appointed the new chief of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) while Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) chief Samant Kumar Goel got one year's extension of tenure.

A 1988 batch Himachal Pradesh cadre officer and an expert on northeast affairs, Deka currently heads the IB's operations desk and has been tracking terrorists and religious radicalisation for the past two decades. "The Appointment Committee of the Cabinet has approved the appointment of Tapan Kumar Deka, IPS, Special Director, Intelligence Bureau, as Director Intelligence Bureau vice Arvinda Kumar IPS, upon completion of his tenure on 30.06.2022 for a tenure of two years from the date of assumption of the charge of the

post or until further orders, whichever is earlier," said a notification from Appointments Committee of the Cabinet.

RAW chief Goel, a 1984 batch IPS officer of the Punjab cadre, got second extension for one year.

"The appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the extension in service of Samant Kumar Goel, IPS (PB-84) as Secretary, Research & Analysis Wing for a period of one year beyond his present tenure i.e. up to 30.06.2023," said the notification.



PARAMESWARAN IYER TO TAKE OVER AS NITI AAYOG CEO

New Delhi: Prameswaran Iyer, the man who is credited with building thousands of toilets as part of Swachh Bharat Mission, will now be heading the country's top think-tank, NITI Aayog.

"The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the appointment of Prameswaran Iyer as the new Chief Executive Officer of NITI Aayog for a period of two years after the tenure of incumbent Amitabh Kant concludes on June 30," it was announced on Friday.

Son of an Air Force officer, Iyer was born in Srinagar and studied at St. Stephen's College.



Four held for embezzling 899 sacks of almond worth Rs 2 cr

GURUGRAM | Agencies

A team of Gurugram police has nabbed four criminals for embezzling 899 bags of almond worth Rs 2 crore.

According to the police, on June 16, a complaint was filed by a man with the Bilaspur police station alleging that a consignment of his company comprising 899 bags of almond was sent from Maharashtra to Delhi on June 12 which was supposed reach the national capital on June 14.

However, the vehicle carrying the bags didn't reach Delhi while the phone of the driver, Aabid, was also switched off. The GPS of the car was also turned off.

Subsequently, the police arrested Aabid from Alwar in Rajasthan while his associate Devender Sharma was arrested from near the



Gurugram-Faridabad toll plaza on June 21.

During questioning, Aabid disclosed that he had handed over 450 sacks of almond to Devender and the remaining 429 sacks to his other associates, Kasam

Khan and Sabid.

Based on the information provided by Aabid, the police arrested Kasam and Sabid from Bharatpur in Rajasthan on June 23.

"The police have recovered 879 sacks of almond so

far. Aabid is on three-day police remand, while Devender has been sent to judicial custody. Kasam had served jail term in 2015 in a similar case," Preet Pal Sangwan, ACP (crime), said.

SKM's peaceful protest against Agnipath

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Days after the Centre announced its Agnipath scheme of four-year recruitment in the Army, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) on Friday held peaceful demonstrations across the country and submitted memorandum against what it termed as "anti-military, anti-farmer, and anti-national scheme".

The SKM -- a consortium of 40-odd farmers' organisations from across the country, which was instrumental in the more than a year long agitation that prompted the government to withdraw its three farm laws -- along with trade unions, civil society organisations, and students held widespread protest demonstrations in Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal,



Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh to observe "a day of protest against Agnipath" scheme.

Following the peaceful demonstrations across multiple districts, the SKM units submitted memorandums to the respective DMs/DCs.

SKM termed the Agnipath scheme as "a big fraud upon the nation", for the youth aspiring to join the armed forces, and for the farmer families of the nation.

Power tussle in Uttarakhand as Secy refuses to obey minister's order on transfers

Dehradun | Agencies

The tussle over power intensified in Uttarakhand after Food Secretary Sachin Kurve sent Nainital District Supply Officer Manoj Varman on leave and transferred six District Supply Officers to the Food and Civil Supplies Department without the approval of departmental Minister Rekha Arya. On Thursday, the Food Minister summoned the original file related to the confidential entry of Sachin Kurve in this matter.

Food and Civil Supplies Minister Rekha Arya has written to the Secretary and directed him to submit the original file related to the confidential entry of Secretary and Commissioner of Food Department Sachin Kurve. The minister said that on June 20, the Food Commissioner sent the District Supply Officer of Nainital on compulsory leave without her approval. On this, she had summoned his reply to cancel this order and get her approval on it. Kurve, instead of following her instructions, transferred six District Supply Officers on the same day without her approval.



The transfers were made in such haste that the date of June 22, 2019 had been written instead of June 22, 2022 in the minutes of the meeting related to this. The officials concerned also signed it without seeing it.

Associated with the Food Commissioner's office, Shyam Arya was shifted to Pithoragarh, Mukesh Kumar to Haridwar, Dehradun's District Supply Officer Jaswant Singh Kandari to Chamoli, Haridwar's District Supply Officer KK Agarwal to

Rudrapur, Nainital's District Supply Officer Manoj Varman to Bageshwar and Rudrapur's District Supply Officer Manoj Doval to Nainital.

Rekha Arya said that the district supply officers in the department have been transferred without following due procedure. Neither the list of eligible officers for transfers was released on the website of the department, nor options were taken from the concerned officers for transfers.

Rekha Arya said that the Transfer Act has

been made by the government for transparency in transfers. According to the Act, by April 30, the Head of the Department had to mark the workplace as per the standard, by May 1, transfer committees were to be formed at the Government, Head of the Department, Mandal and District level, by May 15, accessible and inaccessible places were to be fixed for every cadre. By May 20, options were to be sought from eligible personnel for 10 desired places for compulsory transfers. Applications were to be called on the basis of the request till May 31.

The transfer committee meeting was to be held from June 25 to July 5. After this, the transfer order was to be known by July 10, but according to the Transfer Act, the Departmental Secretary completed the entire action in just one and a half hours without following the procedure. The minister said that the secretary has violated the Act by not following the procedure. It is the responsibility of the departmental minister that if he/she suspects any personal interest and corruption in any decision of the department, then such orders should be cancelled with immediate effect.



UDDHAV DARES REBELS TO 'WIN ELECTIONS SANS SENA, UDDHAV THACKERAY NAME'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Launching a scorching counter-attack on the rebels, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Friday dared them to win the elections "without using the name of Shiv Sena or the Thackerays", even as allies Nationalist Congress Party-Congress reiterated their commitment to save the Maha Vikas Aghadi government.

Addressing a meeting of Sena's district heads and others, Thackeray said that he has left the official residence 'Varsha', but not lost his "will to fight" for the party.

Slamming the rebels' leader Eknath Shinde, he recalled how he did a lot for him, yet Shinde was hurling a series of baseless allegations against the Sena and Thackeray.

"I did everything possible for Shinde... I allotted him the Urban Development portfolio which I handled. His son (Dr Shrikant Shinde) is



a two-time MP and now they are commenting on my son (Minister Aditya Thackeray), and levelling

many allegations even against me," said Thackeray. He challenged the rebels to show

courage and go among the people without taking the names of Shiv Sena or the party founder, the late Balasaheb Thackeray.

The CM reiterated how he had become the CM against his wishes and had no desire to wield power.

"Now, those people who used to claim that they would give their lives rather than quit the Shiv Sena have fled from here. The rebels want to destroy the party... I never imagined in my dreams I would become the CM and have even offered to quit... I have vacated the 'Varsha' bungalow but not left the determination to fight out," Thackeray asserted.

The Sena chief also threw the field open saying anybody in the party is free to leave and they can take away the MPs or others, but not the roots of the party which remains intact.

Simultaneously, the NCP-Congress have reaffirmed their resolve to fight out the political crisis unitedly and stand behind Thackeray till the end.

BJP urges Maha Guv to check MVA's 'indiscriminate decisions'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bharatiya Janata Party Leader of Opposition (Council) Pravin Darekar on Friday urged Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari to intervene against what he termed 'indiscriminate decisions' taken by the Maha Vikas Aghadi government in the past few days.

In a letter to the Governor, Darekar has pointed at the 'massive revolt' in the ruling ally Shiv Sena followed by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's offer to resign and later vacating his official residence 'Varsha'.

Under these circumstances, he accused the MVA government of taking a series of haphazard decisions and issuing Government Resolutions (GR), claiming



some 160 GRs were issued in just 48 hours. The BJP leader said that such a thing happening in the name of development projects worth crores of rupees has raised suspicions, particularly since the MVA government was indecisive in the past 30 months. Terming this as a serious matter needing the Governor's urgent attention,

Darekar claimed that transfers in the police force and other major departments were also being planned. "It is our humble request, that in the larger interest of Maharashtra and the people of the state, you should immediately intervene and put a stop to this misuse of funds," Darekar appealed to the Governor.

Shiv Sena to Deputy Speaker: 'Disqualify' 12 rebel MLAs REBEL GROUP SUBMITS LIST OF 37 MLAS TO DY SPEAKER

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As the state political crisis entered the fourth day, both the Shiv Sena and the rebel group led by Minister Eknath Shinde have launched stronger steps to browbeat each other.

The Shiv Sena has filed a petition with Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Deputy Speaker Narhari Zirwal, seeking to disqualify 12 MLAs supporting Shinde's rebellion.

The disqualification has been sought for flouting the Sena's Whip to attend a meeting of party legislators on Wednesday, said Sena MP Arvind Sawant.

They include: Eknath Shinde, Tanaji Sawant, Prakash Surve, Sandipan Bhumre, Bharat Gogavale, Balaji Kinikar, Anil Babar,



Lata Sonwane, Yamini Jadhav, Sanjay Shirsat, Mahesh Shinde and Absul Sattar. The development came after the party moved to remove Shinde as the Shiv Sena Legislative Party Leader and replaced him with Ajay Chaudhri, which the Deputy Speaker has accepted but the

Shinde group has cried foul. Sena Chief Spokesperson and MP Sanjay Raut said on Friday that now the legal battle has begun with the plea to the Deputy Speaker Zirwal to disqualify the 12 legislators as democracy runs on majority figures which can change anytime.

As the Maharashtra political crisis continued for the fourth day, the rebel group led by Minister Eknath Shinde has submitted a list of his 37 MLAs to Deputy Speaker of Legislative Assembly Narhari Zirwal.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The list, submitted late on Thursday, has also attached two resolutions stating -- Shinde continues to be the chief of Shiv Sena Legislative Party, and MLA Bharat Gogavale has been appointed new Chief Whip. The group claimed the support of 40 MLAs plus a dozen independents and smaller parties on Friday (June 24).

The development came shoulder-to-shoulder with the Shiv Sena in Mumbai submitting a list of 12 MLAs, including Shinde, to Zirwal, demanding their disqualification late on Wednesday.

Party MP Arvind Sawant said that the disqualification has been sought for flouting the Sena's Whip to attend a meeting of party legislators held on Wednesday.

Those who did not attend that meeting included: Eknath Shinde, Tanaji Sawant, Prakash Surve, Sandipan Bhumre, Bharat Gogavale, Balaji Kinikar, Anil Babar, Lata Sonwane, Yamini Jadhav, Sanjay Shirsat, Mahesh Shinde and Abdul Sattar.

The development came after the party on Tuesday removed Shinde as the Shiv Sena Legislative Party Leader and replaced him with Ajay Chaudhri, which the Deputy Speaker has accepted, but the rebels group has cried foul. Dismissing the Sena move, Shinde

said in Guwahati on Friday that the move was 'illegal' and intended to scare the legislators.

"We are not frightened by all this. We know what they are doing and we also are aware of the laws and procedures... Let them send any number of letters or notices, we are not bothered," declared Shinde, speaking to the media.

Sena MP and Chief Spokesperson Sanjay Raut said on Friday that now the legal battle has begun with the plea to the Deputy Speaker Zirwal to disqualify the 12 legislators as democracy runs on majority figures "which can change anytime".

"So far, the support claimed by the rebels is only on paper... They have not yet come to Mumbai and the numbers will change after they return... Those who have gone will have to repent," Raut cautioned.

ED attaches assets worth Rs 78.38 crore in PMLA case

Team Absolute | Mumbai/New Delhi:

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday attached assets worth Rs 78.38 crore of Jalna Sahakari Sakhar Karkhana Ltd under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act in the Maharashtra State Co-operative Bank (MSCB) case, an official said.

"The ED has provisionally attached residual plant and machinery at the site, building structures and more than 200 acres of land of Jalna Sahakari Sakhar Karkhana Ltd. at village Sawargaon Hadap, Taluka and District Jalna, Maharashtra," the official said, adding the assets are currently held in the name of Arjun Sugar Industries Pvt. Ltd.

The financial probe agency had initiated an investigation under the PMLA based upon an FIR registered by the Economic Offence Wing, Mumbai Police. The said FIR was registered in pursuance of a Bombay High Court order. It has been alleged in the said FIR that the cooperative SSKs were fraudulently sold by the then officials &



Directors of MSCB at throw-away prices to their relatives or private persons without following the due procedure prescribed under the SARFAESI Act.

Jalna SSK Limited was established in 1984-85 on around 235 acres of land including 100 acre of land received without any monetary consideration from Maharashtra government.

"The Jalna SSK failed to repay the loan availed from MSCB and was declared as NPA in March 2002. There was a loan

outstanding of Rs 33.49 crore of MSCB on Jalna SSK as of September, 2008. To recover its dues, MSCB took possession of the SSK in February 2009 under SARFAESI Act," the official said.

Thereafter, MSCB conducted an auction of Jalna SSK in February 2012 with a reserve price of Rs 42.18 crore.

Only two parties -- Tapadia Constructions Pvt. Ltd., Aurangabad and Ajeet Seeds Pvt. Ltd, Aurangabad -- participated in the said auction.

PANCHAYAT OFFICIALS HELD FOR TAKING RS 20,000 BRIBE

Mumbai: Two panchayat officials from Maharashtra's Thane district were arrested for allegedly taking a bribe of Rs 20,000.

Inspector Swapnil Juikar told media that based on a complaint, officials of the Thane Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Thursday arrested Sudesh Bhaskar (56), a section engineer with the water supply department of Supegaon village panchayat, and gram sevak Jayesh Thorat (49). The complainant's relative had received a contract to carry out repairs at the panchayat office, and the accused demanded Rs 25,000, which was 5 per cent of the bill amount, for the work done by the contractor, he said. The complainant approached the ACB, following which a trap was laid and Thorat was caught accepting Rs 20,000 on Thursday evening, he added. A further probe is underway.

Mumbaikars rush to get shots amid rise in Covid-19 cases

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As Covid-19 cases are going up, Mumbaikars are running to get shots. The vaccination figures in the city went up by 24 per cent in the first 21 days of this month as compared to May. The state, however, is still lagging as compared to the figures from May. A civic health official said, "After the third wave, there was a sharp drop in the vaccination figures. We are continuously appealing to people to take the second and precautionary dose. We are also asking parents to bring their kids for vaccination, but the response was low. But now that cases have surged, people are coming forward for vaccination." As per data from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, a total of 2,12,413 beneficiaries took the vaccine in May while the number increased to 2,62,720 in June (till 21st).



Dr Mangala Gomare, BMC's executive health officer, said, "The civic health department is taking all efforts to convince citizens to take the vaccine. The cases are going up and the chance of contracting the infection is high too. So, those who are yet to take the second dose should immediately visit the nearest centre. And those who are eligible for precautionary dose, especially senior citizens, should go for it."

"Our health workers are reaching out to the masses under the Har Ghar Dastak programme. We are also

planning to conduct camps in schools and colleges," she added. Meanwhile, the state is still lagging in vaccination in June as compared to May. As per the state health department's report, a total of 18,35,459 beneficiaries got vaccinated in May and the figure stood at 17,32,659 in the first 21 days of June, which is a 5 per cent decrease. An official from the state health department said, "The figure we have is for the first 21 days and the response is good. By the end of June, we will surpass May's overall vaccination figure."

Shiv Sainik attack rebel MLA's office in Mumbai



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shiv Sena workers on Friday vandalised a board outside the office of party MLA Mangesh Kudalkar's office in Kurla and tried to smash up a board bearing his name and photograph, said a police official.

Kudalkar represents the Kurla assembly constituency in the city. He is camping in Guwahati along with Shinde and other Sena MLAs who

have rebelled against Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. A group of Shiv Sena supporters gathered outside Kudalkar's office in Nehrunagar area of Kurla and tried to smash up a board bearing his name and photograph, said a police official.

Before they could attack the MLA's office, police personnel on the spot intervened, following which they dispersed, he added.

Majority Indians want Uddhav Thackeray to step down

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The high voltage political drama in Maharashtra that began with the revolt of the senior Shiv Sena leader Eknath Shinde on Tuesday continued on Thursday.

The growing strength of the Shinde faction has thrown the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government on the brink. The Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray vacated his official residence on Wednesday after an emotional address to the state.

Thackeray in his address said that he is ready to step down from the post if the rebel MLAs tell him that they don't want him to continue as head of the state government. He appealed to the rebel MLAs to return and discuss the issue with him face to face. As media reports claimed that the strength of Shinde's faction has gone up to 45 MLAs, senior party leader Sanjay Raut offered that if all the MLAs say then the party will consider breaking away from the MVA alliance. The Shiv Sena, that heads the ruling MVA alliance, currently has 55 MLAs. The Nationalist Congress Party



(NC) having 53 MLAs and the Congress party with 44 MLAs are the other constituents of the MVA coalition. The opposition BJP has 106 MLAs in the Maharashtra Assembly has a total strength of 288 members.

As the political situation in Maharashtra continues to be in flux, CVoter-

IndiaTracker conducted a nationwide survey on behalf of IANS to know people's opinion on the issue.

During the survey, while the majority of respondents, 60 per cent, opined that Thackeray should resign from the post of Chief Minister, 40 per cent did not share the sentiment.

Interestingly, while majority of NDA voters, 73 per cent, spoke in favour of Thackeray stepping down as head of the state government, views of the opposition supporters were divided on the issue.

Amongst the opposition voters, while 52 per cent respondents said that Thackeray should continue as Chief Minister, 48 per cent demanded his resignation.

According to the survey data, the majority of urban voters, 64 per cent, and a large proportion of rural votes, 56 per cent, spoke in favour of Thackeray stepping down. The survey revealed differences in opinions of different social groups on the issue. During the survey, while majority of Upper Caste Hindus (UCH) 70 per cent, Other Backward Classes (OBC) 66 per cent and Scheduled Tribes (ST) 60 per cent opined in favour of Thackeray's resignation, views of majority of Muslims, 75 per cent, were completely opposed to the idea. Views of Scheduled Caste (SC) respondents were divided on the issue.

As per the survey data, while 55 per cent of SC voters favoured the idea of Thackeray putting in his papers, 45 per cent did not agree to this sentiment.



EDITOR'S SPECS

LONG COVID IN KIDS

Children as young as 0-3 years of age also suffer from long Covid that can last at least two months, according to a study published in *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*. The most commonly reported symptoms among children 0-3 years old were mood swings, rashes and stomach aches. In the study, researchers from Copenhagen University Hospital, Denmark analysed data from a survey of 11,000 children aged 0-14 with a positive Covid-19 test result between January 2020 and July 2021, and were then matched by age and sex to over 33,000 children who never had tested positive for Covid. Among 4-11 years old the most commonly reported symptoms were mood swings, trouble remembering or concentrating, and rashes, and among 12-14 years old, fatigue, mood swings, and trouble remembering or concentrating. The results of the study found children diagnosed with Covid-19 in all age groups to be more likely to experience at least one symptom for two months or longer than the control group. In the 0-3 years age group 40 per cent of children diagnosed with Covid-19 (478 of 1,194 children) experienced symptoms for longer than two months, compared to 27 per cent of controls (1,049 of 3,855 children). For the 4-11 years age group the ratio was 38 per cent of cases (1,912 of 5,023 children) compared to 34 per cent of controls (6,189 of 18,372 children), and for the 12-14 years age group, 46 per cent of cases (1,313 of 2,857 children) compared to 41 per cent of controls (4,454 of 10,789 children) experienced long-lasting symptoms. Approximately one third of children with positive Covid-19 tests reported experiencing symptoms that were not present before the SARS-CoV-2 infection. In addition, with increasing duration of symptoms, the proportion of children with those symptoms tended to decrease.

JASHN-E-GUREZ CELEBRATIONS IN KASHMIR

Situated in the young folds of the Himalayas, 123 km from Srinagar and 86 km from north Kashmir's Bandipora district, Gurez Valley is situated at an elevation of 8,000 feet.

The quaint valley is something right from a fantasy land - it once was the doorway to the famous Silk Road from Europe to Kashgar in China.

Its dense forests, pastures, and flowering meadows rejuvenate the body and heal the soul. The locals are ethnic Dards Shin who live near the Burzil Pass, leading to Gilgit-Baltistan. The Kishanganga river flows through the valley in quiet syllables.

Since April this year, more than 5,000 tourists have visited Gurez, thanks to the continuous efforts of civil and army administration.

The tourists' attraction along the Line of Control has been such that the government has raised infrastructures in the area to meet their demands.

The Army has also inaugurated a view-point on border village of Chorwan along with Kashmir's first windmill to reduce carbon footprint and financial impact on the government. It's also an excellent solution to the power crisis in Gurez.

This month the sun has really shined upon the Gurez valley. The locals have set up tented accommodations and homestays for the tourists who are eager to visit this lesser-known gem of J&K, which was recently opened up to the world by the Centre. The developmental work here is a part of the '75 new destinations' initiative under the banner of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'. Gurez remains closed from the world for six months of the winter, so the remaining six summer months are

being heavily promoted.

Jashn-e-Gurez, the annual Gurez Festival is a two-week celebration to promote and celebrate this unique Kashmiri jewel. It is organised by the Army in collaboration with the District Administration Bandipora and Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department.

This year the festivities began with an inter-village cricket tournament with 18 teams across the valley, including a team from the Army and JK Police. Bike and cycle rallies, marathons, treks, canoeing, among others, were a part of the festival that aims to highlight Gurez as an offbeat adventure tourism destination in pristine surroundings. Water sports, Zorbing, and ATVs are the upcoming attractions much anticipated.

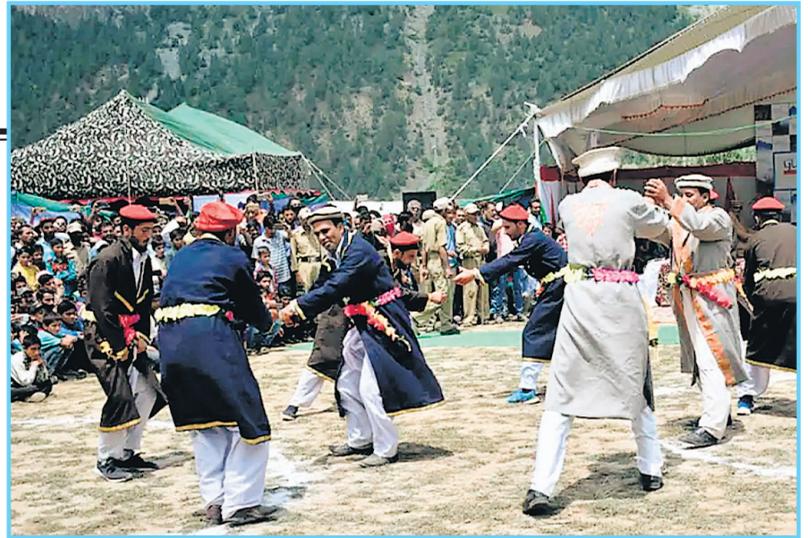
A Mega Sports and Dard Shin Festival was organised as part of the Jashn-e-Gurez Festival from June 7-12.

The youth and children across the valley were trained in three new sports - Rugby, Pencak Silat, and Wushu.

Such events are breeding grounds for budding sportspersons. Food and handicrafts stalls and souvenir shops were also set up along with a free medical check-up camp.

The Dard Shin festival memorialised the rich culture of the Dard-Shin tribe of Gurez through musical nights - the tribe's official introduction to mainland India. More than 2,500 locals, officials of the Indian Army, BSF, CISF, JKP, district administration, and tourists participated in the event.

The Administration is propagating the idea of homestays and tents to preserve the ecological balance and for greater enjoyment of Gurez's scenic beauty. Industry leaders like MakeMyTrip and



Goibibo are offering online bookings. The homestays will mean an additional source of income for locals and a personalised, raw experience with the culture and lifestyle for the tourists -- a win-win situation for all. The booking, execution, and standardisation of services in homestays are being supervised by the Tourism Department.

Due to this, the employment opportunities for the local youth are multi-fold now. Tourism and Skill Development Department are teaching the local youth the skills of tourist trade and hospitality.

The Mountain Agricultural Research and Extension Station (MAR&ES) of SKUAST-Kashmir at Izmarg-Gurez has established a separate Krishi Vigyan Kendra for Gurez valley that will be working on the revival of the heritage crops like Kala Zeera, Buckwheat, Potatoes, and Gurez local Pea. SKUAST is trying to convert Gurez's farmland into an organic zone with high credibility, given the clean soil and atmosphere. Agriculture will be upgraded

through new technology and equipment.

In a three-day public outreach programme that concluded on June 18, BJP senior leader Darakhshan Andrabi took stock of the ground realities of the implementation of the Centre's schemes and welfare programmes in the Gurez valley.

Schemes such as the Ujjwala Yojna aimed to provide LPG connections to poverty struck areas have transformed the kitchens of this valley. Brochures containing information on the welfare schemes implemented in J&K were distributed so more people can apply and reap their benefits.

In the last eight years, Gurez has witnessed immense economic activity and basic communication infrastructure, a feat uncommon for the border and tribal regions of the country.

Gurez has always stood with the border force and against the outside elements that have wished harm for the nation. The people

have increased faith in the government post the COVID times.

During the pandemic, free ration, free vaccination, and the golden card health initiative pulled the poor out of the tough times. Rural entrepreneurship has a huge scope in Gurez and that is next on the government's agenda.

At the first scientific advisory committee meeting of Gurez earlier this month, the need to prioritise Gurez's food and nutritional security was discussed.

Farming difficulties, post-harvest management of potatoes, low remunerative values of sheep to the farmer, the need for skill upgradation and training of rural youth, vegetable preservation, exploration and propagation of medicinal and aromatic plants, sericulture, mushroom cultivation, among others, were the main topics concerns for authorities. If all goes according to the plan, Gurez will top the charts as the most tranquil place in Kashmir.

international

INDIA WARNS OF AFGHANISTAN BECOMING HAVEN FOR JEM, LET

Arul Louis | United Nations

India has warned of Afghanistan becoming a haven for terrorist organisations that threaten the region and called for unified action against the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda, Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba getting entrenched there. India's Permanent Representative T.S. Tirumurti told the UN Security Council on Thursday, "We need to see concrete progress in ensuring that such proscribed terrorists, entities or their aliases do not get any support, tacit or direct, either from Afghan soil or from the terror sanctuaries based in the region."

"The linkages between groups listed (as terrorist organisations) by the UNSC (Security Council) such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the



Jaish-e-Mohammed, as well as provocative statements made by other terrorist groups operating out of Afghanistan pose a direct threat to the region," he said.

He noted that the Taliban, which now controls Afghanistan, "is yet to dissociate itself with other terrorist groups such as the Al-Qaeda which continue to remain

active". Therefore, he added, unified action was needed to "ensure that Afghanistan does not become a haven" for other terrorist organisations, including the "local Islamic State affiliate known by the acronym ISIS-K, Al-Qaeda, Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba". Tirumurti heads the Council's panel overseeing

the implementation of its sanctions relating to Afghanistan that is known as the 1988 Sanctions Committee after the resolution setting it up.

He said that the committee's report issued in May indicates "that the current authorities need to take much stronger action to fulfil their anti-terrorism commitments". In particular, he added that "there is a significant increase in the presence of ISIL-K in the country and their capacity to carry out attacks. ISIL-K, with its base reportedly in Afghanistan, continues to issue threats of terrorist attacks on other countries". ISIS-K has claimed responsibility for the attack on gurdwara Karte Parwan in Kabul last week and has threatened to strike elsewhere.

12 DEAD AFTER CLASH BETWEEN POLICE, ARMED CIVILIANS IN MEXICO'S JALISCO STATE

Mexico City: At least 12 people were killed in a confrontation between police and armed civilians in the town of El Salto, in west Mexico's Jalisco state, state Governor Enrique Alfaro confirmed.

Four police officers were among the fatal victims, Alfaro said on Thursday through Twitter.

"El Salto police and state police shot down eight criminals yesterday and left three seriously injured, after responding to a report of a safe house where there were hidden weapons," he added.

"Unfortunately, four police officers from the town of El Salto were killed in the line of duty," the Governor said.

In March, the Ministry of National Defense (Sedena) deployed a group of soldiers to violence-ridden Jalisco as part of the Mexico Joint Task Force program to strengthen surveillance of criminal activity in the state in the wake of a wave of killings, Xinhua news agency reported.

The Jalisco New Generation Cartel emerged in 2010 as a cell of the Sinaloa Cartel and now has a presence in at least seven Mexican states, as well as Mexico City.

FLOODS KILL 68 IN BANGLADESH



Dhaka | Agencies

A total of 68 people have been killed in floods caused by heavy seasonal rains and an onrush of water in parts of Bangladesh, said a report of the country's Health Emergency Operation Center and Control Room under the Directorate General of Health Services.

Most victims were drowned but some died in snake bites and lightning in the flood-hit areas between May 17 to June 23 this year, said the authorities on Thursday.

Of the victims, 24 deaths and 645 infections were reported in the last 24 hours as of Thursday morning.

Xinhua news agency reported. Floods have so far caused widespread damage to habitation, crops, roads and highways across vast swathes of the country.

Thursday's TV reports showed that wide areas of land are underwater in some parts of Bangladesh, especially in the northern Mymensingh and northeastern Sylhet regions.

Bangladeshi State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief, Md Enamur Rahman earlier said that both the government and private agencies of the country are working together in the Sylhet region which has been facing the worst floods in 122 years.

Ukrainian forces asked to retreat from key eastern city



Kiev | Agencies

Amid escalating Russian advances, Ukrainian forces in Severodonetsk have been asked to retreat from the key city in the eastern Luhansk region where fierce battles are currently raging, a top leader said on Friday.

For several weeks now, Russian forces have nearly encircled Severodonetsk and its twin city Lysychansk.

Capturing the two cities would give Moscow control of the entire Luhansk region, much of which is already controlled by Russian-backed separatists. They are the last remain-

ing Ukrainian positions in Luhansk.

Speaking to local media on Friday, Luhansk regional governor Serhiy Haidai said: "Remaining in positions that have been relentlessly shelled for months just doesn't make sense."

"They have received orders to retreat to new positions... and from there continue their operations."

"There is no point in staying in positions which have been destroyed over several months just for the sake of staying," the BBC quoted the Governor as further saying.

According to Haidai, Severodonetsk's entire infrastructure has been completely destroyed, with over 90 per cent of houses shelled and 80 per cent of them critically damaged.

ANOTHER TREMOR IN QUAKE-HIT AFGHAN PROVINCE KILLS 5

Kabul: At least five people were killed on Friday when a tremor hit Afghanistan's Paktika province where a massive earthquake had claimed 1,100 lives earlier this week, authorities said.

"Unfortunately, once again an earthquake hit Gayan district of Paktika province roughly at 10 a.m. on Friday based on the initial information, five people were killed and 11 others wounded," Xinhua news agency quoted the Ministry of Public Health as saying in a tweet.

On early Wednesday, the 5.9-magnitude earthquake, deemed to be the deadliest in two decades, struck the districts of Gayan and Barmal. Some 1,600 people were also injured as a result.

The epicentre was 44 km from Khost city and tremors were felt as far away as Pakistan and India. More than 1,600 homes were destroyed in the worst-hit Gayan district.

Russia ready to consult Armenia, Azerbaijan on border delimitation: Lavrov

Baku | Agencies

Visiting Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov expressed Moscow's official readiness to consult Azerbaijan and Armenia on delimitation and demarcation of borders.

At a meeting with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Baku, Lavrov said Russia is ready to consult on the work of the Azerbaijani and Armenian commissions that were set up for delimitation and demarcation of borders, Xinhua news agency reported.

"We have concrete proposals in this regard. I will be glad to discuss them with you," Lavrov told Aliyev. The Russian Foreign Minister pointed out "certain progress" in the work of the trilateral working group between Azerbaijan, Russia and Armenia on the opening of communications.

"We stand ready to do everything possible to assist in the implementation of the three documents signed



by the leaders of the three countries in November of 2020, in January and November of 2021," he said.

Lavrov also expressed Moscow's commitment to providing assistance with the negotiations on the signing of a peace agreement between Baku

and Yerevan. "We heard that the Armenian side, Prime Minister Pashinyan is ready to hold negotiations on this issue. We are ready to help with Azerbaijan's and Armenia's consent," he added.



Don't use Presidential candidate's cultural status for political mileage, Uma Bharti to MP BJP

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Veteran BJP leader and former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Uma Bharti, on Friday reminded her party leaders to not pin point the Presidential candidate for her cultural status as a tribal and maintain the sanctity of India's highest Constitutional post.

Bharti's remark came a day after the MP unit of BJP organised an event in Bhopal to celebrate the candidature of former Jharkhand Governor Draupadi Murmu for the Presidential election.

The state BJP unit led by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and the party's state President V.D. Sharma celebrated the occasion with party

cadres in all enthusiasm, reiterating that the BJP leadership has nominated a 'tribal woman' for the highest post in the country.

At the event held at the BJP headquarters here, a group of tribal artists presented a dance performance. Bharti also urged the media to refrain from relating the selection of the Presidential candidate with her cultural background.

"Media and our BJP people should keep in mind that Draupadi Murmu, the candidate selected for post of the President by the NDA, will be the Constitutional head of the country. Such a person does not come under the domination of castes (and cultural identities). Therefore, no opinion should be made with the

desire to take political mileage out of it," Bharti said.

Bharti's remark indicates an attack on the MP BJP unit led by Chouhan and Sharma. Bharti has been taking on both leaders over the liquor issue for the past few months.

"What more is required to become the President of India? Her own merit is the basis of her selection. She is the triple-power of today's contemporary, economic and political system," she said, referring to Murmu being a woman, a person of political stature, and a deserving candidate. Murmu, who belongs to the Santhal tribe of Odisha, filed her nomination on Friday in the presence of Prime Minister Modi, Union ministers Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh and BJP President J.P. Nadda.



COP SHOT HIMSELF AFTER SHOOTING FEMALE COLLEAGUE IN INDORE

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A police inspector fired at his colleague- a woman assistant sub inspector- and then shot himself to death from point blank range in Madhya Pradesh today, cops said. The incident took place in the premises of Indore police control room. The police inspector who

died on the spot has been identified as Hakam Singh Pawar. He had been posted in Madhya Pradesh capital Bhopal and was heading to the Shyamala Hills police station of Bhopal.

The woman assistant sub inspector who was rushed to a city hospital after being shot has been posted in the Indore control room.

She is undergoing treatment, officials informed. The incident prima facie seems to be the fallout of a love affair between the police inspector and the woman assistant sub inspector, Indore Police Commissioner Harinarayanchari Mishra said. Further investigation in the matter is underway.

109 BJP councilors elected unopposed in MP



Team Absolute | Bhopal

The process of urban body elections is going on in Madhya Pradesh. During this, BJP candidates have registered uncontested victory at 109 places in different urban bodies of the state. The date for withdrawal of nominations for the urban body elections in the state has passed and the election campaign has gained momentum. In the state, councilors have been elected

unopposed in one ward in the BJP's municipal corporation, 12 in the municipality and 96 wards of the city council. BJP candidates have registered uncontested victory in 109 places.

BJP state president MP Vishnudutt Sharma said that BJP candidates have been elected unopposed as councilors in 109 wards of various municipal corporations, municipalities and municipal councils in the municipal elections of the state. This is a

big victory for BJP's policies of good governance and development. Congratulating all the councilors elected unopposed, State President Sharma said that this is a wonderful example of coordination, harmony and cooperation. This shows that the people's faith in the policies of BJP has increased continuously and together we will fulfill the resolve of development in the local elections.



Assembly Speaker Girish Gautam faces voters' ire in his own constituency

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Speaker of Madhya Pradesh assembly, Girish Gautam, faced voters' ire in his own constituency amid the ongoing three-tier panchayat elections in the state.

The villagers in the Deotalab Assembly constituency in Rewa district accused Gautam of providing the benefits of government-run schemes only to his supporters, depriving the

genuine beneficiaries.

A video has gone viral on social media, showing Gautam arguing with the villagers during campaigning for the panchayat polls.

Gautam was campaigning for his son Rahul Gautam, who is contesting the district panchayat elections.

In the 2018 Assembly elections, BJP nominee Gautam had won from Deotalab by defeating Seema Jaiveer Singh Sengar of the BSP by 45,043 votes.

Gautam was addressing a gathering to seek people's support for his son who's contesting the panchayat polls in his constituency. However, the villagers, including women, openly said that they will not vote for his son because only party workers are being benefited by government-run

schemes.

One of the villagers alleged that BJP workers are being provided direct financial assistance instead of following the due process.

"Only selected people are getting the benefits of government-run schemes, because they are BJP supporters, depriving the genuine beneficiaries of such schemes," a villager was heard telling Gautam.

In reply, Gautam said that financial assistance has been provided only to the deserving people through the RTGS system.

Gautam said that he would resign from his post and quit politics if allegations of corruption levelled against his supporters are proved true.

"This is a false allegation and I know who is behind all this. If proved

that my supporters did anything wrong, I will resign from the post of Speaker and quit politics," Gautam said.

Notably, Girish's son Rahul is contesting the panchayat elections under BJP's banner and is facing opposition from one of his own cousins, Padmesh Gautam, who is a Congress candidate.

Padmesh, who is a local Congress leader, was accused of a murder and was in jail nearly a decade back.

"In front of the temple of Lord Hanuman, I challenge you to prove your allegations. If they are found true, this village shouldn't cast a single vote in the coming district panchayat polls for us or for me in the coming Vidhan Sabha polls," Gautam said.

MORE THAN ONE THOUSAND UNLICENSED WEAPONS SEIZED IN MP

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The process of urban body and panchayat elections is going on in state. Licensed weapons have been deposited in the state, while there is a possibility of use of non-licensed weapons. There is a campaign going on for this.

Under which more than one thousand unlicensed weapons have been seized so far. After the filing of nominations for urban body and panchayat elections in the state, the process of withdrawal of nominations and allotment of election symbols has been completed. Polling for the first phase of the panchayat is also going to be held on Saturday. In view of these elections in the state, continuous action is being taken by the police in view of the law and order situation. So far, 1062 unlicensed arms have been seized in the state. 2 lakh 56 thousand licensed weapons have been deposited in the state. Action has been taken against one lakh 36 thousand 521 persons in the Preventive Section of CrPC. So far 15 thousand 907 non-bailable warrants have also been served.

Railway officer lashed by train while at work in Anuppur

Team Absolute | Bhopal

An area railway manager (ARM) of Bilaspur railway division was run over by a train while at work on Almai station at Anuppur district on 7:45 pm Thursday.

According to the officials, the deceased was identified as Yogendra Singh Bhatia, 30. Yogendra Bhatia was overseeing the track repairing work when the accident happened. He didn't realize that the MEMU train was coming on the same track over which he was standing. According to the officials, the work was accomplished and they were about to wind up the work when the MEMU train heading from Katni to Bilaspur lashed Bhatia.

He was taken to central hospital, located in Shadol, 30 km away but was declared dead. Yogendra Bhatia was married on 8 June and transferred to Jabalpur city with his wife, who is an IRTS officer and is posted in Jabalpur. "It is an unfortunate incident. A departmental inquiry has been ordered. Statements of all those involved will be recorded and subsequent action will be taken." the Divisional Railway Manager of Bilaspur, A Sahai said.



CM Chouhan planted sapling during his stay in Delhi

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan today planted saplings on Kautilya Marg near Apostolic Nunciature at Chanakyapuri during his stay in Delhi. CM

Chouhan planted a Champa sapling. Talking to reporters during plantation, Chief Minister Chouhan said that he plants saplings every day for environmental protection. The CM said that in order to leave a good earth for the

future generations, it is necessary that everyone must plant saplings on occasions like birthdays, death anniversaries and marriage anniversaries. He said that by doing this we not only plant trees but also nurture life.

Man booked, fined for using bulldozer in marriage procession

Team Absolute | Betul

The police have registered a case and imposed a fine of Rs 5,000 on a bulldozer driver, whose vehicle was used in a marriage procession in Madhya Pradesh's Betul district, an official said on Friday. Ankush Jaiswal, a civil engineer, chose to sit on a JCB machine, instead of a horse or a car, for his marriage procession in Jhallar village of Bhainsdehi tehsil in the district on Wednesday. Two women family members also accompanied Jaiswal on the bulldozer during the procession, and some photos and videos of the event went viral on social media. Taking cognisance of the viral videos, Betul superintendent of



police Simla Prasad directed officials to book the JCB driver Ravi Baraskar and imposed a fine of Rs 5,000 for violation of the Motor Vehicles Act, Jhallar police station in-charge Deepak Parashar said.

JCB machines are meant for commercial use and cannot be used to transport people. Hence, the driver was fined for violating sections 39/192(1) of the Motor Vehicles Act, he said. Ankush Jaiswal had earlier said that he had been working with construction-related machines, including bulldozers, every day as part of his job, which is why he decided to use the equipment in his wedding to make it "a memorable event".

DIGVIJAY AGAIN EMBROILED WITH CONTROVERSY IN SAVARKAR'S CASE, BJP SLAMS



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Congress leader and former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Digvijay Singh, who has always been in the headlines for being an attacker on the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, is once again in the news. The statement he shared about Savarkar has created a political stir.

Former Chief Minister Digvijay Singh wrote on his Twitter handle, "Some more facts have come to the fore on Savarkar ji. Would like to hear. He was sentenced to four months in the year 1908 for attempting to rape an English woman."

In the statement shared by Digvijay Singh with his tweet, Savarkar has also been asked to apologize to the English government several times and write letters to increase the amount of pension. BJP is attacking on the statement shared by the former Chief Minister. State government minister Vishwas Sarang in his reaction said, it is unfortunate to talk like this on the great revolutionary. As far as Digvijay Singh is concerned, he talks like this to stay in the media headlines. What Veer Savarkar did for the country's independence, there is no need for the certificates of people like Digvijay Singh, whose mental level is over.

TRIBAL MUSEUM TO INCREASE ENTRY AND PHOTOGRAPHY FEE FROM JULY 1

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The entry and photography fee has been increased in the Madhya Pradesh Tribal Museum established with a focus on the life, indigenous knowledge, art tradition and beauty of the tribes of Madhya Pradesh. The fee hike will be applicable from July 1, 2022. The entry fee for Indian visitors (above 10 years of age) is Rs 20, for foreign visitors (above 10 years of age) Rs 400. Similarly, a fee of Rs 100 has been fixed for photography per camera/mobile (non-commercial without stand, tripod, selfie stick).

The museum is open for visitors from 12 noon to 8 pm. Architectural, craft and practical forms of residence of tribal communities of Madhya Pradesh are displayed in various galleries of the museum. In the 6 different galleries of the museum, glimpses of tribal life, their surroundings, sports, culture, Devlok etc. can be seen. Kiosks have been set up in each gallery for the research scholars, so that things can be understood both in Hindi and English in detail.

Entry fee of Rs.20 for Indian and Rs.400 for foreign tourists Photography Fee Rs.100

Voters should carry voter ID card to exercise franchise: State Election Commissioner

Team Absolute | Bhopal

State Election Commissioner Basant Pratap Singh has informed that a list of documents has been issued by the State Election Commission to establish the identity of voters for the three-tier Panchayat elections. He has said that voters should go to vote with ID cards, so that there is no problem at the polling station.

Secretary State Election Commission Rakesh Singh has informed that Voter Slip, Voter ID Card given by Election Commission of India, Aadhar Card, Land Rights and Loan Book, Ration Card (all white, blue, yellow and pink), Bank / Farmer / Post Office Passbook, Arms License, Property Documents like Patta, Registered Deed etc., Disability Certificate, Destitute Certificate, Tendu Patta Collector's Identity Card, Co-operative Society Share Certificate, Kisan Credit Card, Passport, Driving License, Income Tax Identity Card (PNN Card), Service Identity Card issued by state/central government, public sector undertaking, local body or other



private industrial houses to their employees, student identity card, SC/ST/Other Backward Class/Domicile Certificate

issued by competent authorities, Pension Documents such as Ex-Servicemen Pension Book/Pension Payment Order/Ex-Servicemen, Widow/Dependent Certificate, Railway Identity Letter, Freedom Fighter Identity Card and Job Card with photo issued in Employment Guarantee Scheme.

In addition to the records shown in this list, the Presiding Officer may also accept such other records as may satisfy him as to the identity of the voter.

It is clarified that any document mentioned above, which is available only with the head of the family, will be allowed for identification of other family members. Similarly, a document in the name of another member of the family can also be used to identify other members, provided other members can be identified on the basis of such document.

If a voter fails to produce any document, then the presiding officer, after establishing his identity from the local Kotwar, Patwari, teacher, village Patel, Anganwadi worker, Anganwadi helper etc. or any reputed local resident, will be able to give him the facility of voting.



Simone Ashley watched snails mating to prep for 'Sex Education' scenes

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Simone Ashley "watched snails mate" to prepare for sex scenes for the show 'Sex Education'. Known as Olivia Hanan in the hit Netflix comedy 'Sex

Education', the actress revealed that as part of her preparation to shoot an intimate scene, she and the rest of the cast would observe the behavior of various animals, reports

aceshowbiz.com.

"We explored the movement of different animals to kind of portray different paces or different sexualities or how sensual something could be," she spilled.

"For example, we look to how snails mate, and when snails mate, they actually produce a plasma that intertwines."

The 'Bridgerton' star went on to explain that the animal being observed changed depending upon what was needed for the mood of the scene.

Speaking on the 'The Envelope' podcast, she added: "So if it was a really sensual, slow kind of scene, we'd be like, 'Oh, it's like the snail.'"

Meanwhile, Ashley recently announced that she will not be returning to the fourth series of 'Sex Education' in order to focus on her role as Kate Sharma in the 3rd series of the period drama series 'Bridgerton'.

Ezra Miller allegedly housing young children in gun-filled farm

Los Angeles | Agencies

Fantastic Beasts star Ezra Miller is allegedly housing a young mother and her three small children at a Vermont farm, which is allegedly littered with firearms, ammunition and marijuana. Multiple sources with knowledge of the situation, including the children's father, made the accusations to Rolling Stone in an article published June 23, reports aceshowbiz.com. The sources in question were said to



have spoken out anonymously "for fear of retribution," alleging that the actor's property includes the presence of "unattended" firearms. The news outlet claimed to have reviewed video footage from April that appeared to show at least eight assault weapons, rifles and handguns scattered around the home's living room, noting some weapons were even propped up next to stuffed animals. One source added that one of the kids once allegedly picked up a loose bullet and put it in her mouth.

The mother and children, aged one to five, have been living at Miller's 96-acre Stamford, Vermont, farm since mid-April. The actor met the woman in Hilo, Hawaii, which Ezra had been visiting in March. The children's father claimed that Ezra secured a flight out of Hawaii for the woman and her children, allegedly without the father's knowledge. He further stressed that he has not been able to see or speak with his children since their departure. "I got a bad feeling in my stomach," he said. "I do want to go get my kids, they mean the f**king world to me."

However, the mother insisted she and her children are not in danger. In fact, she told the outlet that Miller helped her escape from an allegedly "violent and abusive ex" and gave her "a safe environment for [her] three very young children."

"(Ezra's) home ranch has been a healing haven for us," the mother, who is still living at Ezra's farm with her kids, added.



Taraji P. Henson wants to leave US due to 'pressures of being black'

Los Angeles | Agencies

According to aceshowbiz.com, in a new interview, actress shared that she is "really considering" finding somewhere else to live because the political and social climate in the US has left her feeling exhausted. She said on the "PEOPLE Every Day" podcast: "I'm really considering getting up out of here, leaving and living in another country. That's something that

comes with 50, you get tired of fighting. I'm tired." Asked what has left her tired, the 'Empire' star noted the "pressures of being Black" and the constant fight for peace and justice. "I just don't want to have to do another hashtag a I fought, I chanted, I marched. I'm tired."

The 'Minions: Rise of Gru' star feels she could lead a "stress-free" life elsewhere and is happy she's achieved so much in her professional life that she now has the freedom to travel if she wants.

"I want to go where there's neutral ground. I want to just be. And be happy. I want to be called 'Bella' every day, drink wine and swat flies on the porch. Stress-free," she said.



Adele concerts to feature all-female lineup for London weekend

London | Agencies

Singer Adele Hyde Park is making amends with a special two-day concert spectacular. The show, billed as BST will feature an all-female lineup of artists, highlighted by Kacey Musgraves. According to 'Deadline', it will be held on July 1-2 in London's Hyde Park. Also appearing are Mahalia, Self Esteem, Nilufer Yanya, Tiana Major9, Chrissi, Gabrielle, Bonnie Kempplay, Ruti and Tamzene. It's uncertain if every artist will appear both nights, reports 'Deadline'.

"The line up for my Hyde Park shows next week is going to blow your socks off!" Adele

wrote on social media, sharing a poster for the festival as well as a black-and-white graphic of her with some of her guest performers.

"An all-female bill, from new artists that I'm obsessed with to the heavenly @KaceyMusgraves to one of my favourite artists of all time @GabrielleUK who I've loved since I was 4!" "It's going to be incredible, there's a whole host of us performing all day, I can't wait to share the main stage with you ladies," added Adele. BST Hyde Park is sponsored by American Express and takes place every year across two weekends in London. The event will begin on Friday with headliner Elton John, and is expected to end July 10 with Duran Duran.

Chris Pratt says his Mario voice is 'unlike anything you've heard'

Los Angeles | Agencies



Actor Chris Pratt says his voice performance as Mario in the upcoming feature adaptation of the Super Mario Bros. video game will be "unlike anything you've heard". 'Variety' got the chance to catch up with Pratt at the Wednesday night premiere of his new Amazon Prime Video series 'The Terminal List' to talk about finding his voice for the film, which co-stars Charlie Day as Luigi.

There's been much internet discussion over Pratt's casting in the animated film as the Italian plumber despite his non-Italian background, with critics expressing concern that his accent could potentially be offensive.

However, the film's co-producer, Illumination Entertainment's Chris Meledandri, defended Pratt's casting and vowed that his voice work is "phenomenal" in a recent interview with TooFab. Pratt echoed Meledandri's sentiment, telling Variety that Mario's voice has been "updated", reports 'Variety'.

"I worked really closely with the directors and trying out a few things and landed on something that I'm really proud of and can't wait for people to see and hear," Pratt said.

"It's an animated voiceover narrative. It's not a live-action movie. I'm not gonna be wearing a plumber suit running all over. I'm providing a voice for an animated character, and it is updated and unlike anything you've heard in the Mario world before." The untitled Universal movie, directed by Aaron Horvath and Michael Jelenic, will hit theatres next April. Rounding out the cast are Anya Taylor-Joy, Jack Black, Keegan-Michael Key, Seth Rogen, Kevin Michael Richardson, Fred Armisen and Sebastian Maniscalco. Pratt hit the carpet on the heels of another dino-blockbuster. In its second week-end of release, 'Jurassic World Dominion' brought in a domestic gross of \$259 million. It's Pratt's third film in the six-installment franchise. He has no plans to reprise the role of Owen again, but who knows what the future could hold. "It seemed pretty intentional that this was just three movies," Pratt said. "It felt like a trilogy." Sure, but if he wanted another 'Jurassic' film, he could probably make it happen, right? "I'd have to read the script," Pratt said. "I can think of a million ways to contrive bringing Owen back, but I would want it to be authentic and real and be worthy of the story. I would say no, but I guess you can't rule it out 1,000 per cent."



Gal Gadot



FIFA U17 Women's World Cup

INDIA PLACED WITH USA, BRAZIL AND MOROCCO IN GROUP A

Team Absolute | Mumbai

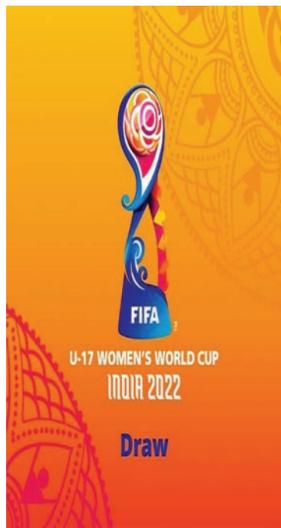
Hosts India were placed in a tough group with 2008 runners-up the United States, Brazil and Morocco to contend with in Group A in the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup which will be held from October 11-30 this year.

The draw for the 16-team event was conducted at the FIFA headquarters in Zurich on Friday. The teams have been divided into four groups of four each, ensuring that two teams from the same FIFA confederation are not in the same group.

India will open their campaign in Group A against the United States at the Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar on October 11.

India, who qualified for the event as hosts and will be making their maiden appearance in the top event for under-17 girls that started in 2008, avoided meeting any of the other previous medalists.

They will now be hoping to finish



among the top two in their group and qualify for the quarterfinals. No host nation has ever reached the semi-finals in the six editions of the event held so far, all losing in the group stage itself.

Thus, European powerhouse Germany the only European team to play in all six editions of the event, head Group B with Nigeria, Chile and New Zealand, bronze medalists in the previous edition in 2018 in Uruguay, as other contenders.

Group C comprises Spain, the 2018 champions, Colombia, Mexico, who lost to Spain 1-2 in the 2018 final, and China while Group C has Japan, the 2014 winner, facing Tanzania, the first-timers from Africa, and Canada, another team that has participated in all six previous editions of the event, and France, who won the title in 2012 when the event was held in Azerbaijan.

The 2022 FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup will be held from October 11-30 at three venues -- the Kalinga

Stadium in Bhubaneswar, the Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Margao, Goa and the Dr. D.Y. Patil Stadium, Navi Mumbai.

Following the conclusion of the group games on October 18, the top two teams from each group will progress to the quarterfinals. Navi Mumbai will kick off the double header knockouts on October 21 where the winner of Group A will face the runner-up of Group B and following soon, the Group B winner will take on the second-placed team from Group A.

The draw:

Dates: October 11-30, 2022

Group A: India, USA, Morocco, Brazil

Group B: Germany, Nigeria, Chile, New Zealand

Group C: Spain, Colombia, Mexico, China

Group D: Japan, Tanzania, Canada, France

Wimbledon draw

Swiatek, Pliskova, Williams placed in top half; Raducanu, Jabeur in bottom

London | Agencies

World No. 1 Iga Swiatek, last year's runner-up Karolina Pliskova, and seven-time champion Serena Williams have been placed in the top half of the draw for the Wimbledon women's singles, the organisers said on Friday.

Swiatek, the newly-crowned Roland Garros champion, will look to extend her 35-match winning streak when she takes on qualifier Jana Fett at the All England Club. The 21-year-old Pole could face former US Open champion Bianca Andreescu, American No. 8 seed Jessica Pegula or 2017 winner Garbie Muguruza in the quarterfinals. Lying in wait for Swiatek as potential semifinal opponents are Pliskova, Williams, No. 4 seed Paula Badosa, and two-time champion Petra Kvitova. Meanwhile, No. 16 seed Simona Halep, who faces a daunting task in her first match at Wimbledon since clinching the title in 2019, has been placed in the top half. The Romanian faces crafty Czech and two-time quarterfi-



nalist Karolina Muchova.

Williams, who hasn't played a singles match since last year's Wimbledon, received a wild card into the main draw and opens her quest for a record 24th Grand Slam title against French world No. 113 Harmony Tan. The 40-year-old could face Spain's Sara Sorribes Tormo, the No. 32 seed, in the second round and possibly Pliskova, the No. 6 seed, in the third round. On the other hand, American teenager Coco Gauff, who reached the Roland Garros final, is a potential fourth-round opponent for Williams and begins her campaign against Elena-Gabriela Ruse of Romania.

The bottom half of the draw features recent Berlin champion and No. 3 seed Ons Jabeur,

home favourite and No. 10 seed Emma Raducanu, Greek No. 5 seed Maria Sakkari, and in-form pair Belinda Bencic and Beatriz Haddad Maia. Jabeur, who withdrew ahead of her Eastbourne doubles semifinal alongside Williams on Thursday with a knee injury, reached the quarterfinals at Wimbledon last year. The Tunisian, who will rise to a career-high No. 2 in the world on Monday, faces Swedish qualifier Mirjam Bjorklund in the first round. US Open champion Raducanu was given a tough opener against the in-form Belgian Alison Van Uytvanck, who has won 12 matches on grass in the build-up to Wimbledon, including titles in Surbiton and Gaiba.

Ranji Trophy Final

Dubey, Sharma, Patidar propel MP on the verge of first-innings lead

Bengaluru | Agencies

Yash Dubey, Shubham Sharma and Rajat Patidar led Madhya Pradesh's batting domination on day three of Ranji Trophy Final against Mumbai, bringing the side in touching distance of taking a first-innings lead, ending the day at 368/3 in 125 overs, with just six runs needed to overtake Mumbai's 374 and grab a crucial first-innings lead.

Friday was a day which well and truly belonged to Madhya Pradesh. Dubey and Sharma, the overnight batters, made 133 and 116 respectively, sharing a mammoth 222-run stand for the second wicket. Once the duo fell, Patidar took centre stage with some eye-catching shots to be unbeaten at 67.



Brief scores:

Mumbai 374 all out in 127.4 overs (Sarfaraz Khan 134; Gaurav Yadav 4/106) lead Madhya Pradesh 368/3 in 123 overs (Yash Dubey 133, Shubham Sharma 116; Mohit Awasthi 1/53, Tushar Deshpande 1/73) by six runs

For Mumbai, it was a hard day of toil under sunshine, getting very little help from the pitch and dropping Sharma at 55 as well as getting out Patidar on 52 off a no-ball added to their woes.

Patidar, whose attacking intent got fans in stadium chanting 'RCB, RCB', began the final session with a cracking cover drive off off-spinner Tanush Kotian before punch-

ing Shams Mulani beautifully between two cover fielders. His aggression continued when he created room to drive through long-off and then played a delightful late cut to keep the Madhya Pradesh run-making juggernaut going. Patidar reached his thrilling fifty in just 44 balls by clipping Mohit Awasthi through mid-wicket.

India determined to win against USA in WU23 3-Nations tournament

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India under-23 women's football team will take on the United States in the WU23 3-Nations Tournament in Larods IP, Sweden on Saturday (June 25), hoping to do better than their first match in the event.

The Indian team had played the first of its two matches against Sweden in the 3-Nations tournament, in which they lost 1-0.

But a day before taking on USA under-23, India head coach Suren Chettri believes that the girls will score and win the match, their last encounter in the tournament.

"If we want to win, we need to score," coach Chettri mentioned ahead of the game. Even though the players were disappointed after the loss in their last match against Sweden, Chettri sounded optimistic. "We will play the way we played against Sweden and focus on attack-



ing more this time." "It was sad to lose the last game but the girls had put up their best effort against the number 2 in World FIFA ranking. We played a really good defending game, whatever skills we had we tried to show on

the pitch and we will be doing the same tomorrow," he maintained. One of the players who stood firm all over 90 minutes into the game but conceded an injury-time goal was Blue Tigresses goalkeeper Aditi

Chauhan. Aditi also believes in coming back stronger on Saturday as she said, "There are a lot of positives from the last game and the team is motivated to come back even stronger against the USA."

Manu Bhaker shoots double gold at Kumar Surendra Singh Memorial Shooting

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Olympian and former world number one Manu Bhaker shot a double gold, winning both the women's and junior women's 10m Air Pistol titles at the 20th Kumar Surendra Singh Memorial (KSSM) Shooting competition, the pistol events for which are taking place in Bhopal's M.P. Shooting Academy range.

Haryana's Manu outshot Punjab's Arshdeep Kaur 16-14 in a closely fought final contest.

Manu shot 263.9 to top the eight-woman semi-final stage even as Arshdeep followed her to the gold medal contest, finishing second with a score of 260.5. Radhika Tanwar, also from Haryana,



won bronze. In the junior contest Manu was up against Uttar Pradesh's (U.P.) Yuvika Tomar, who was the best Shooter all-around in qualifying, topping both the women's and junior women's qualifiers with a score of 584. Manu however was too good for her, sealing the final 16-12. The bronze again went to Haryana as Lakshita finished the semifinal stage with a score of 246.7, behind Yuvika's 252.7 and Manu's 249. Shikha Narwal won in the youth category where Lakshita picked up the silver.

Yuvika did win gold on the day though, teaming up with Anjali Chaudhary and Devanshi Dhama to seal the team title for U.P. Haryana won silver and Maharashtra won bronze.

Indian hockey team on a mission to win maiden medal at World Cup: Captain Savita

Amsterdam: Indian women's hockey team captain Savita has said her team is on a mission to win its maiden World Cup medal when the mega-event commences in Spain and the Netherlands on July 1. In an open letter from the captain to Indian fans across the world, Savita added that finishing third in the FIH Pro League recently had given the side a boost ahead of the World Cup.

Between July 3 and 7, India will play their round-robin league matches against England, China and New Zealand on alternate days respectively. Topping the pool will take them to the quarterfinals, to be played in Amsterdam. In case India finish second or third in Pool B, they will need to play crossover matches in Terrassa, Spain to qualify for the last-eight and from there on the semis and final, which will be played in Spain.

Gaurav Gill clocks fastest time in WRC2 Safari Rally Kenya

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Returning to World Rally Championship after a two-year hiatus, India's Gaurav Gill started the Safari Rally Kenya with style by clocking the fastest timings of 3:32.9 in WRC2 grid.

Representing India in the grid, Gill is returning to WRC 2 driving a Skoda Fabia Rally2 car for the first time with Brazilian co-driver Gabriel.

Considered as one of the most dreaded events of the season, Gill showcased his driving prowess and control on the machine in SSI - Super Special Kasarani by clocking the fastest timings of 3:32.9 in WRC2 grid, just 14.1 seconds off the leader Sebastian Ogier driving a works Toyota in WRC1.

While the WRC grid will see some serious face-off between nine-time world champion Sebastian Loeb of M-Sport Ford Puma Rally1 and eight-time world champion Sebastian Ogier of Toyota Gazoo Racing who won last year's Safari Rally Kenya, Indian driver Gill has com-



petition from highest-placed championship contenders Polish driver Kajetan Kajetanowicz driving Skoda Fabia Rally 2 and Martin Prokop from Czech who is fielding his trusty Ford Fiesta Rally2.

The rally covering a distance of 1223.77kms with 363.44 kms of 19 grueling special stages started from Central Nairobi.

Murali Vijay plans return to cricket; not setting himself any targets

Chennai | Agencies

India cricketer Murali Vijay is not setting himself any targets as he plans a return to the sport to play in the Tamil Nadu Premier League (TNPL) after a nearly two-year hiatus.

A veteran of 61 Tests and nearly 4,000 runs in the longest format of the game, Vijay last played a competitive match in the 2020 edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) for the Chennai Super Kings, and is now set to don the Ruby Trichy Warriors colours in the TNPL this year.

"The two-year break was to reflect... at the end of the day, you have to be realistic with your targets. I pretty much don't have any aim at the moment. I just want to play cricket and enjoy this phase of my life at this point and see where it takes me, with the help of TNCA," said Vijay.



"I want to play as long as possible. Just took a personal break. I have a young family and wanted to take care of them. I'm enjoying my cricket now and I'm feeling fit, hopefully, I can do my bit for my team and TNPL," Vijay said at

a TNPL event.

The 38-year-old Vijay added the decision to take a break has also to do with injuries coupled with the fact that his personal life was going at a "fast pace".

World Archery proposes compound events from 2028 LA Olympics

Paris | Agencies

World Archery, the sports global governing body, has proposed the inclusion of compound archery in the Olympics and the proposal is officially being considered for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games.

If approved by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), compound archery will be included alongside the current recurve event in the sports programme of the LA28 Olympic Games, World Archery said in a release from Lausanne, Switzerland.

This will open up a medal opportunity for upcoming nations like India, which has won many medals in compound archery at the international level. South



Korea has dominated the recurve section winning 43 medals in all with USA second with 33.

The proposal from World Archery is for an additional indoor archery competition for men, women and mixed teams that

would last approximately three days, shorter than the current nine-day Olympic schedule, said the release carried on the official website of World Archery.

Competing over 18 metres and indoors, in comparison to the 70-

metre outdoor recurve format, would clearly differentiate the two events while building on the successful professional indoor archery circuit that is already well-established in the USA, the host nation of the next Games after Paris 2024, the release informed.

The request will now be assessed by the International Olympic Committee, alongside submissions from other sports, before a final decision is made.

Compound is a modern bow style invented in the 1960s that uses a system of pulleys and cables, along with release aids and magnified scopes, to increase the bow's speed and accuracy. The compound competition emphasises precision, tension and perfection.



Ranbir Kapoor
I will be working more as I
have to plan a family now

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ranbir Kapoor is head over heels for her ladylove Alia Bhatt. Today during a press conference ahead of the trailer release of Shamsheer RK didn't leave a single chance to appreciate wife, Alia.

When a fan exclaimed, "Ranbir, you have stolen our hearts," the actor heard it. Without pausing, the actor responded, "ab mene vo sab chod diya"

(I have left stealing

hearts).

Ranbir mentioned his lifelong love during the press conference and commented, "I couldn't ask for a finer life partner." "I am the one who has claimed that marriage is a daal chawal but trust me, Alia is a daal chawal with all the spices," he continued.

While discussing the future plans, actor said that he will be working much more now that he needs to plan a family.

For the unversed, Shamsheer will hit the big screen on 22 July 2022. Apart from that Ranbir Kapoor has Bhramasra and Animal as her upcoming project.

BHUSHAN KUMAR
GIFTS A SWANKY CAR
TO KARTIK AARYAN



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Kartik Aaryan and Kiara Advani starrer horror-comedy Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2 raked in Rs 200 crore at the box office. Directed by Anees Bazmee, the film was produced by Bhushan Kumar and Murad Khetani.

Elated by the overwhelming success of the flick, Bhushan Kumar surprised Kartik Aaryan by gifting him

a swanky car.

Kartik Aaryan has proudly become the first and only owner of the McLaren GT in India with starting price of Rs 3.73 crore (ex-showroom). The pictures of the two posing by the car are doing rounds on the internet.

On the work front,

Kartik Aaryan has a bunch of interesting films in his

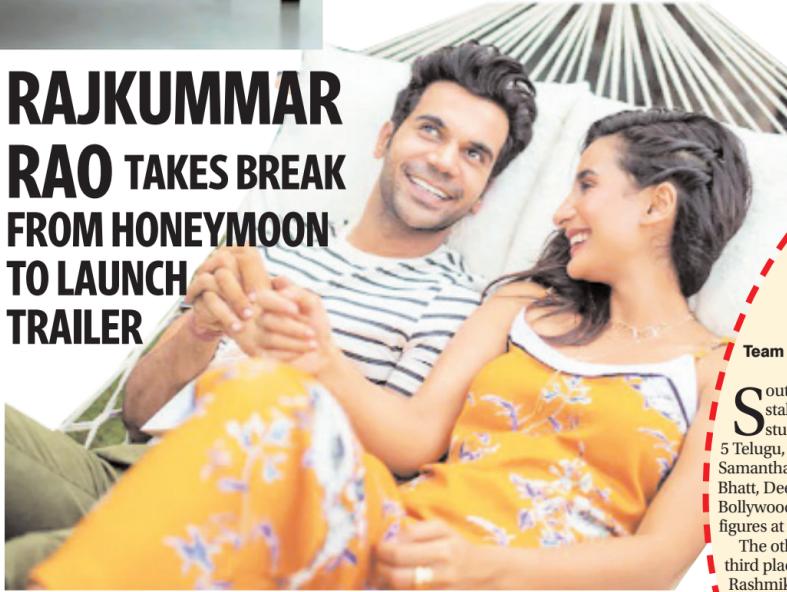
pipeline. He will be co-starring Kriti Sanon once again in Shehzada. The film is supposed to be a remake of Allu Arjun's hit movie Ala Vaikuntapurramuloo and has been produced by Bhushan Kumar, Aman Gill and Allu Aravind. In addition, the actor also has Freddy opposite Alaya F and Hansal Mehta's Captain India in his kitty.



AKSHAY KUMAR, PARESH RAWAL AND SUNIEL SHETTY TO REUNITE AGAIN?

Mumbai: Paresh Rawal, Akshay Kumar and Suniel Shetty starrer 2006 flick Phir Hera Pheri was a laughter riot that is still loved by a large section of the audience. The fans are eagerly anticipating the sequence of the film and here is good news for them! Producer Firoz Nadiadwala has ascertained that the sequel of the film is on cards. Producer Firoz Nadiadwala, in a recent interview, confirmed working on Hera Pheri 3 and also mentioned that it would have the original cast. "You'll get to see it very soon with the same star cast - Akshay ji, Paresh bhai and Suniel ji. The story is in place, and we are working on certain modalities. It'll be made in the same way, retaining the innocence of the characters. We can't take past achievements for granted. So, we have to be extra careful in terms of our content, story, screenplay, characters, mannerism etc," he told while speaking to a news portal. The first part which released in the year 2000 was directed by Priyadarshan, while the second part which came out in 2006 was helmed and written by Neeraj Vora.

RAJKUMMAR RAO TAKES BREAK FROM HONEYMOON TO LAUNCH TRAILER



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Rajkummar Rao, who was holidaying with his actress-wife Patralekhaa, took a break from his honeymoon and gave time to his work and travelled to Mumbai to attend the trailer launch of his film 'Hit: The First Case'. Rajkummar arrived in Mumbai, travelled 22 hours to be part of the grand event only to travel back to his holiday later in the night.

Talking about the same at the event, the actor shared, "It was important for me to take a holiday after such a long pandemic as I couldn't take one after my marriage. I landed this morning at 9 am and I will be flying back tonight itself." "I travelled all this way just for the trailer launch of my film

because this film is very special to me and Sailesh is an excellent filmmaker. His original HIT was one of my favourites. And it was fun shooting with Sanya, Bhushan Sir, Dil Raju Sir and Kuldeep sir. So, when the team informed me that we are planning to launch the trailer and you might have to come for a day to attend it, I did not even think for a second before saying yes because this is the film that I am proud of." He added: "This film presents me in a very different avatar and it also brings a great investigative thriller in our Indian Cinema because there are hardly any thriller films and a good thriller film is absolutely rare. So, I am very very happy that we all are a part of HIT: The First Case." The film will hit the theatres on July 15.

SAMANTHA TOPS THE LIST OF MOST POPULAR ACTRESS LEAVING ALIA, DEEPIKA BEHIND

Team Absolute | Mumbai

South stars continue to dominate in the popularity stakes if the results of the Ormax Stars India Loves study are any indication. The top 10 female stars list has 5 Telugu, 3 Hindi and 2 Tamil stars sharing the honours. Samantha tops the list followed by Alia Bhat. Incidentally, Alia Bhatt, Deepika Padukone and Katrina Kaif are the three Bollywood names on the list. While Alia ranks second, Deepika figures at the fifth spot and Katrina coming in at seventh spot.

The other stars from South industry include Nayantara at third place, Kajal Aggarwal at fifth, Keerthy Suresh at sixth, Rashmika, Pooja Hegde, and Anushka Shetty at eight, nine, and ten positions respectively.

Thanks to her diverse roles and acting chops,

Samantha Prabhu's talent as an actor is well known. And now, she has also emerged as the most popular female star of India. As per a recent research report conducted in India by Ormax beginning April, Samantha Prabhu has topped this list which includes other big names of the film world as well from across India.



ARJUN KAPOOR TO RING IN 37TH BIRTHDAY WITH MALAIKA IN PARIS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actor Arjun Kapoor will turn 37 on 26 June and to ring in his special day he will be spending it with his lady love Malaika Arora in Paris.

The couple was papped by the shutterbugs at the airport earlier today. The couple looked absolutely stylish as they slayed in their chic yet casual airport OOTNs. Arjun was seen donning a blue tee-shirt, which he paired with a black leather jacket and denim pants & Malaika Arora slipped into a Christian Dior short dress. She teamed her hoodie dress with boots and looked classy.

JUGJUGG JEEYO : VARUN DHAWAN-KIARA ADVANI STARRER IS A PAISA VASOOL FAMILY ENTERTAINER

FILM REVIEW

BY AAKRUTI BAGLA

Director: Raj Mehta
Runtime: 148 minutes
Cast: Anil Kapoor, Neetu Kapoor, Kiara Advani, Varun Dhawan, Prajakta Koli, Manish Paul
Ratings: 3.5/5

At the time in Bollywood where makers are either focusing on a subject in a preachy way or wooing the audience with high-octane action and thrillers kind of films. Raj Mehta's Jugjugg Jeeyo is like a breath of air with its heart in the right place.

STORY

The story of Jugjugg Jeeyo revolves around the Saini family of Punjab. Bheem Saini's (Anil Kapoor) son and daughter-in-law played by Varun and Kiara are childhood sweethearts whose marriage has hit rock bottom, and after 5 years they decide to part ways. As soon as Kukoo Saini (Varun Dhawan) is about to break this news to his father Bheem (Anil Kapoor), he unearths that Bheem is also planning to divorce his wife, Geeta (Neetu Kapoor) after their daughter Ginny's (Prajakta Koli) wedding, as he has found love in Meera (Tisca Chopra).

Well, what happens next is something you have to witness by heading to theatres near you.

REVIEW

Subject like divorce and separation has been depicted umpteen times on the big screen. But what makes this Raj Mehta's directorial a fun watch is that it is devoid of preachiness and stigmatization that surrounds it. The writers juxtapose drama, emotions, romance and humour seamlessly in the narrative.

The filmmaker's breezy treatment to the taboo subject like divorce is what makes this flick highly pleasing to a wide section of the audience.

The witty lines especially in the first half leave you laughing in your seats. But, the screenplay loses its lustre a few places in the second half. Speaking of other technical aspects, Jay Patel's cinematography and Manish More's editing goes well with the theme of the film.

Music is another outstanding aspect of the film as it is in sync with the situations in the film. While Rangi Saari is soothing to hear, the

Punjabban song is a foot-tapping number. Rest, Dupatta and Nain Ta Heere are passable.

Speaking of performances, all the actors have put their best foot forward. The casting of the film is undoubtedly an appealing aspect and none of the actors will disappoint you.

To start with, Neetu Kapoor tells in a scene that her husband, played by Anil Kapoor is an old player. The actor truly justifies it with his top-notch act. Words fall short to praise his brilliance. Who can tell, that Neetu Kapoor is returning to the big screen after 12 years? As the diva maintains the required subtlety in her act in every aspect. Be it a heart-broken wife, a dotting mommy or an open-minded mother-in-law, the actress nails every part.

Another leading lady in the film that surprises us is Kiara Advani as Naina Saini. Be it scenes which are high on emotions or showing her as a strong-headed woman, she portrays all the facets with utmost per-

fection. Undoubtedly Varun and Kiara make for an outstanding on-screen pair. But it's the equation between Kiara and Neetu Kapoor as mother-in-law and daughter-in-law that are a delight to watch and stands out. Keep your tissues ready as the emotional breakdown moment between the two will leave you teary-eyed. Varun Dhawan has tried hard to do justice to his character of Kukoo Saini, but things slightly went down here. The actor fails to convincingly play tear-jerking moments. Manish Paul is full of energy and his comic timings are impressive. Prajakta Koli too and Tisca Chopra manage to leave an impression despite limited screentime.

FINAL VERDICT

On the whole, Jugjugg Jeeyo is a light-hearted family drama and certainly makes for an entertaining watch. One can experience a gamut of emotions while watching it on the big screen.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Nikita Dutta