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COVID DEATHS AGAIN ON RISE, SOUMYA SWAMINATHAN SAYS BE PREPARED FOR WAVES

BELL ALARMING AGAIN

Even as Covid cases and even deaths are again on the rise globally, the world must be prepared for such Covid-19 waves, World Health Organisation's (WHO) Chief Scientist Soumya Swaminathan has said.

- ▶ THE TWO OMICRON SUB-VARIANTS HAVE SHOWN A WORRISOME ABILITY TO RE-INFECTION PEOPLE PREVIOUSLY VACCINATED OR WHO HAVE RECOVERED FROM COVID.
- ▶ THE US AND BRAZIL ARE CURRENTLY THE MAIN CONTRIBUTORS TO GLOBAL MORTALITY. IN THE US, THE NEW OMICRON VARIANTS HAVE PUSHED UP HOSPITALISATIONS AND DEATHS IN RECENT WEEKS.
- ▶ THE BIGGEST INCREASES IN COVID-19 CASES WERE SEEN IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC AND THE MIDDLE EAST, WHERE THEY JUMPED BY MORE THAN A QUARTER.
- ▶ DEATHS SPIKED BY 78 PER CENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND BY 23 PER CENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, WHILE DROPPING ELSEWHERE OR REMAINING STABLE, THE WHO REPORT SAID.



FREE BOOSTER DOSE VACCINATION STARTED

New Delhi: India starts giving free third Covid vaccine dose to adults. The drive will last 75 days to mark the 75th anniversary of the country's independence on 15 August. Until now, only frontline workers, health workers and people above 60 years were eligible for free booster doses. Others had to pay for it. The move comes days after India cut the gap between the second and third doses of the vaccine to six months from nine. India has administered 50 million booster doses so far, only around 5% of the eligible population. The country began the booster dose programme in January for healthcare and frontline workers, and those above 60 years with comorbidities. It later expanded the drive to all adults. A vaccine programme for 15- to 18-year-olds began in January, and for 12- to -14-year-olds in March.

“We need to be prepared for these #Covid19 waves- each new #variant will be more transmissible & immune evasive- higher numbers infected will translate into greater hospitalisations & sickness. Countries should have a data driven plan to quickly respond to changing situations.”



INDIA REPORTS 20,038 NEW COVID CASES, 47 DEATHS

New Delhi: India on Friday reported a marginal decline at 20,038 Covid infections in the last 24 hours against 20,139 cases reported on Thursday, the Union Health Ministry said. During the same period, the country reported 47 Covid deaths, taking the nationwide death toll to 5,25,604 so far. The active caseload in the country presently stands at 1,39,073, accounting for 0.32 per cent of the country's total positive cases. The recovery of 16,994 patients in the last 24 hours took the cumulative tally to 4,30,45,350. Consequently, India's recovery rate stands at 98.48 per cent. Meanwhile, India's daily positivity rate has also declined to 4.44 per cent, while the weekly positivity rate currently stands at 4.30 per cent. A total of 4,50,820 tests were conducted across the country in the last 24 hours, increasing the overall tally to more than 86.86 crore.

US House of Representatives approves CAATSA waiver for India



Yashwant Raj | Washington

The US House of Representatives on Thursday passed a legislation measure that will urge the Biden administration to waive sanctions on India for purchasing Russian S-400 missile defence systems. The measure passed in a voice vote as an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2023 (the defense budget). To make it to President Joe Biden's desk for enactment, it must be a part of the final legislation that comes out of a process called reconciliation in which bills passed by the House and Senate are made into one. India is potentially facing US sanctions

under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) for its purchase of the Russian S-400s. The 2017 law seeks to punish Russia for the 2016 election interference and other issues by scaring away buyers of its defence equipment with the threat of secondary sanctions. China and Turkey, a NATO ally, are the only two countries sanctioned by the US under this law yet. India has started receiving these systems, which technically should have triggered CAATSA sanctions, but the Biden administration has not publicly declared its intentions, either way.

The amendment that passed Thursday was introduced by Ro Khanna, an Indian American lawmaker from California who is now widely believed to be considering a run for the White House in 2024 if Biden decides to not run again.

"The United States must stand with India in the face of escalating aggression from China. As Vice Chair of the India Caucus, I have been working to strengthen the partnership between our countries and ensure that India can defend itself along the Indian Chinese border," Khanna said in a statement. "This amendment is of the utmost importance, and I am proud to see it pass the House on a bipartisan basis."

IIT Madras best educational institute, Delhi's Miranda House tops in colleges

Team Absolute | New Delhi

IIT-Madras has been declared the top educational institution in India in the overall ranking of all higher educational institutions while the Indian Institute of Science Bangalore has been adjudged as the best university in the country in the NIRF-2022 national ranking. Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) has become the second best university in India. At the same time, Jamia Millia Islamia has now become the third top university in the country. Kolkata's Jadavpur University is at number four. Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeeth Coimbatore has come in fifth place and Banaras Hindu University has come in sixth place.



IIT Bombay is ranked third and IIT Delhi has been declared as the fourth best institute in the country. At the same time, IIT Kanpur has been placed at fifth rank in this category. Delhi University's Miranda House has been adjudged the best college in India in the NIRF-2022 rank-

ing. At second place is Hindu College of Delhi University. Chennai Presidency College is at third place, while Chennai's Loyla College is at fourth place. Delhi University's Lady Shri Ram College is ranked fifth in the category of best colleges across the country.

RUBAIYA SAYEED IDENTIFIES YASIN MALIK AS HER ABDUCTOR



Jammu: Rubaiya Sayeed, daughter of late former J&K Chief Minister, Mufti Muhammad Sayeed, on Friday identified Yasin Malik as her abductor in 1989.

Rubaiya Sayeed, listed as the witness for the prosecution, appeared before the CBI court here and identified Yasin Malik and three other accused as her abductors. Rubaiya Sayeed was abducted in 1989 and her release was managed by swapping four jailed militant commanders when her father was then the Home Minister in the V.P. Singh government. Malik has already been sentenced for life in the terror funding case in which he admitted to the charges levelled against him by the prosecution.

'In Indian democracy, political parties are open to criticism'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi Court on Friday observed, that in Indian democracy, the political parties are open to their criticism, saying the political parties are not shying away from the public to face criticism of its policies. The court's observation came while granting bail to Alt News co-founder Mohammed Zubair in connection with a 2018 contentious tweet case, which allegedly promoted enmity between religious groups, according to the FIR. As per the FIR, in his tweet, Zubair had written: "BEFORE 2014: Honeymoon Hotel. After 2014: Hanuman Hotel." The applicant/accused stated to have used the words "BEFORE 2014: and After 2014" to point out towards a political

party. In Indian democracy the political parties are open for their criticism. The political parties are not shying away from public to face the criticism of its policies. The voice of dissent is necessary for healthy democracy. Therefore, merely for the criticism of any political parties it is not justified to invoke section 153 A and 295 A IPC." Additional Sessions Judge Devender Kumar Jangala of Patiala House Courts stated in the order. The applicant has posted the image of the scene of a movie "Kisi se na Kehna" released in the year 1983. This movie was certified by the Central Board of Film Certification, which is a statutory body of the Government of India and is available for public view since then. No complaint is stated to have been filed till today that the said scene of

movie has hurt the feelings of particular community of society, the court noted. It was also noted that democracy can neither work nor prosper unless people go out to share their views. "Democracy is a government by the people via open discussion. The Democracy can neither work nor prosper unless people go out to share their views. Article 19 (1) (a) of the Constitution of India gives freedom of speech and expression to its citizen. Undoubtedly free speech is the proper foundation of a democratic society. A free exchange of ideas, dissemination of information without restraints, dissemination of knowledge, airing of differing viewpoints, debating and forming one's own views and expressing them, are the basic indicator of a free society," the order said.

"Misled, Betrayed, Cheated": Rahul jabs centre on unemployment

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the issue of joblessness, asking if India's unemployed youth can use "unparliamentary" words -- misled, betrayed and cheated -- "for your lies" of providing two crore jobs every year. Gandhi shared a graph based on the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data which showed that unemployment had doubled in five years from 2017-18 to 2021-22. The graph showed the percentage of unemployment in the last five years with the poster: "Where are the 2 crore jobs/year, Prime Minister?" "Misled. Betrayed. Cheated. Prime Minister, can India's unemployed youth use these 'unparliamentary' words for your lies?" the former Congress chief said in a tweet. Gandhi's attack also comes after opposition uproar over certain words of common use being categorised as unparliamentary in a booklet by the Lok Sabha Secretariat.



Trump escapes impeachment but Speaker orders independent 9/11-style probe

Ashok Nilakantan | New York

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has announced her plans to establish a 9/11 style independent commission outside the Congress to probe the January 6, 2021 Capitol Hills insurrection, even as bipartisan Senators voted 57-43 to impeach the former president, but failed to get the support of 17 Republicans to have the 2/3rd majority required to convict Trump. Trump was free to go on impeachment in the second vote of the senate. Even as Trump got this reprieve with his 'Trumpification' of the Republican party, Pelosi announced plans for Congress to establish an outside and independ-

ent commission to investigate "the facts and causes" related to the attack on the US Capitol last year. In a letter to her Democratic colleagues on Monday, the California Democrat said the commission will be modelled on the commission established after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. President Joe Biden responded to the Senate's acquittal of Trump by reminding Americans that truth must be defended, saying the impeachment of the former President was a stark illustration of the danger posed to democracy by lies, misinformation and extremism. And Biden said that although Trump was acquitted, his actions in the lead-up to the Jan 6 riots were not "in dispute".

- ▶ A VOICE NOTE SHARED AS A STATUS UPDATE MAY BE CALLED "VOICE STATUS".
- ▶ THE FEATURE WILL ONLY BE SHARED WITH THE PEOPLE YOU CHOOSE WITHIN YOUR STATUS PRIVACY SETTINGS, AND THE VOICE NOTE WILL BE END-TO-END ENCRYPTED AS OTHER IMAGES AND VIDEOS SHARED TO YOUR STATUS.
- ▶ RECENTLY, THE PLATFORM ANNOUNCED THAT IT IS ROLLING OUT A NEW FEATURE THAT WILL LET USERS REACT TO MESSAGES WITH ANY EMOJI OF THEIR CHOICE.
- ▶ CURRENTLY, THE PLATFORM GIVES SEVERAL USERS THE ABILITY TO REACT WITH A LIMITED NUMBER OF JUST SIX EMOJIS.

WhatsApp may soon let you post voice notes on status updates

San Francisco | Agencies

Meta-owned messaging platform WhatsApp is working on a new feature that may allow users to post voice notes on their status updates. According to WABetaInfo, this feature is under development so it is not ready to be released to beta users. "WhatsApp is planning to extend the functionality of status updates by adding the support for voice notes," as per the report. CEO Mark Zuckerberg



mentioned some of the emojis like a robot, french fries, surfing in the sea, etc. Meanwhile, a recent report said that WhatsApp is also likely working on a feature that will give iOS users the ability to hide their online status from everyone. Currently, users can choose to display their "Last Seen" information to contacts, some people, or no one. For a future version of the app, WhatsApp will let users follow a similar approach to the online toggle.



WOMAN WILLING STAYING WITH MAN CAN'T FILE RAPE CASE IF RELATIONSHIP FAILS: SC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court has held that a woman, who was in a relationship with a man and willingly staying with him, cannot file a case of rape, after the relationship had gone sour.

It ordered release of the appellant on bail to the satisfaction of the competent authority.

A bench of Justices Hemant Gupta and Vikram Nath noted the admitted case of the complainant that she was in a relationship with the appellant for a period of four years. Also, the complainant's counsel admitted that she was 21 years old, when the relationship started.

"In view of the said fact, the complainant has willingly staying with the appellant and had the relationship. Therefore, now if the relationship is not working out, the same cannot be a ground for lodging an FIR for the offence under Section 376(2)(n) IPC," said the bench.

Ansaar Mohammad had moved



the top court challenging the Rajasthan High Court's May 19 order, which dismissed an application for pre-arrest bail under Section

438 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 for the offences under Sections 376(2)(n), 377 and 506 IPC.

The top court granted anticipatory bail to Mohammad who was accused of rape, unnatural offences, and criminal intimidation.

"Consequently, we allow the present appeal and set aside the order of the High Court. The appellant is ordered to be released on bail to the satisfaction of the competent authority," it said. However, the bench clarified that the observations in the present order are only for the purposes of deciding the pre-arrest bail application. "The investigation shall proceed uninfluenced by the observations made in the present order. Pending application(s), if any, also stand disposed of," said the bench.

The high court had said: "It is an admitted position that petitioner had made the relation with the complainant by promising to marry her and due to their relation, one female child was born. So, looking at the gravity of offence, I do not consider it a fit case to enlarge the petitioners on anticipatory bail. Hence, the anticipatory bail application is dismissed."

NITISH DIDN'T EVEN RESPOND TO MY MESSAGES DURING POLL CAMPAIGN: YASHWANT SINHA

Patna | Agencies

Opposition's Presidential poll candidate Yashwant Sinha on Friday said that he had repeatedly tried to contact Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar during his campaign but the latter refused to talk to him.

Sinha was in Patna during his presidential election campaign and all the opposition parties including the RJD, Congress, the CPI, the CPI-M, and the CPI-ML unanimously expressed their support.

"When the leaders of opposition parties unanimously announced my name as a joint candidate for the presidential post, I called every leader to get their support and help. Accordingly, I repeatedly contacted Bihar CM Nitish Kumar and also sent text messages to him and said that I want to talk to him but he refused. I believe his political status is bigger than people like me. Hence, he did not talk to me," Sinha said.

"When the NDA announced the name of Draupadi Murmu as a candidate for the presidential poll, Odhisha CM Naveen Patnaik announced his party's support to her as she is a native of his state. Earlier, when Pratibha Patil became a candidate for the presidential election, the Shiv Sena had given support to her as she belongs to Maharashtra. Similarly, I belong to Bihar and



hence, I was thinking that Nitish Kumar may support me in the presidential poll," Sinha said.

"I personally believe that he should think about Bihar. If a candidate comes from Bihar, why Nitish Kumar is not coming in his favour is hard to understand. If Nitish Kumar is not thinking about Bihar and thinking of the universe, then I don't know but if he is thinking about Bihar, he should help a candidate who belongs to Bihar," Sinha said.

RSS a threat to the nation, Start construction work of sanctioned PMAY(U) houses by Aug 15: Ministry to states

In wake of the controversy over Patna SSP Manaveet Singh Dhillon's statement comparing the RSS with the PFI, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav said that RSS is dangerous for the society and the country, and whatever the police officer had said is completely true.

Patna | Agencies

The RJD is saying right from the beginning that the RSS is a threat to the country. At present, whatever the poisonous and hatred spread in the society is only due to the RSS. It is in the agenda of RSS," the Leader of Opposition in the Bihar Assembly said.

"Patna SSP Manaveet Singh Dhillon has rightly described the RSS. The BJP is demanding his termination but I would say that he must be congratulated for his effort to prevent a big incident," he said.

Earlier, his party's national spokesperson Mritunjay Tiwari also said that the statement of Patna SSP is true about the RSS, and it is



spreading hatred in the society. Following the strong reaction of the BJP, the Patna SSP also clarified that his statement was wrongly interpreted.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With a view to expedite the construction of houses under the governments flagship scheme Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban), the Ministry of Urban Affairs has set a timeframe asking the states to start construction work of the sanctioned houses as per the schedule by August 15, 2022.

Sources said the states have been directed to submit their plans up to July this year and expedite compliances for fund release.

All the houses sanctioned after June 30, 2021 have to start construction before August 15 this year. Similarly, the houses which have been sanctioned before June 30, 2021, had to initiate construction latest by June 30 this year.

Many states, including Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and a few others, have been asked to submit their utilisation



certificates against the earlier release of funds from the Centre.

States and UTs, including Chhattisgarh, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Odisha, Punjab and a few others, have been asked to ensure the release of Central assistance along with the state's matching share to the concerned

agencies, including urban local bodies, beneficiaries and others. All these issues were discussed in a recently held meeting of the Central monitoring committee of the Housing Ministry wherein many states were asked to submit social audit reports for claiming the third instalment of Central assistance.

States have also been asked to resolve all MIS (management information system) for claiming instalments of Central assistance. In this regard, they have been advised to regularly review the progress of geotagging of various stages of construction and ensure that only good quality images are uploaded. States have also been advised to upload photographs of completed houses with the PMAY(U) logo. Based on the project proposals submitted by the states/UTs, more than 122.7 lakh houses have been sanctioned across the country under PMAY-U, out of which more than 61 lakh houses have been completed so far. Eligible beneficiaries can avail the benefit of PMAY-U through four verticals, including Beneficiary-led Construction or enhancement (BLC); Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP); 'In-Situ' Slum Redevelopment (ISSR) and Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS).

K'taka riot victim's kin refuses Rs 2L compensation, throws it back at Siddaramaiah

Bagalkot (Karnataka) | Agencies

In a big embarrassment to Opposition leader Siddaramaiah, the kin of a victim of a communal clash refused to take Rs 2 lakh as compensation and threw the money at his vehicle in Karnataka's Bagalkot district on Friday.

Rajma, the wife of Mohammad Haneef, who was assaulted during a communal clash in Kerur, said she threw the money because she did not want it.

"Hindus and Muslims should live like children of one mother. I can get food, if I tell anyone that I am hungry," she said.

"Today they will give compensation and go away. My husband can't work for another year because of the assault. What should we do? Everyone will come seeking votes. No one should indulge in rowdism. Hindus and Muslims should live together. Why do we need all these conflicts," Rajma questioned.

When asked what she will do now for the treatment of her husband,



she explained that the Anjuman committee is taking care of everything and she is grateful to them.

The incident took place when Siddaramaiah, who is the Congress MLA from Badami constituency in the district, had gone to a hospital in Kerur to meet those who got injured in a communal clash.

At the hospital, he handed over Rs 2 lakh as compensation to four injured persons.

Rajma, the family member of one of the injured persons, took the cash and said that she wanted peace, not money. Though Siddaramaiah sitting in his vehicle tried to console her by holding her hand, she did not

budge and threw back the money at his vehicle.

Meanwhile, some injured persons from the Hindu community, who have also been admitted to the hospital, refused to meet Siddaramaiah. The Opposition leader, who was all set to meet them, cancelled his visit at the last minute.

Five dead, 8 injured in Delhi wall collapse

Team Absolute | New Delhi

At least 5 persons were killed and 8 others sustained injuries after a boundary wall of an under-construction warehouse collapsed in the national capital on Friday afternoon, an official said.

Delhi Fire Service chief Atul Garg said that they received a call about the incident around 12.40 p.m. at Bakoli village, near Chauhan Dharamkanta in the Narela area after which six fire tenders were immediately pressed into service.

Delhi Police also received a PCR call at the same time at Alipur police station after which the staff rushed to the spot and found that approximately 100 ft long and 15 ft high wall of an under construction warehouse had



collapsed. "Initially, approximately 20 labourers who were digging a foundation just adjacent to the wall were buried under the debris," the official said. Meanwhile, ambulances and firefighters also reached the spot and collectively, the police and the firemen were able to rescue 13 labourers from the accident site. "All of them were immediately rushed to

Raja Harish Chand Hospital, however, five of them succumbed to their injuries," the official said.

The rescue operation is still underway. The police have set a perimeter for the people to keep them away from the incident site as an intense rescue operation was going on to save any person who might be still trapped under the debris.

HOLIDAY DECLARED IN K'TAKA SCHOOLS AMID RAIN FURY

Bengaluru: Heavy rains continued to pound many districts of Karnataka on Friday, forcing the authorities to declare holiday in schools in Belagavi, Chikkamagalur and Hassan districts.

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai has called a meeting of district commissioners and other concerned officials from the rain-affected districts on Friday where he will take stock of the flood situation. District Commissioner Nitesh Patil has announced two-day school holiday in Belagavi district considering the heavy rainfall there.

Krishna river is overflowing and people on the river banks have been alerted to ensure safety. The rains have wreaked havoc in Chikkamagalur, Kodagu and Hassan districts as well.

Till Wednesday, heavy rains claimed 32 lives in the state, while 14 relief camps have been set up across Karnataka. The four coastal districts of Dakshina Kannada, Uttara Kannada, Udupi and Kodagu have received additional rainfall in July this year. North Karnataka districts have also received excessive rain.

Minor girl gang-raped in Delhi, 3 held

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A 16-year-old girl was allegedly gang-raped by two people in the national capital, an official said here on Friday.

For the heinous crime, the police have apprehended three people, including two who committed the rape and another person who was also present at the time of the crime. All the three accused were aged 23, 25 and 35 years.

The incident took place on the intervening night of July 6-7 when the victim had gone to meet two of her known people.

"A PCR call was received at Vasant Vihar police station at 4 a.m. on July 8 in which the caller stated three men have molested a girl," Deputy Commissioner of Police (southwest) Manoj C. said.

The caller, who was the father of the victim girl, told police that his minor daughter went from Vasant Vihar with three people in



a Wagon R car at 8.30 p.m. on July 6 and all of them returned the next day, July 7, in the morning. The girl revealed about the incident to her parents late in the

evening after which they took their daughter to a hospital.

"On examination, the victim girl informed that at 8.30 p.m. on July 6, she met with two men,

both known to her, near Vasant Vihar market. Both of them offered her a joyride and then another person came there with his Wagon R car," the DCP said.

After this, all the four rode the car and went to Mahipalpur where they bought the liquor and consumed it.

"In her statement, the victim stated that after consuming the liquor all four of them went to a lonely place where one of the person, who was known to the girl, kissed her first and later the other two men committed rape," DCP Manoj said.

Accordingly, based on her statement, the police registered a case under relevant sections of the POCSO Act and the Indian Penal Code.

The official informed that there was no external injury on the victim or even on the accused. "Investigation is still underway to clarify the facts," the official added.

'Guidelines routine', say LS Secretariat sources after Oppn uproar

Team Absolute | New Delhi

After the opposition's uproar on the ban on protests in the Parliament premises, sources in the Lok Sabha Secretariat said that these 'are routine advisories' ahead of every session.

Secretariat sources said similar advisories had been issued in the past also. This has been happening during the previous tenures in Parliament. The Congress has taken strong objection to it as this comes on the heels of controversy over the use of words during the parliamentary proceedings.

The guideline issued in the parliamentary bulletin says, "Members can't use the precincts of the parliament house for any demonstration, Dharna, strike, fast or purpose for performing any religious ceremony."

The advisory was issued on Thursday by the Parliament Security Office.

On Thursday, the Speaker clarified that there was no ban on the use of words as it was alleged by the opposition. The booklet said, "Words and expressions in English which have been declared unparliamentary in Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, State Legislatures in India and some Commonwealth Parliaments."

Leader of opposition in Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge said, "The way the BJP Govt has destroyed the functioning of the house since 2014 is way more Unparliamentary than those words that describe the characteristics of this gov't. Congress led UPA believed in democracy but BJP led NDA stifles any scope for dissent or difference of opinion."



WILL QUIT POLITICS IF A SINGLE MLA LOSES POLLS: CM EKNATH SHINDE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Throwing the gauntlet at the erstwhile Maha Vikas Aghadi government which he toppled, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Friday declared that he would quit politics if a single MLA who joined him loses the next Assembly polls.

"I am confident that all these 50 MLAs will win the elections... If any of them lose, I will resign from politics," Shinde said, speaking at a rally by one of his supporting legislators, Abdul Sattar.

He reiterated that in the next state elections, his Shiv Sena and ally Bharatiya Janata Party would jointly bag 200 seats - or he would leave politics.

Referring to the recent dra-



matic rebellion that led to the collapse of the MVA headed by then Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, Shinde admitted how he was "worried" over its possible consequences. "When all that was happening, initially there were some 30 MLAs, then 50 legislators... All of them would encourage and support me. But I was worried, at

the back of my mind, I wondered what would happen to them as they had staked their entire political careers with me," he said. While he spent sleepless nights, his supporters - 40 MLAs from Shiv Sena and 10 others - were 'bindaas' (carefree) and goaded him to go ahead with his plans with their full backing, he added. Since the rebellion that

started quietly on June 20, the MLAs travelled to Gujarat, then Assam and later to Goa before returning to Maharashtra after he took oath as CM on June 30, along with BJP's Devendra Fadnavis as Deputy CM.

Recalling how his group was labelled as dogs, pigs and zombies by various Shiv Sena leaders, Shinde refuted allegations that any of the MLAs were taken away "forcibly" and said they came together for the uprising in the cause of Hindutva and the state's development. He said that the legislators were inspired by Balasaheb Thackeray and Anand Dighe who always considered the Congress and Nationalist Congress Party as political enemies and felt "suffocated" under the MVA tenure for two-and-half years.

MAHARASHTRA LEGISLATURE MONSOON SESSION POSTPONED

Mumbai: The Maharashtra Legislature's monsoon session, which was scheduled to start from June 18, has been postponed, an official said here on Friday.

The new dates for the session shall be announced later, according to a formal announcement, though reasons for the postponement are not specified.

Earlier this month, Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari had convened a special session for 2 days on July 3-4 to enable the election of the Assembly Speaker and a vote of confidence for Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis who were sworn-in on June 30.

SUSHMITA SEN BREAKS HER SILENCE ON LALIT MODI AFFAIR: NOT MARRIED, NO RINGS!

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Sushmita Sen, who has been the focal point of headlines for a few hours now courtesy IPL founder Lalit Modi's social media posts, has broken her silence.

Since it all started from a social media post, the 'Aarya' actress and former Miss Universe chose the platform of social media to share a cryptic message.

Sushmita took to her Instagram and posted a picture of herself with her daughters - Renee and Alisah. She wrote in the caption, "I'm in a happy place. NOT MARRIED... NO RINGS... Unconditionally surrounded by love!"

She further wrote in the caption, "Enough clarification given... Now back to life & work. Thank you for sharing in my happiness always... and for those who don't... it's #NYOB (none of your business) Anyway!! I love you guys!!" Earlier, Lalit Modi posted several of his pictures with Sushmita from their holidays and social gatherings claiming that the two are dating. "Just back in London after a whirling global



tour #maldives #sardinia with the families - not to mention my #better looking partner @sushmitasen47 - a new beginning a new life finally", he had posted on his social handles. "Over the moon. In love does not mean marriage yet. But one day by God's grace it will happen. Just announced that we are together (sic)", he had shared.

Modi later clarified that he and Sushmita are not yet married but just dating.

On Uddhav Thackeray's Aurangabad renaming move, Eknath Shinde's decision

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Friday said the previous Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government's decision to rename Aurangabad city when it had been reduced to minority was illegal, and it will be ratified again in the next cabinet meeting.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Uddhav Thackeray-led MVA government announced the renaming of Aurangabad in central Maharashtra as 'Sambhajinagar' -- after Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's elder son Chhatrapati Sambhaji -- in its last cabinet meeting on June 29, hours before Uddhav Thackeray resigned. Shinde was sworn in as

chief minister with the BJP's support the next day, having split the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena.

"The MVA government took the decision to rename Aurangabad as Sambhajinagar in its last cabinet meeting when it had been reduced to a minority government. Holding a cabinet meeting (in such a situation) was illegal," the chief minister claimed at an event here.

Sena founder Bal Thackeray had announced that Aurangabad -- which derives its name from Mughal emperor Aurangzeb -- will be renamed as Sambhajinagar several decades ago, Shinde said.

"The name Sambhajinagar is already there, we will ratify it in the next cabinet meeting," he said, adding that this will make the decision legally safe.

OVER 11,000 RAIN-AFFECTED PEOPLE IN GADCHIROLI SHIFT-ED TO SAFETY

Nagpur: Over 11,000 rain-affected people were shifted to safety in 45 villages amid incessant rainfall in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district, police said on Friday.

According to the district disaster management cell, Gadchiroli received 27.7 mm rainfall during the day and heavy to moderate showers were witnessed in parts of the district. Around 24 routes in the district were blocked due to overflowing of nullahs and damages to the bridges, and many of the closed routes are slowly being opened for traffic, it said.

As many as 11,836 people from 45 villages have been shifted to help centres so far, and no loss of life or rain-related accident was reported in the district during the day, it was stated.

Devendra Fadnavis meets Raj Thackeray ahead of Mumbai civic polls

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis met Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) president Raj Thackeray in Mumbai on Friday.

The meeting, which is currently underway, is taking place at 'Shivtirtha', Mr Thackeray's residence at Dadar in central Mumbai.

The MNS chief had last month undergone a hip replacement surgery at the Lilavati Hospital. This is Mr Fadnavis's first visit to Mr Thackeray after the surgery. Earlier this month,



Thackeray had written an open letter to Fadnavis, praising him for setting an example of party loyalty and commitment by taking over as deputy chief minister of the state despite

being the frontrunner for the top post. The meeting between the two leaders assumes significance in view of the upcoming elections to the Brihanmumbai Municipal

Corporation (BMC) and the pending expansion of the Maharashtra cabinet led by Eknath Shinde.

Shinde, who rebelled against the Shiv Sena leadership along with majority of party MLAs, took oath as the chief minister on June 30, a day after the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government led by Uddhav Thackeray collapsed. Mr Fadnavis was sworn in as his deputy. The MNS, which has one MLA, had backed the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the last month's elections to the Rajya Sabha as well as state Legislative Council seats.

MAN ARRESTED FOR RAPING ON PROMISE OF MARRIAGE IN LATUR

A MAN WAS ARRESTED FOR ALLEGEDLY RAPING A WOMAN ON A FALSE PROMISE OF MARRIAGE AND FORCING HER TO CONVERT HER RELIGION IN MAHARASHTRA'S LATUR CITY, POLICE SAID ON FRIDAY.

Latur | Agencies

The police on Thursday arrested Arafat Laik Khan (32), a resident of Zinganappa lane area of the city, deputy superintendent of police



Jitendra Jagdale said.

Based on the complaint lodged by the 27-year-old victim, a case under section 376 (rape) and other relevant

provisions of the IPC and Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 has been registered against the arrest-

ed accused and seven members of his family, he said.

According to the police, the victim had a shop in the same shopping complex as the accused and they got acquainted with each other and entered into a relationship.

The accused proposed to her in October 2018 and forced her to convert her religion, following which an agreement was made on a bond paper. The accused allegedly took the victim to a flat in a residential building and raped her. However, the accused later arranged to marry another woman, the police said.

When the victim went to the accused's house to demand an explanation, his family members threatened to kill her, they said, adding that further probe is underway.

"Bowling Before Gujarat": NCP jabs CM

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shahar Pawar's party NCP criticised Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde over the clearances given to the Ahmedabad-Mumbai bullet train project, saying he should focus more on issues concerning the state. Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday said that Chief Minister Shinde had given all the clearances to expedite the project, which the previous Maha Vikas Aghadi

government, of the Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress, had put on the back burner.

The NCP's chief spokesperson Mahesh Tapase said, "The illegal government of Eknath Shinde has expeditiously given clearances to the bullet train project".

Thane district, which Eknath Shinde represents, is the most urbanised district in the state, with the largest number of municipal corporations, he said.

"Shinde should focus more on issues concerning

the state and Thane district to resolve the urban problems it faces, instead of bowling before neighbouring Gujarat," Tapase alleged.

The estimated cost of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project is 1,10,000 crore, of which Rs 88,000 crore are being funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Over 70 per cent land required in Maharashtra for the project has been acquired in Thane and Palghar districts.

ATTACKS ON SHIV SAINIKS WON'T BE TOLERATED: UDDHAV



Mumbai: On Friday, the Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray stated that the attacks on Sena party workers would not be tolerated.

Thackeray was speaking after meeting Sena worker Baban Gaonkar who was attacked by unidentified persons on Thursday night.

Byculla is the Assembly constituency of Yamini Jadhav, one of the rebel Sena MLAs who has joined Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's faction.

"Attempts to play with the lives of Shiv Sena workers will not be tolerated. If police can not bring the culprits to book, Sena workers will do it. Police shouldn't get into politics," Thackeray said.

Congress to begin probe into MLAs' cross-voting in Maha MLC polls

Senior Congress leader Mohan Prakash will reach Mumbai on Saturday for a two-day probe into the alleged cross-voting by party legislators during the Maharashtra Legislative Council biennial elections held on June 20, officials said here on Friday.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

He will also examine the chain of events concerning the vote of confidence by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde in which 11 Congress MLAs were absent in the special session of the Maharashtra Legislature held on July 3-4.

A former AICC General Secretary In-Charge of Maharashtra, Prakash is well-versed with the state Congress's faction-ridden politics and is expected to submit his report to the party high command for necessary action and remedial measures next week.

For the 10 MLC seats, the Congress had fielded two candidates - Chandrakant Handore and Bhai Jagtap - with calculations in their favour given the erstwhile Maha Vikas Aghadi strength then.

In the hotly-contested polls, the first candidate Handore was trounced while Jagtap emerged the surprise winner, proving to be a huge loss of face for the party. A prominent Dalit leader and ex-minister, Handore is the Working President of state Congress, while Jagtap is the Mumbai Congress President.

The party has taken the embarrassing debacle of its first-choice candidate



(Handore) - who secured less than the allotted votes - very seriously in the MLC

polls, said party officials. Prakash is slated to meet top leaders

including state Congress President Nana Patole, Handore and Jagtap, other senior

leaders and legislators, jointly or individually to get to the bottom of the cross-voting mystery.

An office-bearer said the party will find out who was responsible for Handore's defeat considering the MVA's numerical strength which could have ensured victory for both Handore and Jagtap easily.

Soon after the elections, ex-CM Prithviraj Chavan and ex-Minister Naseem Khan besides Handore had demanded a probe into the cross-voting fracas, while Patole met Congress President Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and General Secretary, Organisation, K.C. Venugopal in Delhi.

Prakash will also discuss the chain of events leading to the collapse of the MVA, the "absenteeism" of the 11 Congress MLAs during CM Shinde's vote of confidence on July 4, and whether they comprised the 7 suspected of cross-voting in the MLC polls.

The absentees included MLAs Jitesh Antapurkar who was busy with his (own) wedding and Praniti Sushilkumar Shinde was abroad, besides Ashok Chavan, Vijay Wadettiwar, Dheeraj Vilasrao Deshmukh, Zeeshan Siddiqui, Shirish Chaudhary, Madhavrao Javalgaonkar, Kunal Patil, Raju Awale, and Mohan Hambarde.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Mamata Banerjee on mission hills

In order to communicate better with the people of the Darjeeling hills in north Bengal, who are predominantly Gorkhas, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has decided to learn the Gorkhali language. She expressed this wish while addressing a function on the occasion of the birth anniversary of the Nepali poet, Bhanu Bhakta. She said that she has already found a way to learn Gorkhali. "One of my nephews is getting married to a girl who is a resident of Kurseong. Both of them are doctors by profession. I have decided to learn Gorkhali from her after the marriage," the chief minister said. Speaking on the occasion, she referred to the life of Bhanu Bhakta and said this great Nepali poet never believed in creating division among the people. "We in Trinamool Congress speak of unity among people. We believe that one can become a true leader only if he or she works among the people," the chief minister said. On Wednesday morning, Banerjee moved around the streets of Darjeeling and interacted with the people, especially the children. She gifted chocolates to the children and also attended photo sessions with them. Incidentally, West Bengal governor Jagdeep Dhankhar and Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma were also in Darjeeling. On Wednesday, the governor invited the chief minister of both the states for tea. After the tea, the chief minister said that it was just a courtesy call and there was no discussion on politics. When asked whether there was discussion between her and Biswa Sarma on the forthcoming Presidential polls, the chief minister said "How is that possible since we are from two different parties." She refused to comment on the controversy over the new look of the national emblem.

DRAUPADI MURMU WILL ENHANCE THE DECORUM OF PRESIDENCY

Lalit Garg

By declaring Draupadi Murmu as its candidate for the country's fifteenth presidential election, the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance has raised the value of the tribal community, especially by bringing tribal life into the mainstream. This decision shows the political acumen and maturity of the BJP. She is a tribal daughter who will be the first tribal to reach the highest constitutional post and the second woman President of the Republic of India, which will give new strength to the democracy of India, along with the world. India is also changing rapidly. A new political vision, a new political environment is taking shape in the all-pervading turmoil, in this era, with Draupadi Murmu becoming the President, not only the dignity of this highest constitutional post will get a new record, but the national existence and identity will also be strengthened. Because her image has been that of a knowledgeable and soft-spoken politician of settled democratic traditions. It is expected that her presence as the constitutional head of the country will reassure every Indian, especially tribal women, for their peaceful and safe life. Only the tribal can feel the pain of the tribal - that is, the pain of the reality that has been experienced. In my view, it is not surprising if Draupadi Murmu emerges as the biggest female heroine to raise the voice of the tribal and the oppressed in today's world. Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had sent a Muslim APJ Abdul Kalam to Rashtrapati Bhavan and now Narendra Modi first made a Dalit Ramnath Kovind the President and now Draupadi Murmu, a Scheduled Tribe, is being elevated to the highest post of the executive, which is certainly a healthy, ideal and aware democracy & as a sign of auspiciousness. The credit for the presentation of Draupadi Murmu as a brilliant and historic presidential candidate goes to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP President J.P. Nadda's strategy. Murmu's nomination is only sharpening the edge of lower class politics on which BJP has been working hard for a long time. The neglect of the tribal community across the country has been in the news since independence; Modi has been active since the beginning for the interest and welfare of the tribal's, affecting about 11 percent of the total electorate



and about 25 percent of the total voter turnout.

Particularly, the BJP, comprising Narendra Modi, Amit Shah and J.P. Nadda, is giving special attention to the tribal community so that it can bring itself out of the limited identity of the urban party. When the names of presidential candidates were being discussed, I was hoping to get some names from the tribal community itself. Murmu was on top of them. Certainly, having a tribal woman in Rashtrapati Bhavan will enhance the image of BJP among the tribal community, whose direct impact can be seen in states like West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Gujarat.

Narendra Modi has not only stunned and surprised the nation but has been doing miracles with his decisions; the same has been done by announcing the name of Draupadi Murmu. Because many targets have been hit with this one arrow. The BJP has been struggling hard in these states due to the presence of very powerful regional parties like Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, BJD in Odisha and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha in Jharkhand. Whereas in all these three states the dominance of Congress is negligible. In such a situation, by sending Draupadi Murmu to Rashtrapati Bhavan, BJP will not only be able to ease its fight, but will also be successful in making its place in these states. The elections in Gujarat are in front, there is also a tribal community in abundance, the effect of this decision will be seen there as well. On the other hand, for the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, its fight against the conversion of a large number of tribal's on behalf of Christian missionaries may also become easier now.

BJP has been showing efficient and mature politics in these years. Their leadership, showing strategic acumen, made a tribal-Dalit-backward uprising over the years by making a person from a caste-backward

background the Prime Minister, a person from a Dalit background as the President and now a tribal woman as the presidential candidate. The meaning has changed. It has been given the name of social harmony, after a tribal politician becomes the President, there will be justice for the tribal and backward class, it is believed. It is wrong to say that the President in India is only an office of symbolic importance.

Coming from a Dalit background, President K.R. Narayanan took a tough stand on the communal violence in Gujarat in 2002, forcing the then state government to change its stand on some matters, while President Giani Zail Singh, who came from a backward background, took many of the intoxicated Rajiv Gandhi government. The issues were sweated. Ramnath Kovind also strengthened the democracy of the country with his decisions taken from time to time. There is every possibility that Draupadi Murmu will be elected as the President and after taking oath of this office, she will also display the same determination and make her tenure memorable for the country, which is free from terror, free from scams and free from communalism. In which Dalit, Adivasi and backward classes should get an equal and fair lifestyle of living. Being a candidate from a simple family to the highest office of the country is a testimony to the glory of Indian democracy. Nothing can be better than being Draupadi Murmu's candidate as President and marching towards being elected is an inspiration to crores of people with similar backgrounds. This will not only give more strength to Indian democracy, but will also increase its fame. There is no doubt that Draupadi Murmu has been an ordinary politician, but India has a history that ordinary people have done 'extraordinary' things.

Draupadi Murmu was born on 20 June 1958 in Baidposi village of Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. His father's name is Biranchi Narayan Tudu. They belong to the tribal ethnic group, the Santhals. She graduated from Rama Devi Women's College. After this Draupadi started the job from the state secretary of Odisha. She is married to Shyam Charan Murmu. In 1997, she became a local councilor for the first time by winning the election of Nagar Panchayat for the first time. Three years later, she got a chance to become an MLA from the same con-

stituency of Rairangpur, first in 2000, and then twice as a minister in the BJP-BJD government. In 2015, she was made the first woman governor of Jharkhand. Former President V.V. Giri was also born in Odisha, but he was originally from Andhra Pradesh.

Murmu's life witnessed many crises and struggles, which shows her vitality. Apart from being a widow in her youth, she didn't feel any mental breakage even with the death of two sons. During this, she continued to encourage the entire family including her only daughter Itishree. Her eyes moistened when she was being administered oath as the Governor of Jharkhand. She is an ideal and courageous woman of religious rites. They have a special influence on Indian culture and rituals. Two days before the announcement of the name of her presidential candidate, she went to my son Gaurav Garg's in-laws' house in Rairangpur, and while feeding the cows, asked the operators there to pray for me. Perhaps she had some hope and possibility that her name might be announced. Gaumata heard the call of her heart. Today, the fire of communal hatred is being deliberately fuelled in the country. All kinds of crises are being created, it is a great irony of democracy that heads are counted here, not brains. Our democracy is suffering because of this, it has been suffering. More heads are coming, not the brain. There are more masks of caste, religion and class, less faces of humanity. By deceitful use of intelligence, they create a maze of equations, from which Abhimanyu did not learn to get out. In fact, the people who drive democracy need such training so that a new definition of democracy can be rewritten.

This vision made Draupadi Murmu's role not only important but decisive as well. Therefore, by placing this burden on Draupadi Murmu, the country wants to be sure that the rule of the constitution is from Arunachal Pradesh to the President. It will run uninterrupted till Bengal and the country's borders will be completely safe because the President is the supreme commander of the armies. This will be the first time in the history of India that the dignity of the office will be increased by placing a powerful tribal woman as the President.

international

PAKISTAN BLOCKS INDIA'S ATTEMPT FOR UNSC MEMBERSHIP

Hamza Ameer | Islamabad

Pakistan has again blocked India's attempt to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), which it is showcasing as its diplomatic success against New Delhi. India lacked minimum support from other member states of the UNSC's global forum to become the permanent member, while Pakistan's stance of opposing the UNSC membership to India and urging for a continuation of debate on the criteria of the membership was accepted.

Pakistan has maintained and emphasized a definite period of UNSC permanent membership and its election after every two or five years, an argument that is part of the ongoing debate at the UNSC. Reports detail that Pakistan opposed India's attempt to become UNSC permanent member as it accused New Delhi of violating UNSC resolutions. "India lacks getting a two-third majority in the UN Charter, whereas, the Indian group also loses the backing of the United States (US)," media reports suggest. "India has also failed to meet the criteria for becoming a UNSC permanent



member despite claiming to be a secular and strong economy," Pakistan maintained. It should be noted that India is in need of getting the support of at least 129 member states for becoming a permanent member. However, diplomatic sources stated that India failed to get the support of even half of the required number of states.

"Pakistan's stance was supported by the Arab League and the African Union," said a diplomatic source.

During April this year, Pakistan had highlighted the need for flexibility to

achieve the required consensus among all UN member states to overcome the stalemate in the long-running negotiations to restructure the UN Security Council. The debate over the Security Council reforms started in February 2009, where various categories of membership were brought on the table for open discussion. The power to veto, regional representation, size of an enlarged Security Council and working methods of the council with reference to relationship with the General Assembly, have been debated among the member states.



RANIL WICKREMESINGHE SWORN-IN AS INTERIM PRESIDENT OF SRI LANKA

Colombo: Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe was sworn-in as the interim President of the island nation on Friday.

Prime Minister Wickremesinghe was sworn-in before Chief Justice Jayantha Jayasuriya, Daily Mirror reported.

Earlier in the day, Sri Lankan Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena officially announced the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

The Speaker said, "As one of the oldest democracies in South Asia, I urge all the political parties and the people to assist to follow the democratic practices and take necessary steps to resolve the current situation." The Parliament would be summoned on Saturday (July 16) to take nominations for the next President and then to have an election among 225 MPs. Gotabaya Rajapaksa had e-mailed his resignation to the Speaker, moments after he arrived in Singapore. The island nation saw months of protests over food, fuel shortage and mishandling of economy. Inflation in the crisis-hit country is more than 50 per cent.

World is nearing 'brink' of nuclear war: Tulsi Gabbard

Washington | Agencies

Former US congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard has warned that US President Joe Biden's administration is driving the world towards a devastating nuclear conflict by using the Ukraine crisis to fight a "proxy war" with Russia.

"The American people need to understand the seriousness of the situation that the Biden administration and leaders in Washington have put us in," Gabbard said in a Fox News interview, RT reported.

The Hawaii Democrat, who was among the candidates whom Biden defeated to win his party's 2020 presidential nomination, called for stepping back to focus on "the big picture and the great threat that we face, which is the reality that this war is continuing to escalate".

Biden has led the charge for international sanctions to punish Moscow over its military offensive in Ukraine. The US has approved 70



billion dollars in aid, including advanced weaponry, to help Ukraine fight Russian forces.

During a visit to Israel on Thursday, Biden said Washington will continue to provide such aid indefinitely to ensure that Moscow suffers "a strategic failure" in Ukraine.

"President Biden himself says he has no idea when or how it's going to end, but we know where this escalation leads," Gabbard said.

"It leads us closer and closer to the brink of a nuclear war with Russia", RT reported Gabbard as saying.

MAN ACQUITTED IN 1985 AIR INDIA PLANE BOMBING SHOT DEAD IN CANADA



New York | Agencies

Ripudaman Singh Malik, who was acquitted on charges of bombing an Air India plane killing 329 people on board, has been shot dead in British Columbia, according to media reports.

Malik was killed as he sat inside his car in the Vancouver suburb of Surrey on Thursday, the Vancouver Sun reported.

Malik and a Babbar Khalsa associate, Ajaib Singh Bagri, were acquitted by a British Columbia Supreme Court judge of murder and conspiracy charges in the terrorist bomb attack that brought down Air India's Kanishka, a Boeing 747 aircraft, over the Atlantic Ocean near Ireland in 1985.

Bombs had been planted in the luggage on that plane.

The explosives in the second plane went off at Tokyo airport killing two baggage handlers rather than mid flight.

The terrorist attack on Air India, the worst in aviation history but for the 9/11 attacks, is a shameful taint on Canada's record because it could not bring the perpetrators fully to justice. Only one person, the bomb-maker Inderjit Singh Reyat was convicted in connection with the attack after he pleaded guilty to manslaughter in 2003 but got off lightly.

He was sentenced to nine years in prison and was released in 2016.

UK issues first-ever red warning for extreme heat

London | Agencies

The Met Office of the United Kingdom (UK), the country's national weather service, on Friday issued a red warning for extreme heat, the highest-level alert, that covers parts of England next Monday and Tuesday.

The alert, issued for the first time ever, is an upgrade from an amber warning that has been put in place until the end of Tuesday, Xinhua news agency reported quoting the weather service.

"Exceptional, perhaps record-breaking, temperatures are likely on Monday, then again on Tuesday," it



said. The highest temperature recorded in the UK so far was 38.7 degrees Celsius at Cambridge Botanic Garden in July 2019.

The Met office said it

expects "population-wide adverse health effects, not limited to those most vulnerable to extreme heat, leading to serious illness or danger to life."

BRITISH AID WORKER HELD BY RUSSIA-BACKED SEPARATISTS IN UKRAINE DIES

Kiev | Agencies

A British aid worker, who was captured in Ukraine by Russia-backed separatists, has died, media reports said.

Paul Urey, from Culcheth, Lancashire was detained in eastern Ukraine in April and charged with mercenary activity, BBC reported.

Urey died on Sunday "due to illness and stress", Daria Morozova, self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) official, claimed on Telegram. "During his first medical examination, Paul Urey was diagnosed with a number of chronic illnesses, including insulin-dependent

diabetes, respiratory system failure, kidney failure and several cardiovascular illnesses. Given these diagnoses and the stress, he died on July 10," Morozova said.

The 45-year-old's family were contacted by the UK Foreign Office, says the Presidium Network, a UK non-profit that provides support to communities in crisis to manage humanitarian issues and represent the needs of people.

His mother is "distracted and still in shock", it said. The UK says it is seeking urgent clarification from Ukraine and the Russian government on reports of a British aid worker's death.



New scheme of Hemoglobinopathy (Sickle Cell Anemia and Thalassemia) Diagnosis Programme approved

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In the Cabinet meeting held under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, in Mantralaya, decision was taken to grant approval for continuation of State Hemoglobinopathy Mission Scheme. The scheme will enable genetic counseling to reduce morbidity and mortality of sickle cell patients and prevent the spread of haemoglobinopathy, community level screening for sickle cell anaemia, thalassemia and other haemoglobinopathy development, identification of the disease and will ensure necessary management. The Hemoglobinopathy Mission was formed in June 2021 in the state. The scheme will be expanded to all 89 tribal development blocks of the state. The scheme will be implemented in the year 2022-23 to 2023-24.

EXTENSION OF TIME LIMIT FOR SPECIAL RECRUITMENT DRIVE

The Cabinet approved extending the time frame of one from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023 for special recruitment drive to fill backlog/carry forward posts of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Persons with Disabilities.

PG SEATS INCREASED

The Cabinet granted administrative approval of Rs.116 crore 90 lakh for increasing PG seats in Medical College, Bhopal. A total of 134 PG seats for postgraduate courses in medical field in various departments of Medical College, Bhopal will be increased, due to which additional number of subject specialist doctors will be available every year to the state.

APPROVAL OF POSTS

The Cabinet approved 30 academic and 43 non-academic posts (total 73 posts) and annual recurring expenditure of Rs.4 crore 96 lakh for the



Vocational College, Rajgarh.

EXEMPTION IN STAMP DUTY

Cabinet took the decision to extend the concessions given by notification number FB-04-08-2020-2-five (35), 23 July 2020 issued by the Commercial Tax Department in the Indian Stamp Act 1899, for loans up to Rs. 20 thousand given under PM Street Vendors Atmanirbhar Nidhi Yojana. The stamp duty payable on the documents to the beneficiaries was fixed at Rs.10.

DISPOSAL OF PROPERTY

Decision has been taken by the Cabinet to allow the district collector take action of contract/pro-

ceedings after 100 percent tender amount is deposited by H-1 tenderer and for sale and disposal of land asset located in village Bhatkedi district Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, whose survey no. 33/2 total area 4915 sqm while approving tender amount of Rs 7 crore 17 lakhs 358 only of H-1 tenderer which is more than the reserve value amount of Rs 6 crore 3 lakh.

Decision was taken by the Cabinet that action for contract, registry for the disposal of land assets located in Khadi Village Industries Board Tehsil Rau District Indore, whose Khasra number 566 Packi 569 (Packy) and 597/1 (Packy) total area is 310 Sq. after approving Rs 81 lakh only, which is more than Rs 20 lakh, the reserve price amount, and after depositing 100 percent of the tender amount by the H-1 tenderer, will be taken by the District Collector.

AMENDMENT IN MADHYA PRADESH STATE INDUSTRIAL LAND AND BUILDING MANAGEMENT RULES 2019

The Cabinet decided to amend the new Madhya Pradesh State Industrial Land and Building Management Rules 2019 for proper and efficient management of developed/under development and undeveloped land under the Department of Industrial Policy, Investment Promotion. In this, provision of e-bidding process has been made in place of first come first serve, along with free and transparent allocation of land / building in industrial areas and increase in revenue as per clause 12 (ii). Clause 12 (ii) (d), clause 13 (ii). Clause 13 (III), Clause 13 (v) in the Madhya Pradesh Public Service Guarantee Act according to the notified service, the time limit for letter of intent, allotment order, execution of lease records, possession etc. has been amended. Clause 13(vii) Provision has been made to pay in installments for vacant plots in identified industrial areas. Clause 19 (b) (II) In transfer cases, the option of minimum amount of Rs 50 crore with 25 percent investment amount has been included and provision has been made for separate transfer fee according to the investment made in the proposed project. Paragraph 20 has been revised to Clause 20(a) and 20(b). Provision has been made for transfer of unusable land of units working in clause 20(a) to 1000 square meters instead of 500 square meters and for division and transfer of unusable land of units closed in clause 20(b). Clause 24 (a) in the event of surrender of the plot, a provision has been made to refund the interest amount, while clarifying the provision of refund of development fee with the nominee, after a time period of 6 years in the case of small scale industries and after 7 years in the case of medium and large scale industries even after surrendering before 9 years. Clause 34 The jurisdiction of allotment of land for allied purposes has been delegated to the Board of Directors.

REVISED ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL

The Cabinet granted revised administrative approval of Rs 397 crore 5 lakh instead of Rs 338 crore 46 lakh issued earlier for 1000 bedded hospital under construction in Medical College, Gwalior.

LAND ALLOTMENT FOR SETTING UP SEED FARM

The Cabinet has decided to allot land to the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare to set up seed farms in 4 villages in district Morena, including Mauja Jakhauna village, total area 50 rakba 339.104 hectares, Rithorakhurd village total area 59 rakba 201.247 hectares, Gadaura village 111.31 hectare out of total kita 27 rakba 134.91 hectares, and Gorkhas village, 37 rakba, 233.683 hectares, total rakba 885.344 hectares for government land free premium and Re 1 annual land rent.

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT REWARDS MADHYA PRADESH FOR EXCELLENT WORK IN THE MINERAL SECTOR

Mineral Minister presents trophy to Chief Minister Chouhan. Information about the achievement given in the Cabinet meeting.



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Mineral Resources Minister Brijendra Pratap Singh presented the trophies and awards given by the central government to the state for excellent work in the mineral sector, to Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. The trophy was presented to Chief Minister Chouhan in the meeting of the Council of Ministers in Mantralaya.

Mineral Resources Minister Singh said that the Ministry of Mines, Government of India, awarded the state government for excellent work in the fields of exploration, auction of mineral blocks, reforms in processes, ease of doing business in the mining sector, increase in revenue etc. The state government was award-

ed the first prize of Rs 3 crore and second prize of Rs 2 crore in two different categories at the 6th National Mining Conclave at Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi on July 12.

The award was presented by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Union Minister of Mines Prahlad Joshi and Union Minister of State Raosaheb Danve Patil. On behalf of the state government, Minister Brijendra Pratap Singh, Principal Secretary Mineral Resources Sukhveer Singh received the award. An additional amount of Rs 2 crore was also provided to the state government as incentive for successful auction of mineral blocks in the year 2021-22. A total amount of Rs 7 crore was given to the Madhya Pradesh government as an award.

CM WELCOMES DRAUPADI MURMU ON HER ARRIVAL IN BHOPAL

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Draupadi Murmu was welcomed on her arrival at Bhopal's state airport today. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan welcomed Murmu with a bouquet of flowers. Other ministers of Madhya Pradesh also welcomed Murmu. Union Minister of Jal Shakti Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat has also accompanied Murmu. He was also welcomed on his arrival in Bhopal. Union Minister of State for Rural Development, Steel Faggan Singh Kulaste, Union Minister of State for Food Processing Industries, Jal Shakti Shri Prahlad Patel, Member of Parliament VD Sharma and public representatives were present.



Despite the misuse of money power, administrative machinery, BJP losing Congress

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The results of Panchayat elections are coming in Madhya Pradesh, while the counting of votes of urban bodies is going to be held in the coming days. The Congress claims that, "It is getting a big victory in the Panchayat elections, this is when the BJP has misused the money power and administrative machinery fiercely."

Panchayat elections in the state have been held on non-party basis, the results are coming after the counting of votes. Congress MLA and former minister PC Sharma and Vice President of Media Department Ajay Singh Yadav, while discussing with reporters, claimed that despite the misuse of BJP's money power and administrative machinery, big victory is coming in the account of Congress.



Congress leaders say that the code of conduct was openly violated by the BJP in the urban body and panchayat elections, the government machinery was misused, yet the BJP is losing ground. BJP's Maihar MLA Narayan Tripathi has exposed the

BJP MLA WHO GAVE STATEMENT AGAINST MP GOVERNMENT MET SHIVRAJ

Bhopal: Narayan Tripathi, MLA from Maihar assembly, who gave a statement against his own government in Madhya Pradesh, met Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday, on this occasion State Home Minister Dr Narottam Mishra was also present. Presidential election date is approaching and BJP is busy garnering votes for NDA's candidate Draupadi Murmu, meanwhile, Maihar MLA Narayan Tripathi's statement against the government started raising many questions.



In this sequence, BJP MLA Tripathi was called to Bhopal and he met Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and spoke. Home Minister Narottam Mishra was also present on the occasion. Narayan Tripathi has clearly said that for the first time someone is going to become the President from tribal class, my stand is clear in this matter, my vote will go to the candidate Draupadi Murmu on behalf of the party. It is to be known that BJP MLA Tripathi had openly accused the misuse of government machinery in the urban bodies panchayat elections and put his own government in the dock.

dishonest system of Madhya Pradesh, not only this, but clearly from government officials to the Election Commission has also been brought in the dock.

Congress leaders allege that like all elections, BJP is now trying to buy MLAs by horse-trading for the presidential election. Two Congress MLAs Umang Singhar and Prachi Lal Meena clearly alleged in front of the media that BJP leaders are being tempted to vote, this has once again exposed the BJP.

Referring to the raids by the Income Tax Department on the premises of Congress MLA Sanjay Sharma, Congress leaders said, "BJP is not only doing politics of horse-trading, but is also misusing institutions to suppress opponents. Congress The Income Tax Department raids on MLA Sanjay Sharma and is being tortured, efforts are being made to break the opposition, this is the politics of Bharatiya Janata Party.

Gift of education is the biggest bounty - Minister Scindia

EDUCATION IS THE MOST IMPORTANT MEDIUM FOR SHAPING THE FUTURE - MINISTER DR. MOHAN YADAV

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Minister for Technical Education and Skill Development, Yashodhara Raje Scindia said that the gift of education is the biggest gift. A person has to face difficulties and challenges in making his dreams come true, but the person who gives his all in making others dreams come true, comes under the category of Guru. Minister Scindia was addressing the programme of Rajiv Gandhi Proudlyogiki Vishwavidyalaya and All India Academic Institution Sitare Foundation at Jehanuma Hotel on Friday.



Minister Scindia said that the founder of Sitare Foundation, Amit Singhal, is providing free education to the talented children of underprivileged sections. This is a very commendable initiative. He said that Sitare Foundation is establishing the Sitare institution being established. Its objective is to provide world class education of computer science

graduate to the talented children of the country. Minister Scindia told the children that this is a big opportunity, don't let it pass you by. Gladly accept this change in your life. Higher Education Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav said that this decision taken

by the Sitare Foundation will prove to be important in bridging the gap between the demand and supply of computer science professionals. He said that Madhya Pradesh is the first state in the country where the National Education Policy has been

implemented. With the establishment of Sitare University, talented students will not only get an opportunity to study modern technologies, but they will also be able to take leadership in the field of technology in the future.

Booster dose vaccination campaign in MP from July 21

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Vaccination is the biggest weapon to prevent corona infection in Madhya Pradesh, two doses of it have been applied, now the campaign of booster dose is starting from July 21, which will run till September 25. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, while reviewing the preparations for the COVID-19 booster dose vaccination campaign, said that from July 21, a booster dose vaccination campaign would be duly started in the state for corona control. This campaign will continue till September 25. A grand campaign for vaccination will also be run every 15 days. Make the campaign a



success by getting as many eligible people as possible booster doses.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that preparations should be made in a planned manner for the introduction of booster dose. Individuals who have completed six months of both the doses are eligible for a boost-

er dose. It is to be known that the central government has also made a provision of booster dose of corona at government centers, which will be imposed free of cost. The booster dose is to be administered only for 75 days.

If we look at the current situation of Corona in the state, at present there are 928 active cases in the state. Madhya Pradesh is currently ranked 22nd in the country. Corona testing is going on continuously. The proportion in which the weekly cases are increasing, in the same proportion the patients are also getting cured. At present, more cases have come in Indore, Bhopal, Jabalpur, Sehore and Gwalior.



WEINSTEIN ABUSE DRAMA UNCOVERED IN FILM STARRING CAREY MULLIGAN, ZOE KAZAN

Los Angeles | Agencies

The hunt to bring down Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein is on in the first trailer for 'She Said', a dramatic adaptation of the book by Megan Twohey and Jodi Kantor.

The two journalists reignited the #MeToo movement with their New York Times expose on the Hollywood film producer, which included the first wave of sexual harassment and abuse allegations against him, reports 'Variety'.

Carey Mulligan and Zoe Kazan star in the film as the two journalists.

The official 'She Said' synopsis reads: "Two-time Academy Award nominee Carey Mulligan and Zoe Kazan star as New York Times reporters Megan Twohey and Jodi Kantor, who together broke one of the most important stories in a generation -- a story that helped propel the #MeToo movement, shattered decades of silence around the subject of sexual assault in Hollywood and altered American culture forever."

Weinstein was eventually sentenced to 23 years in prison on charges of sexual assault and third-degree rape.

'She Said' is directed by Maria Schrader, whose credits include the Netflix limited series 'Unorthodox'. Rebecca Lenkiewicz adapted the screenplay.

Joining Mulligan and Kazan in the ensemble cast are Patricia Clarkson, Andre Braugher, Samantha Morton, Jennifer Ehle, Tom Pelphrey and Adam Shapiro.

Eva Mendes planning a 'boring' summer

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Eva Mendes has made sure she and her daughters Esmeralda and Amada had a packed agenda when they explored London earlier this year while her partner and Hollywood star Ryan Gosling was working, but now she wants to calm things down and give the girls space to explore their own imagination.

Mendes said, "When we were in London, we went from musical to musical taking advantage of being back in the theater, we went to all kinds of museums, we went to Windsor Castle. I had a ton of field trips planned for them, which we did."

"And now I feel like it's time to bring boredom back. I'm bringing boredom back, especially for kids, but for myself as well. I really feel like when we're bored, not stimulated by a phone, or an iPad, or computer or television, that's when ideas come in. Sometimes it's fun, sometimes it's dangerous, and sometimes it's enlightening. I really want it to be the summer of boredom," she said.

The 'Hitch' star believes she and her 41-year-old partner are key to their daughters developing self-confidence, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

She said: "I think everything starts in the home. So hopefully Ryan and I are doing the work by just loving them, completely loving them, and doing most of that work for them so that they grow up feeling like they're enough. That's the one thing that's really important to me.

Because once they feel like they're enough, no matter what they do, no matter what they end up doing, that will feed into every area of your life.

Especially into how attractive you feel, or any of that stuff."

Mendes previously explained how she hopes the home life she shares with the 'Drive' actor sets a good example to their daughters about ignoring gender stereotypes.



Porsha Williams will replace Tinsley Mortimer on the cast of Peacock's Real Housewives Ultimate Girls Trip 3

Los Angeles | Agencies

Porsha Williams has reportedly joined the 'Housewives' franchise once again. The former Real Housewives of Atlanta star, 41, is set to replace Tinsley Mortimer, 46, in the cast of Real Housewives Ultimate Girls Trip season 3, as per People. Insiders revealed that Mortimer decided to leave the Peacock production for 'personal reasons', reports dailymail.co.uk.

Williams will be on the show alongside Gizelle Bryant (Real Housewives of Potomac), and her co-star Candice Dillard-Bassett.

Though Peacock is yet to announce the official cast, it's reported to also include Alexia Nepola and Marysol Patton (Real Housewives of Miami); Heather Gay and Whitney Rose (Real Housewives of Salt Lake City); as well as Leah McSweeney (Real Housewives of New York City). The insider also revealed that the stars have reportedly already been filmed packing their suitcases and will get on their flights on Thursday.

Christopher Meloni goes nude for fitness brand YouTube commercial

Los Angeles | Agencies

'Law & Order: Special Victims Unit' actor Christopher Meloni treated fans to his beefed up body as he stripped down to his birthday suit for a fitness company's newest advertisement video.

In the commercial released via the brand's YouTube channel, the 61-year-old could be seen doing his workout routine with his private parts being censored in pixels.

but the app gets me motivated to do lots of different workouts."

At one point in the ad, a naked Meloni went for an outdoor run in a park, baffling a couple along the way. Their dog, in the



with the project due to scheduling conflicts with his upcoming movies 'Pain Hustlers' and 'Big Red One'. According to 'Deadline', Evans just wrapped production on the upcoming action adventure romcom 'Ghosted'. 'Deadline' further states that Berlanti is particular about what he commits to as a director and insiders say not only was he super excited about the opportunity but his take on the script excited both Apple executives and producers about what he wants to do for the film.

Jonathan Lia, These Pictures Co-Founder, said in a statement accessed by 'Deadline', "We are thrilled to welcome Greg Berlanti and Channing Tatum to Project Artemis. Greg's passion for character and storytelling has driven his decades long career in film & TV. We couldn't be more excited for him to lead our team on this journey. We have been huge fans of Channing's for a long time and are so honoured to finally have the opportunity to work with him."

KEANU REEVES TO HELM OTT DOCUSERIES ON F1 AND THE ROSS BRAWN SAGA

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Keanu Reeves is working on a docuseries about Formula One for the streaming portal Disney+. The yet-to-be-titled four-part docuseries will reportedly focus on Formula One managing director Ross Brawn, who in 2009 bought the Honda team, renamed it Brawn GP and took it to two unprecedented championship victories, reports 'Variety'. Reeves will host the series and has already been conducting interviews. Among those believed to be on board are former Ferrari chairman Luca di Montezemolo, whom Reeves was pictured with last month, and drivers Jenson Button and Rubens Barrichello. Brawn himself is also set to take part. Last week, Reeves was pictured at the British Grand Prix in Silverstone, UK, where he spoke to a local racing journalist about the documentary series. "We want to tell that amazing remarkable story (of Brawn). There is so much to talk about," he said. "A friend of mine was telling me the story and I was so struck by it. He was actually working for Brawn back in the day in publicity and he's a producer/director and so we were like, well let's tell that story, let's try and tell that story," the 'Matrix' star said.

CHANNING TATUM REPLACES CHRIS EVANS IN SPACE RACE MOVIE 'PROJECT ARTEMIS'

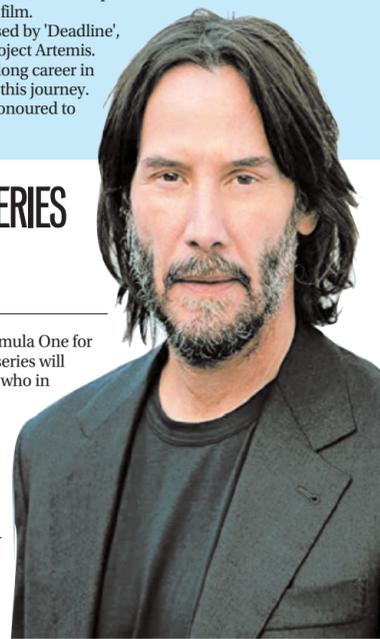
Los Angeles | Agencies

The high-profile space movie 'Project Artemis' has seen two major changes during its initial course of making. Hollywood star Channing Tatum is currently in talks to co-star opposite Scarlett Johansson.

Greg Berlanti will now direct the film replacing Jason Bateman, who amicably parted ways with the film due to creative differences, reports 'Deadline'. Plot details are being kept under wraps other than it being set against the space race in the 60s. Tatum replaces Chris Evans, who had to part ways

with the project due to scheduling conflicts with his upcoming movies 'Pain Hustlers' and 'Big Red One'. According to 'Deadline', Evans just wrapped production on the upcoming action adventure romcom 'Ghosted'. 'Deadline' further states that Berlanti is particular about what he commits to as a director and insiders say not only was he super excited about the opportunity but his take on the script excited both Apple executives and producers about what he wants to do for the film.

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ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Megan Barton Hanson

"Apparently some people think the way I work out is strange. Honestly, I don't get it," he quipped in the footage, reports aceshowbiz.com.

The veteran actor then continued with his exercises, which included meditating, yoga and kickboxing.

"Me, I don't think using the Peloton app is strange at all," he went on reasoning.

"Sure, they're famous for their amazing equipment,

meantime, could be seen barking loudly at the 'Marauders' actor.

Cheekily, the commercial video translated the bark with subtitle that read: "Wow! He really does have a great app!"

The fitness ad concluded with a modification of 'Law & Order' iconic intro.



Singapore Open

PV SINDHU REACHES SEMIFINAL; SAINA, PRANNOY CRASH OUT

Mumbai | Agencies

The two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu registered a thrilling win over China's Han Yue to reach the semifinal, but her compatriots Saina Nehwal and HS Prannoy crashed out after suffering heart-breaking defeats in their respective quarterfinal matches in the Singapore Open 2022, here on Friday.

World No 7 Sindhu came from behind to beat world No 19 Han Yue 17-21, 21-11, 21-19 in the quarterfinals, which lasted for one hour and 2 minutes. With the win, she set up a semifinal clash against Japan's Saena Kawakami, who upset Thai shuttler Pongpawee Chochuwong in her final eight clash.

The Indian shuttler made a slow start and trailed her Chinese opponent 14-11 before scoring four back-to-back points to take the lead. Han



Yue, however, continued to trouble Sindhu with her deft touches and went on to win the first game.

The second game, too, started as a tight affair with Sindhu going on the offensive but Han Yue staying on her coat-tails. But with the score at 14-11,

the two-time Olympic medallist stepped up and took the next seven points to force a decider.

In the all-important third game, Han Yue raced to a 14-9 lead and put the Indian ace on the backfoot. The Indian ace, however, dug deep and

turned the tables with a flurry of seven points and proceeded to wrap up the match.

However, London 2012 bronze medallist Saina failed to join Sindhu in the semi-finals after going down 13-21, 21-15, 20-21 to Japan's Aya Ohori in a closely-fought match. The 32-year old Saina conceded a 19-16 lead in the decider to crash out of the BWF Super 500 tournament.

In men's singles, in-form HS Prannoy won the first game against Japan's Kodai Naraoka but couldn't make the advantage count as he lost 12-21, 21-14, 21-18, in just over an hour.

Meanwhile, men's doubles pair MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila's Singapore Open 2022 campaign also came to a close after losing their final eight clash 10-21 21-18 21-17 against Indonesian second seeds Mohammad Ahsan and Hendra Setiawan.

This too shall pass. Stay strong: Babar Azam's message to Virat Kohli

Lahore | Agencies

Pakistan skipper Babar Azam has come out in support of the embattled Virat Kohli, whose lean patch with the bat has extended for more than two years, saying this phase too shall pass and he will come out stronger.

Recently, legendary cricketers such as Kapil Dev and Sunil Gavaskar have been critical of Kohli's performance, with the former saying he should be dropped from the side and the latter indicating that some senior players are getting preferential treatment by being allowed to pick and choose which series they want to play.

While Kohli continues to dish out one lacklustre performance after another, making just 16 runs in the second ODI against England on Thursday, which India lost by 100 runs at Lord's after he missed the first game with a groin injury, Babar Azam took to social media to back



one of India's most successful former captains.

The right-handed Kohli has now gone 77 consecutive international innings without reaching three figures, after scores of 1 and 11 in the T20I series against England and failures in the rescheduled fifth Test at Edgbaston.

Babar Azam posted an image of him walking with Kohli on twitter and wrote, "This too shall pass. Stay strong. #ViratKohli."

Fans, though, were surprised with Azam's concern for the India batter, saying he shouldn't be praising a rival team cricketer.

Top swimmers geared up to make a splash at Junior National Aquatics

Bhubaneswar | Agencies

A total of over 1200 participants from across 28 states and Union Territories have descended for the prestigious 48th Junior National Aquatic Championships which will begin here on July 16 at the Biju Patnaik Swimming Pool Complex.

The five-day national championships at the iconic Kalinga Stadium, which is a hub for several top international sporting events, will see participants vie for top honours in swimming and water polo.

The 48th Junior National Aquatic Championships 2022 will serve as a selection trial for the next edition of the Khelo India Youth Games. The swimming Federation of India (SFI) will also identify swimmers for a long-term national programme aimed at preparing swimmers for the 2024 Paris Olympics.

In the Junior category, Karnataka's Ridhima Virendrakumar, Nina Venkatesh, Sanvi Rao, Shohan Ganguly, Utkarsh S. Patil, Vidith Shankar, and Sambhav R. are billed to bring home top honours. Maharashtra's Vedaant



Madhavan, Ananya Joshi, Aryan Varnekar, Apeksha Fernandes, Kiara Bangera, Uthkarsh Gor, Palak Damini, Tamil Nadu's Vishesh Parmeshwar and Delhi's Bhavya Sachdeva too are expected to outperform in their respective events. Expressing his gratitude to the Department of Sports Youth Services, Odisha State Government who extended their support in hosting this event, Swimming Federation of India's Secretary General Monal Chokshi said, "We are absolutely delighted that the National Championships is taking place in this fantastic facility within the Kalinga Stadium premise."

Serena Williams set to return to the National Bank Open in Toronto

Toronto | Agencies

The 23-time Grand Slam champion Serena Williams is set to play in the National Bank Open, starting from August 8-14 in Toronto.

It will be her first hard-court tournament in two years after she made her tennis return at the end of June by playing doubles in the Eastbourne tournament on grass court ahead of Wimbledon. She then played singles at Wimbledon, losing in the first round to France's Harmony Tan in a close three-set match.

Serena Williams is scheduled to participate in the National Bank Open in Toronto, the first WTA 1000 event of the summer. She is using her protected ranking



to enter the Toronto tournament. Serena, a three-time champion in Toronto, last played there in 2019, where she made the final against Bianca Andreescu. The Canadian was also granted a wild card into this year's

main draw. Serena hasn't officially announced whether she is playing at the U.S. Open, but it looks like she's attempting to continue her comeback at the Grand Slam. Led by World No 1 Iga Swiatek, Toronto will feature

41 of the top 43 ranked players. Given the tournament's strong entry list, which includes the full slate of the tour's Top 10, along with Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina, Roland Garros runner-up Coco Gauff, Canada's own Leylah Fernandez and reigning champion Andreescu, the tournament's entry cutoff was high this year. No.43 Sara Sorribes Tormo was the last direct main-draw entrant.

The tournament also confirmed Andreescu will play her first match during the night session on Tuesday, August 9. No.1 Swiatek will open her campaign during the day session on August 10. The Canadian Open takes place at Sobey's Stadium from August 8 to 14.

The switch hit should be banned completely: Scott Styris

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A few days back, speaking on his official YouTube channel, ace India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin had said that batters should be adjudged leg-before wicket even if the ball is pitched outside leg stump if they miss out in an attempt to do the switch hit.

"My question is not whether he can play reverse sweep or not, whether it's negative bowling strategy or not (bowling outside leg stump), my point is about lbw. It's unfair that it's not ruled lbw."

"Let batters play the switch hit, but give us LBW when they miss. How can you say it is not LBW when the batter turns? If they start giving that out in all formats of the game, some parity could be retained between bowling and batting," was Ashwin's logic.

As per the current laws, a batter cannot be ruled out lbw if the ball pitches outside the leg, even if it hits the stumps, which is deemed the 'blind spot' for batters. Now, former New Zealand cricketer Scott Styris has countered Ashwin's view by calling for a ban on the switch hit itself. "Well, I sort of gotta go back half a step here. I loved a lot of the points that Ashwin made. I completely disagreed with all his solutions. I actually think even



though we just had some fun with the switch hit, I think the switch hit should be banned completely.

"There are rules for captains and bowlers in terms of where their fieldsmen can be, how many behind point, how many on the leg side, all of these things," said Styris on 'Sports Over The Top' show on Sports18.

Styris, the former Blackcaps all-rounder who played 29 Tests, 188 ODIs and 31 T20Is, further explained how a ban on switch hit will make people stop worrying about the lbw law. Ashwin spoke about on his Youtube channel.

FIBA Asia Cup

India suffer defeat against the Philippines in second group match

Jakarta (Indonesia) | Agencies

The Indian men's basketball team suffered a 59-101 defeat against the Philippines in its second FIBA Asia Cup 2022 Group D match at the Istora Gelora Bung Karno Stadium, here on Friday.

Muin Bek Hafeez was India's standout player with 14 points followed by Pranav Prince with 11. William Navarro, with 18 points, and Thirya Ravena, 17, did the damage for the Philippines.

This was India's second loss in a row in the FIBA Asia Cup after a 100-47 thrashing against world No. 27 New Zealand in the opener. India are currently third in Group D with two points, just above Lebanon who have the same tally but have played a game less. The Philippines, ranked 34th in the world, started on the front foot, as expected, against an Indian basketball team ranked 48 places below them.

India's Pranav Prince dunked to get the score-



board rolling but the Philippines soon took over the reins and raced to a 13-8 lead. Some great work by Muin Bek Hafeez helped India draw level at 13-13 but it was the last time the Indian

team found itself on level terms with their opponents throughout the duration of the match. With Thirya Ravena leading the offensive, the Philippines ended the first quarter with a seven-point lead before extending it to 18 before half-time as the score read 53-38.

India, missing captain Vishesh Bhargavanshi through an injury, failed to mount any sort of resistance in the second half as they kept leaking points. The game ended 101-59 in the Philippines' favour, an olympics.com report said.

India's final Group D match will be against world No 54 Lebanon on Sunday. The top team from the group will advance to the quarterfinals while the second and third-placed nations will compete in the playoffs for a second chance at making the final eight.

Notably, India's best performance at the FIBA Asia Cup came in 1975 when they finished fourth.

4 NATIONS PARA-BADMINTON: PRAMOD BHAGAT REACHES SEMI-FINALS

Dublin (Ireland): World No. 1

Pramod Bhagat has sailed into the semifinals after defeating Bulgaria's Dimitar Pavlov in straight sets in the 4 Nations Para-Badminton International 2022 here. Bhagat won the match in straight sets 21-8, 21-9 in 17 minutes. The ace shuttler will now face Japan's Daisuke Fujihara in the semifinals.

Talking about the match, Bhagat said, "The tournament has been going good so far but now are the crucial games. I have played Fujihara a lot of times and know his game in and out, he is a great player and has always pushed me and extracted more out of me. It would be a great semifinal."

I'm just happy to have played my part, says Reece Topley on match-winning 6/24

London | Agencies

Tall left-arm quick Reece Topley was incredibly pleased to have played his part in contributing to England's 100-run win in the second ODI against India at Lord's on Thursday.

Topley was named player of the match in the win over India at Lord's for his amazing spell of 6/24 in 9.5 overs, the best-ever figures by an England bowler in ODIs.

"It was a terrific team performance to bounce back from the other day and I'm just happy to have played my part. It means a lot and makes it all worthwhile, to be honest. It was just over the stand where I had surgery three years ago (due to stress fracture in the back at the Wellington



Hospital), so it's come full circle, which is crazy," said Topley after the match. Topley has been a consistent presence in England's white-ball sides for over a year and is aiming to be a constant presence in the team under the captaincy of Jos Buttler and head coach Matthew Mott. "Of course, it's every-

one's dream to play for England and I just want to pull on the shirt as often as possible and play my part in winning games for England in the World Cups, whoever is touring. It is a privilege every time. It's a big game at the weekend, try and wrap up the series. Hopefully, we do that, and whatever is next," stated Topley.

We will try our best to win maiden CWG gold: Hockey captain Manpreet Singh

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Manpreet Singh, who led India to Olympic medal after four decades in Tokyo last year, returns as captain of a full-strength Indian men's hockey team for the 2022 Commonwealth Games at Birmingham starting later this month.

The team faces a Herculean task as India have never won gold in Commonwealth Games men's hockey since the sport made its debut in 1998 in Kuala Lumpur. Indian men had finished fourth in Gold Coast in 2018.

India are in Pool B with England, Canada, Wales and Ghana. Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Pakistan and Scotland comprise the tougher Pool A in the 10-team competition.

In an interview, Manpreet talks about the challenges the team faces in Commonwealth Games.



"We have had a good camp at Bengaluru where we worked on our fitness and other aspects of the game. We have played some tough matches against strong teams in the

Pro League and that has given us an indication of the areas in that we need to work further.

We will have a hectic year next year too, we have the World Cup,

the Asian Games, which have been postponed and the Pro League. We are also planning for the World Cup and the Commonwealth Games is an important stop on that route. But the main focus this year is on the Commonwealth Games.

We will try our best. There are a lot of hurdles. All the players are confident of doing well in the Commonwealth Games. Topping the Pool and making it to the semifinals is our first aim and we will take things as they come after that. We can't take any team lightly. England will be our main opponent in Pool A while Canada is also a good team. We don't know much about Ghana but as I said earlier, at this stage we can't take any team lightly. We had a similar experience against Wales in the 2018 Commonwealth Games at Gold Coast (India won 4-3 in a tough match). We are confident of putting up our best performance."



Whom Janhvi Kapoor and Sara Ali Khan were dating before Bollywood debut!

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Sara Ali Khan is one of the industry's most promising actresses. She has appeared in films like Kedarnath, Love Aaj Kal, Atrangi Re, and Simmba. She has a large social media following and frequently posts images of herself to her fans and admirers. Janhvi Kapoor has also established herself as a trustworthy actor. Following the success of Dhadak, she appeared in Gunjan Saxena's biography and Roohi. The pair appeared on the second episode of

Karan Johar's controversial gossip show. Karan Johar surprised Sara Ali Khan and Janhvi Kapoor by disclosing that the two previously dated a brother-duo. He stated, "I am tracking back to before the pandemic. I don't know the level of your friendship today, but I don't remember there being any. I remember that you both have dated siblings before. I mean it was the past. You both dated two brothers. And the commonality between the three of us is that they both used to live in my building." In no time after the revelation fans quickly

donned the stalker's hat and dug out a few images that allegedly reveal Sara and Janhvi dated siblings at one point in time. Many fans speculated that the brothers Janhvi and Sara Ali Khan dated Veer and Shikhar Pahariya, and they published photos of them together. Sushilkumar Shinde, the former Chief Minister of Maharashtra, has two sons, Veer and Shikhar.



It took twenty years to strengthen the family's financial condition: Terence Lewis

Dinesh Zala | Mumbai

Bollywood's famous choreographer and television dance show judge Terence Lewis appeared in a different avatar in the song 'Meherbaan' and the song received a lot of appreciation from the audience. Terence, who has worked as a choreographer in hundreds of films and songs, has now turned to act. When we had a conversation during our interview, he shared many interesting things apart from his acting journey.

Q: You are seen in a different avatar in 'Meherbaan'. How challenging was it to deliver a tremendous performance with this avatar?

A: This song has been shot in Kashmir, where it was very cold. Aziz is an amazing director. In the song, you must have seen us performing on the bridge, that bridge was also very small, if we fell from there, then our bones could also break. Apart from this, the biggest challenge was when we were shooting in the market where a crowd had gathered. So there were a lot of problems in shooting too. People wanted to get selfies and photos



clicked. And it was a bit cautious to shoot amidst the screams of the people.

Q: Why did it take you so long to get on the screen?

A: Twenty years ago, I used to get small opportunities for acting. I belong to

the middle class and I don't have a godfather. In such a situation I felt that I am getting the money for dancing. And I had to stand on my own feet. We are eight siblings; the family is a bit big. But the economic condition was not good. So I had to rectify that situation. And it took twenty years to strengthen the financial condition of the family.

Q: You have ventured into acting, so what kind of stories do you want to be a part of next?

A: I want there to be such truth in my films. As Guru Dutt sir used to make films, lot of meaning full cinema. Today such films have stopped being made. I want to be a part of good stories.



John Abraham roped in for Shivam Nair's geopolitical thriller

Team Absolute | Mumbai

John Abraham is one of the finest actors in the tinsel town. From comedy to action, the actor has aced every role with elan. Currently, the actor is gearing up for his film Ek Villian 2.

He recently began filming for the Dijan Vijan production Tehran, one of the few feature films made in Iran. In midst of this shoot, reports are rife that Naam Shabana and Special OPS director, Shivam Nair has roped in

John for his next.

Touted to be a geopolitical thriller with nail-biting events, the flick is all set to go on floors by the end of 2022. While interacting with a leading news portal, Director Shivam Nair excitedly shares, "I have been working on this geopolitical thriller for a while now. A lot of hard work & research has gone into the creation of the story structure & this script. We now have John Abraham as our lead for this, whose title, we will reveal shortly. Pre-produc-

tion for this joint venture with Wakaao Films has already started."

The yet untitled Shivam Nair directorial is written by Ritesh Shah. For those who are unaware, Ritesh Shah is also working in Tehran.

Meanwhile, on the professional front, John Abraham's Ek Villian 2 is all set to hit the theatres on 29 July. He also has Pathaan alongside Shahrukh Khan and Deepika Padukone. Apart from this, he is currently shooting for Tehran.

SHABAASH MITHU



FILM REVIEW

BY SHACHI CHATURVEDI

TAAPSEE HITS A BOUNDARY AS MITHALI RAJ

Directed by: Srijit Mukherji
Runtime: 2 hours 42 minutes
Cast: Taapsee Pannu (Mithali Raj), Mumtaz Sorcar (Jhulan Goswami), Vijay Raaz (Mithali's coach), Brijendra Kala and Devadarshini (Mithali's mother)
Rating: 3/5

SYNOPSIS

Shabaash Mithu is an Indian Hindi-language biographical sports drama. The film is based on the life of Mithali Raj, the former Test and One-Day International captain of India's women's national cricket team.

REVIEW

The flick is not a typical biography about a player's fight to gain success. Rather, it is the narrative of Mithali Raj's fight for equal rights and opportunities for female players. There is no denying that Taapsee Pannu is a wonderful actress, but what surprised was Inayat Verma's performance. In the film, the

child played a younger Mithali, and her great acting and appropriate characterization helped to create the mood. Vijay Raaz, with his unique delivery of the role, has nailed it as Mithali's coach.

The child artist who played Noorie did some commendable job initially as audiences are misled into thinking that Noorie is the main protagonist until Mithali is introduced in a completely different character shade- of an ace Bharatnatyam student.

When it comes to Taapsee's performance, she sought to display all of the emotions with very few expressions while also nicely balancing the real-life Mithali's style.

The movie had a lot of songs, which made them look much more than they needed to.

In terms of technical factors, there wasn't much to remark on. A cricket fan viewing a movie and noting the actor doing the correct moves demonstrates the actor's preparation and sheer dedication toward work.

Dialogues such as "abhi to tere nam ka flames Khel Raha Hoga" and the informal discussion amongst the women's team players kept the drama element alive.

However, the line-up of events was good yet the second half of the movie seems too crowded with a lane of events that somehow messed with the viewer's head.

FINAL VERDICT

We all desire equality, and there is a pressing need to achieve it across genders and platforms, and this film is an epic example of women's battle for basic rights.

HIT - THE FIRST CASE



FILM REVIEW

BY SHACHI CHATURVEDI

RAJKUMMAR RAO'S HIT CAN HIT THE RIGHT CORD

Directed by: Sailesh Kolanu
Runtime: 2 hours 15 minutes
Cast: Rajkummar Rao, Sanya Malhotra, Dalip Tahil and Milind Gunaji
Rating: 3.5/5

SYNOPSIS

In order to investigate a case involving a missing lady, a police officer on the murder interrogation team must overcome his issues with his terrible history.

REVIEW

Hit - The First Case follows a story of an officer with a rough history. Inspector Vikram (Rajkummar Rao) is stationed in Jaipur and is a member of the police force's HIT (Homicide Investigation Team). He is married to Neha (Sanya Malhotra), a forensic investigator. Vikram has PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) as a result of witnessing a loved one being lit on fire in front of his eyes and being powerless to stop it.

When Neha is kidnapped, the plot takes a tragic turn. On the other hand, the suspense is surprising but not completely believable. The killer's motivation, as well as other details revealed to the audience, may appear absurd. Surely, something better might have been done at the script level.

Rajkummar Rao knows his role and accomplishes what his director expects of him. The actor has a track record of being the best part of any film he does, which may have trained him to adapt to any environment.



Sanya Malhotra just exists to be abducted and discovered. It's a cameo with no back story, simply a plot device.

When it comes to the film's soundtrack. The movie does not contain many songs, but they work well because they are employed in the correct amount at the right time. Sailesh Kolanu's direction is on point till the intermission. But the second half not better.

In terms of technical aspects, there wasn't much to say, but the film was shot really well and kept you glued to your seat until the very end. The appropriate amount of close-ups and pans added to the excitement. To be fair, the film contains some serious drama.

FINAL VERDICT

Rajkummar Rao is a fantastic actor, which can clearly be seen in this film. If you enjoy Rajkummar or thrillers, this is the film for you.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Laura Nemeth