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At least 4 washed away in Himachal cloudburst, rain wreaks havoc nationally

THE RAIN FURY

Shimla | Agencies

At least four people washed away after a cloudburst in the Parvati Valley of Kullu district in Himachal Pradesh on Wednesday, damaging public and private property too.

The cloudburst occurred at Chojh village in Challal panchayat in Kullu subdivision in which 4-6 people and five cows were washed away, a report by the state Disaster Management Authority said.

It said the rescue team was on the way to the spot, but due to the landslide they were stuck on the Kasol-Jaimala road.

Some camping sites were also washed away in the Kasol area with the flashflood triggered by overnight heavy rains. The bridge connecting to the village has been damaged. Six cafes located on the river bank were also washed away in the flood.

A woman was killed while two others were injured due to landslides following heavy rain in the last 24 hours in Himachal Pradesh. Since Tuesday night, incidents of cloudbursts and landslides have



been reported at many places in the state. Landslides occurred in Dhalli area of Shimla as incessant heavy rain continued late on Tuesday night. A young woman sleeping on the roadside was



killed due to the landslide, while two others were injured. The injured are being treated at Indira Gandhi Medical College & Hospital (IGMC), Shimla.

As per information, the girls, who are originally from Haryana, sold medicines on the roadside. The deceased has been identified as Kareena (14), while



Asha (16) and Kulwinder (14) were injured in the landslide.

HEAVY RAIN ALERT FOR MAHA FROM JULY 6 TO 8

Mumbai: The India Meteorological Department issued a heavy rainfall alert for Maharashtra on Wednesday and the next two days, as state capital Mumbai continued to witness heavy downpour for the third consecutive day, resulting in a landslide near a chawl, water-logging at many places and traffic disruptions. Three persons were injured in the landslide, an official said, as Mumbaiers continued to face hardship due to flooding on roads. A citizen in a tweet said they now need a boat to commute, instead of a car. A landslide also occurred on a road leading to the Pratapgad Fort in western Maharashtra's Satara district on Wednesday following heavy rains. There was no report of any casualty and no one was trapped in the debris, the Public Works Department's executive engineer, Sanjay Sonawane, said.

IMD Director General Mrutunjay Mohapatra said an off-shore trough lies across the Gujarat and Maharashtra coast and low pressure over west Madhya Pradesh, resulting in heavy rainfall over Maharashtra and Gujarat. The IMD has issued a 'red alert' for south Konkan, Goa and south central Maharashtra from July 6-8. It said heavy to very heavy rainfall is very likely at a few places with extremely heavy rainfall at isolated places during this period.

Mumbai is likely to witness another wet day as the India Meteorological Department has predicted moderate to heavy rain in the city and suburbs, with a possibility of extremely heavy rainfall at isolated places in the next 24 hours, according to civic officials.

ORANGE ALERT IN GUJARAT FOR NEXT FOUR DAYS

Ahmedabad: The Meteorological Department has forecast extremely very heavy rains in three districts of south Gujarat -- Valsad, Navsari and Surat and issued an orange alert for the same, while Gir Somnath, Porbandar, and some other districts of Saurashtra and Bharuch district are likely to receive heavy rainfall in next three to four days.

Met department said low pressure developed in the region is likely to bring extremely heavy rains in south Gujarat and people are advised not to venture out unnecessarily, or move to a safe place if they are living in low lying areas.

RAINS CONTINUE TO BATTER K'TAKA

Bengaluru: Incessant and heavy rains continued to batter Karnataka districts especially the coastal region on Wednesday. The search operation taken up for fishing out a schoolgirl's body continued in Chikkamagalur district amid the rains. The rain has pummelled Dakshina Kannada, Uttara Kannada, Kodagu, Belagavi, Hubballi, Shivamogga, Chikkamagaluru and other districts of the state. The arrival of international flights has been disrupted at Mangaluru International Airport of Dakshina Kannada district.

The life in those districts has been badly hit. Due to floods and continuous rains, landslides have been reported and at many places the roads have been washed away by, mostly in coastal districts.

RBI RELAXES REGULATIONS TO BOOST FOREX INFLOWS



Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday announced a series of measures to boost foreign exchange inflows.

The central bank said that it has taken the steps in order to further diversify and expand the sources of forex funding so as to mitigate volatility and dampen global spillovers. According to the RBI, Authorised Dealer Category-1 (AD Cat-1) banks can utilise overseas foreign currency borrowings (OFCB) for lending in foreign currency to entities for a wider set of end-use purposes, subject to the negative list set out for external commercial borrowings (ECBs).

The measure is expected to facilitate foreign currency borrowing by a larger set of borrowers who may find it difficult to directly access overseas markets. This dispensation for raising such borrowings is available till October 31, 2022. As regards the external commercial borrowings (ECB) the RBI has temporarily increased the limit under the automatic route from \$750 million or its equivalent per financial year to \$1.5 billion. The all-in cost ceiling under the ECB framework is also being raised by 100 basis points, subject to the borrower being of investment grade rating. The above dispensations are available up to December 31, 2022.

LPG cylinder price up by Rs 50

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Cooking gas LPG price on Wednesday was hiked by Rs 50 per cylinder, the third increase in rates since May on firming international energy prices.

Non-subsidised LPG now costs Rs 1,053 per 14.2-kg cylinder in the national capital, up from Rs 1,003 previously, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

Common households pay non-subsidised rates for the cooking gas they buy, after the government restricted subsidy to just poor beneficiaries who got connections under the Ujjwala scheme. This is the third increase in the LPG rate since May and the fourth this



year. The price was hiked by Rs 50 per cylinder on March 22 and again by the same quantum on May 7. Rates went up by Rs 3.50 per cylinder on May 19. Prices have gone up by Rs 244 per cylinder since June 2021. Of this, Rs 153.50 increase happened since March 2022.

"Headlines Managed. Economy Mismanaged": Rahul Gandhi

"Headlines Managed. Economy Mismanaged," Rahul Gandhi tweeted, with a photo and text to suggest the BJP's stance on inflation and the depreciation of Indian currency changed after it came to power. In the text, he said the BJP used to propagate (prachar) in the past that the currency of a country goes down if it has a corrupt government. But now "Indian Rupee slips to ? 79.36 hitting record low" which is an "attack" (prahar) on the common man, he said.

Mahua Moitra unfollows party's official Twitter handle

Kolkata | Agencies

Distancing herself further from her party, Trinamool Congress Lok Sabha member, Mahua Moitra, on Wednesday, reportedly unfollowed the official Twitter handle of the party. However, she has continued following the official Twitter handle of West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee.

The development is a likely fallout of her growing differences with the party leadership over her comments about Goddess Kali at a recent media conclave in Kolkata. Her comments evoked strong criticism by the state BJP leaders who described Moitra's comments as an insult to the tradition-



al Hindu religion. The BJP leaders even demanded Mamata Banerjee to take action against her party MPs as things started getting serious, Trinamool Congress leadership distanced itself from the comments of Moitra. Moitra did not make any delay in reacting over the growing controversies. "To all you Sanghis lying will not make you better Hindus. I NEVER backed any film or poster or mentioned the work smoking. Suggest you visit my Maa Kali in Tarapith to see what food & drink is offered as bhog. Joy Ma Tara," Moitra said in a counter Twitter message.

Union Ministers Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, R.C.P. Singh

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A day before the end of their Rajya Sabha term, Union Ministers Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi and R.C.P. Singh on Wednesday resigned from the Union Cabinet.

Naqvi, the Minority Affairs Minister, and Singh, the Steel Minister, have submitted their resignation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Sources said that the Prime Minister has lauded the contribution of Naqvi and Singh as ministers during a meeting of the Union Cabinet - the last for both ministers - earlier in the day.

Sources said that after the Cabinet meeting, Naqvi, who was also the Deputy Leader of the House in the Rajya Sabha, met BJP chief J.P. Nadda at party headquarters here.



Singh, who is from the Janata Dal-United, was made minister during last year's cabinet reshuffle. The BJP and the JD-U both did not give ticket to Naqvi and Singh during last month's biennial Rajya Sabha polls.

There is speculation doing rounds in political circles that Naqvi may be made the BJP-led NDA candidate for the post of Vice President. "Several names are doing rounds and Naqvi's name is one of them. There is also speculation that he may be appointed Lt Governor of Jammu and Kashmir," a party insider said.

VISTARA BANGKOK-DELHI FLIGHT ENGINE FAILS AFTER LANDING AT IGI



New Delhi: One of the engines of a Vistara flight coming from Bangkok failed after it landed at the Indra Gandhi International Airport here, officials said Wednesday.

The incident took place on Tuesday and all the passengers were safely disembarked. According to airline officials, one of the engines of the flight UK122 had developed a "minor" electrical malfunction.

Subsequently, a tow truck was brought to take the aircraft to the parking bay. A Vistara spokesperson told reporter that the crew elected to tow the aircraft to the bay, keeping the safety and comfort of the passengers in mind.

World at serious risk of food access crisis: FAO

The FAO Director-General outlined measures to be taken by the international community to address the situation. These include food production at the country-level must be expanded, cash and critical inputs are needed for cereal and vegetable production and to protect livestock with treatments, vaccinations, feed and water and agrifood supply chains and value chains must be strengthened with the engagement of the public and the private sectors, to support smallholder farmers and households. In addition, livelihoods, agrifood systems and economies need protection against future shocks.

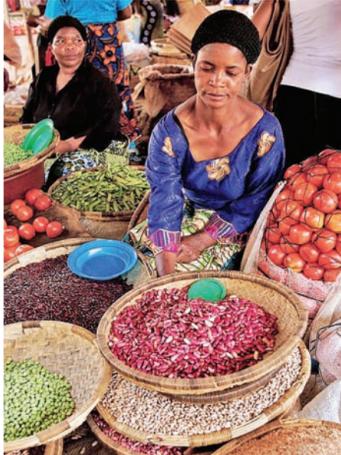
New York | Agencies

The pandemic, global interruption to supply chains, rising costs of major primary commodities, conflicts and humanitarian crises threaten the functioning of world agrifood systems, QU Dongyu, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), said.

"We are at serious risk of facing a food access crisis now, and probably a food availability crisis for the next season. All this has put at risk our efforts to achieve the SDGs," Qu said at the opening of the 2022 United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in New York on Tuesday. The HLPF is the main United Nations platform for following up and reviewing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals on the global level. "We must prevent the acceleration of

acute food insecurity trends in the coming months and years," Qu said.

Speaking later in the day at the FAO-led side event, "Agrifood Systems Transformation for a Resilient World: Responding to Global Crises," Qu said, "We only have eight years before our agreed timeline to implement the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. We have no time to lose." Qu summarised the scale of the task ahead, pointing to the impacts of the



pandemic, conflicts, and the cumulative loss to the global economy of more than \$12 trillion in 2020 and 2021, setting back progress on the SDGs. To overcome these problems, he outlined four main areas that need attention: Investment in the countries most in need; policies that increase productivity and protect natural resources; ensuring more efficient use of available inputs and outputs; and the importance of innovation, science and research. Timely food

aid is required but there needs to be more attention on producing nutritious food locally, FAO advocates. Only eight per cent of all food security funding in emergencies goes to assist agricultural production but investing in agriculture and rural livelihoods is seven to 10 times more cost-effective than traditional assistance.

"We must put policies in place that both increase productivity and protect natural resources," Qu said.

Qu also spoke of the need to ensure better and more efficient use of available outputs and inputs, citing the examples of global water stress, food loss and waste, and using fertilizer more efficiently.

Around one billion hectares of land face severe water constraints and almost 800 million hectares of rainfed cropland and pastureland are severely affected by recurring drought. Better use of the best technology and regulation for the efficient use of water in agriculture is needed.

BORIS JOHNSON GOVT HIT BY RESIGNATIONS

London: In a fresh blow to UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who recently survived a leadership challenge, three more have resigned from his government on Wednesday, media reports said.

Education ministers Will Quince and Robin Walker and ministerial aide Laura Trott on Wednesday, BBC reported. Will Quince said he had "no choice but to tender my resignation" while Laura Trott said she was quitting over a loss of "trust" in the government.

The resignations have added to the pressure on the Prime Minister following the departure of his health and finance ministers. Two of Boris Johnson's top ministers -- Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak and Health Secretary Sajid Javid -- quit the government on Tuesday.



PT USHA, ILAIYARAJA AMONG FOUR NOMINATED TO RAJYA SABHA

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Legendary athlete P.T. Usha, iconic music composer Ilaiyaraaja, noted philanthropist Veerendra Heggade and acclaimed screenwriter-director K.V. Vijayendra Prasad were on Wednesday nominated to the Rajya Sabha. Incidentally, all the four members nominated to the Rajya Sabha are from southern states. While Usha is from Kerala, Ilaiyaraaja hails from Tamil Nadu, Heggade belongs to Karnataka and Prasad is from Andhra Pradesh.

Government sources said that the Rajya Sabha nominations is another instance of the Narendra Modi-led government recognising outstanding Indians who have made a mark in diverse fields.

The four nominated members have had illustrious careers in their respective fields and received national and global recognition for their contributions.

"The four nominated representatives represent various southern states and expand the region's representation in the Upper House. The Modi government has consistently ensured adequate representation of various under-represented groups. The four nominated members include a woman, a Dalit, and a member of a religious minority (Jain community)," the sources said.

Usha, a celebrated athlete born in a small village in Kozhikode district in Kerala, is one of India's most iconic sportspersons. She has been a role model and inspiration for lakhs of young girls across the country who have dreamt of taking up a career in sports, especially track and field events. Popularly known as the 'Payyoli Express', Usha has won medals for the country at various international sporting events, including the World Junior Invitational Meet,



Asian Championships and Asian Games. She has set and broken many national and Asian records during her career.

At the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, she missed winning India's first medal in a track and field event at the Games in a photo-finish as she stood fourth in women's 400m race, missing out on a bronze by 1/100 second.

Post-retirement, she started the Usha School of Athletics, which offers world-class facilities to talented youngsters. Usha is a recipient of the Arjuna award and the Padma Shri. Born in a Dalit household at a village in Madurai district, Ilaiyaraaja is regarded as one of India's greatest music composers. During his long career, Ilaiyaraaja had to face innumerable hardships and caste-based discrimination.

However, he overcame all such hurdles and emerged as one of the country's leading music composers.

In a career spanning more than five decades, Ilaiyaraaja has composed over 7,000 songs for more than 1,000 films and performed in more than 20,000 concerts across the globe.

In 2018, he was honoured with the Padma Vibhushan award. He has also been awarded with Padma Bhushan. Veerendra Heggade has served as the 'Dharmadhikari' of the Dharmasthala Temple in Karnataka since the tender age of 20. He has been a devoted philanthropist for more than five decades. He has led various transformative initiatives for rural development and promotion of self-employment. He established the Rural Development and Self-employment Training Institute (RDSETI) to spread awareness about self-employment opportunities and train rural youth. Heggade has also conceptualised the Shri Kshethra Dharmasthala Rural Development Project, an initiative for inclusive rural development and self-employment in Karnataka. Currently, the project has more than six lakh SHGs and over 49 lakh members.

He also heads the Shri Dharmasthala Manjunatheswara Educational Trust, which provides quality and affordable education through more than 25 schools and colleges. He was awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 2015.

Vijayendra Prasad is an acclaimed screenwriter and film director, who has penned the scripts of many prominent Telugu and Hindi movies. His notable works include some of the highest-grossing Indian movies such as 'RRR', the 'Baahubali' series, and 'Bajrangi Bhaijaan'. Some of the movies he wrote have transcended sharp regional boundaries and become blockbusters across the country.

SCINDIA GETS ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF STEEL, IRANI OF MINORITY AFFAIRS



Team Absolute | New Delhi

President Ram Nath Kovind on Wednesday accepted the resignations of Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi and Steel Minister R.C.P. Singh from the Union Cabinet and asked Union Ministers Smriti Irani and Jyotiraditya M Scindia to hold charges of their portfolios.

"The President, as advised by the Prime Minister, has accepted the resignations of Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi and Ram Chandra Prasad Singh from the Union Council of

Ministers, with immediate effect, under clause (2) of Article 75 of the Constitution," a Rashtrapati Bhavan communique said.

It also said that the President has directed that Woman And Child Development Minister Irani be assigned the additional charge of the Ministry of Minority Affairs, and Civil Aviation Minister Scindia the charge of the Ministry of Steel.

Naqvi and Singh quit as Union Ministers on Wednesday - a day before the end of their Rajya Sabha terms.

After Salman Khan, now his lawyer gets death threat in Jodhpur

Jaipur | Agencies

Bollywood star Salman Khan's lawyer Hastimal Saraswat has filed a complaint at Jodhpur police station alleging that he has received death threats through letter which says that 'enemy's friend is enemy'.

This threat is similar to that which Bollywood actor Salman Khan and his father Salim Khan received recently. Also the letter is similar to what given to Salman Khan. Letter to Advocate Saraswat says, "Enemy's friend is an enemy. Will do something like Moosewala."

The threatening person wrote 'LB-GB' on Salman's letter. 'LB-GB' is also written on the letter sent to the Advocate.

Saraswat on Tuesday gave a complaint at Mahamandir police station in Jodhpur. He said, "I was in America for a month and a half. When I reached Jodhpur on the evening of June 30, my junior advocate Jitendra Prasad Bishnoi came to my house at around 11 p.m. on July 3 and said, that on July 1, at 10.30 a.m., a letter was found stuck in the latch of room number 8 of Jubilee Chamber located in the Old High Court."



"The letter had threatened to kill me and my family. Had to go to Jaipur to meet the Governor on 4th July. Therefore, forwarded this letter to the Mahamandir police station officer on WhatsApp to give him complete information," said Saraswat. Mahamandir police station officer Lekhray Siyag said that the police has registered a case and a gunman has been posted outside his house on Pawta B Road. The investigation has been started.

ODISHA MLA CLEARS CLASS 10 BOARD EXAMS AT AGE OF 58

Bhubaneswar:

Odisha MLA Angada Kanhar on Wednesday cleared the Class 10 board exam at the age of 58 years.

Kanhar, a BJD MLA from Phulbani constituency, has passed the State Open School Certificate Examination with B1 grade, securing 364 out of 500 marks. He had appeared at the exam at A.J.O. High School at Phulbani in Kandhamal district.

As per his scorecard, the MLA has got the highest (84) marks in Sanskrit, and the lowest (57) in English. He got 78 marks in both mathematics and social science, and 67 in science. The maximum mark for each subject is 100. Odisha's Board of Secondary Education on Wednesday announced the results of matriculation offline examinations, which was conducted on offline mode this year.



Supporting BJP in the hills was a mistake: Anit Thapa

Kolkata | Agencies

Anit Thapa, whose newly formed political outfit Bhartiya Gorkha Prajatantrik Morcha (BGPM) recently won a landslide victory in the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) polls, on Wednesday said that the decision of major political forces in the hills to support BJP was a disaster.

"We have supported the BJP for 15 years. It was a mistake. Nothing positive has happened in the hills. Now we want to work in close association with the state government for the positive development in the hills," Thapa said after a meeting with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at the state secretariat of Nabanna on Wednesday afternoon.

He said that the Chief Minister has accepted his invitation to be present in the hills on July 12 to attend a function on the formation of a new GTA board. Speaking to the media persons after the meeting with the Chief Minister, Thapa said that till Tuesday the hill people were victims of sentimental politics. "There was no scope for practical politics in the hills as a result of which the GTA system col-



lapsed. This system needs to be functional again and for that purpose I wish to work closely with the state government. The people of the hills seem to have understood that finally and hence they have elected us," Thapa said.

NOW EV CHARGING STATION MUST FOR EVERY NEW BUILDING IN NOIDA

Team Absolute | Noida

The authorities have decided to not approve any building plan here until and unless it makes provision for an electric vehicle charging station in it.

Sources at the Noida Authority said a decision regarding this was taken, and subsequently the Building Manual, 2010 was amended on May 13.

Notably, as per March 25, this year, the number of electric vehicles in the country are 10,76,420 and as per the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), a total of 1,742 Public Charging Stations (PCS) are operational in the country. Nine



cities -- Surat, Pune, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, and Chennai, account for approximately 940 stations.

"This move of Noida Authority will certainly give an impetus to electric vehi-

cles and people will tend to buy it more," a Noida-based resident said.

The Centre has also made 360-degree efforts to enhance public charging infrastructure by involving private and public agencies -- BEE, EESL, PGCIL, NTPC,

etc. Many private organisations have come forward to install EV charging stations to develop convenient charging networks to gain consumers' confidence.

The Ministry of Power had issued 'Charging Infrastructure for Electric Vehicles - the revised consolidated Guidelines and Standards' on January 14 this year to accelerate the E-Mobility transition in the country. Under the Scheme for Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles in India Phase-II (FAME India Phase II) of the Ministry of Heavy Industries, 2,877 public EV charging stations have been sanctioned in 68 cities.

G.A. MIR QUILTS AS CONGRESS' J&K UNIT CHIEF

Srinagar: Congress' J&K President Ghulam Ahmad Mir on Wednesday submitted his resignation to party chief Sonia Gandhi.

In his letter of resignation to Gandhi, he said that he would abide by the party high command decision on the selection of his successor. Mir, who was the party chief in J&K since 2015, said that following the best traditions of the party, he had put in his papers to facilitate the Congress President's appointment of the next chief of J&K Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC). Sources said the decision to replace Mir has been prompted by reports that the Assembly elections could be held in J&K by the year end. Reports here also said that the name of Azad loyalist, Vichar Rasool Wani is being considered by the Congress high command as Mir's successor.

Rajasthan govt to provide jobs to Kanhaiya Lal's sons

Jaipur | Agencies

The Rajasthan government in a cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Wednesday decided to give government jobs to sons of Kanhaiya Lal Teli, who was beheaded in Udaipur in Talibani kind of attack on June 28.

In his tweet Gehlot said, "Taking a sensitive decision, the cabinet has decided to appoint Yash Teli and Tarun Teli, sons of Shri Kanhaiyalal Teli, in government service."

Relaxation has been given in the rules for appointment, he said further adding, "This appointment will be provided under Rule 6C of Rajasthan Subordinate Office Clerk Service (Amendment) Rules, 2008 and 2009." Gehlot said, "There is no other



source of livelihood in the family of the deceased. If the dependents are given appointment, their life will go smooth. The family will get financial and mental help," he added. Kanhaiya Lal, a tailor, was murdered in broad daylight in Rajasthan's Udaipur on June 28 for supporting suspended former BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma whose controversial remarks on Prophet Mohammad had set off a huge controversy at home and abroad.

Punjab CM to tie the knot for second time on Thursday



Chandigarh | Agencies

Starting his second personal 'innings', Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann is going to tie knot for the second time on Thursday at a private ceremony amidst the presence of AAP's top leadership, including national convenor Arvind Kejriwal.

Mann is getting married to Gurpreet Kaur, a doctor by profession. The 48-year-old Mann is tying knot with 1993-born Kaur, who did her MBBS from Maharishi Markandeshwar University at Haryana's Mullana in 2018. In his previous marriage to Inderpreet Kaur, which ended in a divorce in 2016, Mann has two children

-- son Dilshan and daughter Seerat -- who are currently staying in the US with their mother.

Both children had attended Mann's swearing-in ceremony at Khatkar Kalan on March 16. Mann's cabinet colleagues -- Aman Arora and Harjot Singh Bains -- have congratulated him on Twitter.

Liquor flows free in 'dry' Gujarat

Gandhinagar | Agencies

Despite stringent laws in place to prohibit it, liquor apparently flows free in "dry" Gujarat.

In June, Bhesan village (Junagadh district - Saurashtra) Sarpanch announced that if any one is caught intoxicated, the person will be punished by the village panchayat.

Defending the decision, Sarpanch Jaysingh Bhati said the drinking problem had increased in the village, 15 to 20 women have become widows because of alcohol, as their husbands died because of addiction in the last two years.

On Sunday night, Valsad police arrested BJP leaders and workers partying in Dharampur. A day after on Monday, police arrested Lunavada's former MLA Hirabhai Patel's son Maharshi with 39 bottles of IMFL and beer. Hirabhai has recently joined BJP.

These examples are just the tip of an iceberg indicating how the liquor is flowing in Gujarat, where prohibition is implemented in the name of Gandhiji, but the government and police are never serious in implementing the policy in letter and spirit, alleged political opponents.

"Gandhiji never believed in enforcing prohibition by law, as he saw it as socio-economic issue and not a law an order issue, he was aware that women are sufferer of male's liquor addiction, so he encouraged women for picketing at liquor



dens, which worked successful, the true sense of picketing was never understood," expressed Uttambhai Parmar, noted Gandhian.

Empowering police to raid and search liquor dens or illegal manufacturing has worsened the situation, they are least interested in implementing the prohibition, on the contrary they encourage and threaten bootleggers to continue the business and pay them hefty bribes for the same, alleged Parmar. "Intentionally the policy is loosely

implemented, because the loopholes have created a parallel economy, from the bottom of the police department to top brass including politicians are making huge money, so why will they implement it strictly," questions Arjun Modhwadia, senior leader of Congress party.

Parmar and Modhwadia are against lifting prohibition, both strongly believe even for namesake the prohibition is implemented, it is moral binding giving a hope of social security to women.



Urban Body Election 2022: 61% voter turnout recorded

▶ VOTING FOR THE FIRST PHASE OF URBAN BODY ELECTION CAME TO END AT 5 PM ON WEDNESDAY.

▶ VOTING WAS HELD FOR 133 URBAN BODIES IN 49 DISTRICTS OF THE STATE.

▶ A TOTAL OF 13,148 POLLING BOOTHS WERE SET UP FOR THE FIRST PHASE OF CIVIC POLLS.

▶ SECOND PHASE OF THE ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD ON JULY 13.

▶ COUNTING OF THE VOTES WILL BE DONE ON JULY 17 FROM 9 AM.



Team Absolute | Bhopal

According to the information received till 8 pm in the first phase of Urban Bodies General Election-2022, peaceful polling was completed in all 133 urban bodies. The total estimated turnout was 61 per cent. Of these,

59.10 per cent are female, 63.20 per cent male and 34.60 percent other voters. In the first phase, polling was held in 11 municipal corporations, 36 municipal councils and 86 municipal councils in 44 districts. In today's polling, 11 per cent polling was recorded till 9 am, 26 per cent till 11 am, 42 per cent till 1 pm, 52

per cent till 3 pm and 61 per cent till 5 pm. State capital recorded only 43.80 per cent polling of these 42 per cent women 45.50 per cent males and 23.20 per cent others cast their votes while the commercial capital of State Indore recorded 76 per cent polling with 74.30 per cent women, 77.70 per cent male exercising their right.

During the actual polling, 61 Control Units and 114 Ballot Units have been replaced. 62 CU and 123 BU were replaced during the mock poll. A total of 20 thousand 456 Control Units (CUs) and 34 thousand 983 Ballot Units (BUs) including reserve were used for voting.

During the polling, mainly 5 CUs, 11 BUs in Gwalior district, 5 CUs, 8 BUs in Sagar, 4 CUs, 6 BUs in Satna, 9 CUs, 18 BUs in Jabalpur, 4 CUs in Chhindwara, 8 BUs, 4 in Bhopal CU, 9 BU, 6 CU, 26, BU in Indore, 2 CU and 2 BU in Ujjain district have been replaced.

Another tribal woman beaten, paraded

Yet another shameful incident of atrocity against women came to light in Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday when a tribal woman in Khargone was beaten up, thrashed by her own family members and was paraded carrying her husband on shoulders.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Yet another shameful incident of atrocity against women came to light in Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday when a tribal woman in Khargone was beaten up, thrashed by her own family members and was paraded carrying her husband on shoulders. It came just two days after a woman was beaten up,



thrashed and was forced to carry her husband on shoulders as punishment for having an alleged extra-marital affair in Dewas district of the state.

According to police, the incident in Khargone occurred on July 2, however, it came to light on Wednesday after a video surfaced on social media which showed a woman being beaten up brutally by her own family members, and was forced to carry her husband on her shoulders.

Police said that the incident was reported in Keli village under Unn police station in Khargone district on July 2. During preliminary investigation it was revealed that a 42-year-old woman, mother of two, left her in-laws about five-month ago and came to her parents house. Instead of staying with her brothers, she

started staying in her uncle's house.

On July 2, her in-laws came there and first beat her uncle and then dragged her out of the house and forced her to carry her husband on shoulders as punishment.

The woman was married in Nalgwadi village of Barwani district. The couple were often involved in arguments over petty issues and her husband used to beat her. Upset, she left her in-laws' house and started living with her uncle.

Khargone district police said that five persons have been arrested in this connection. Those arrested have been identified as Magan Manasya (Husband of the woman), Cashia Soyla Bhatnagar, Thawaria Lalsingh Mandloi, Kalu Chhabra and Nurla Falya, said Khargone SP Dharamveer Singh Yadav.

FIR lodged in Bhopal against Mahua Moitra over remarks on Goddess Kali

The Madhya Pradesh Police on Wednesday registered a case against Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra for her controversial remarks on Goddess Kali.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh Police on Wednesday registered a case against Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra for her controversial remarks on Goddess Kali.

In the FIR registered by the Crime Branch in Bhopal, Moitra has been booked under Section 295A (outraging religious sentiments) of the India Penal Code. The development came after Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan condemned Moitra's remarks, saying, "The statement was made with the sole intention of demeaning Goddess Kali."



Moitra triggered a row on Tuesday while addressing a conclave where she said that she had every right as an individual to imagine Goddess Kali as meat-eating and alcohol-accepting goddess, as each person had his or her unique way of worship-

ping deities. Chouhan alleged that Moitra deliberately made the remarks without knowing anything about Hindu religion and religious beliefs.

The Chief Minister added that Moitra's statement has hurt the religious feelings of Hindus.

"We will not tolerate disrespect towards Hindu gods and goddesses at any cost," he added.

The police have confirmed registering an FIR against Moitra, though its copy has not been made public.

Apart from Madhya Pradesh, the Bengal unit of the BJP has also filed two complaints against Moitra for 'insulting' Goddess Kali.

While the first complaint was lodged by some BJP workers on Wednesday morning, the second was lodged by Bengal BJP leader Rajarshi Lahiri at the Rabindra Sarobar police station, as per reports.



MP govt forms committee for two G-20 conferences

The Madhya Pradesh government has constituted a committee comprising top officials to look after the hospitality and security for the two conferences of G-20 countries to be held in Indore and Bhopal.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government has constituted a committee comprising top officials to look after the hospitality and security for the two conferences of G-20 countries to be held in Indore and Bhopal.

Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains has formed the committee of senior officials of the state administration, which includes additional chief secretaries of the general administration and home departments, besides other senior officials, an official told IANS on Tuesday.

The committee, headed by the Chief Secretary, will look after the hospitality and security of the participants during the two conferences of G-20 countries, the official said in a statement.

However, no dates for these events were mentioned in the statement.

The Principal Secretary in the Tourism Department will be the nodal officer of this committee, it was stated.

As per the statement, India will host over 190 meetings and conferences of G-20 delegates from December 1, 2022 to November 30, 2023 across the country.

MP Home Minister warns to ban film 'Kaali'

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra on Wednesday warned to impose a ban on the film 'Kaali' if the objectionable posters showing the Goddess smoking a cigarette are not removed. Calling it an insult of Goddess Kali, the minister also said that if posters were not removed, the government will lodge an FIR against the film's director.

"Maa Kaali's insult will not be tolerated, strict action will be taken. We will ask for the registration of an FIR. We will also ban the film in the state. Strict action will be taken if the posters are not removed," Mishra said.

An infuriated minister further said that filmmakers find it easy to insult Hindu Gods and Goddess but not



any other religion because they know that they will be punished. "It is a well planned conspiracy against Hindus, he added.

The poster of the performance documentary Kaali showed the Goddess smoking a cigarette and holding a LGBTQ flag.

Madurai-born filmmaker based in Toronto in Canada Leena Manimekalai came under sharp criticism after she shared the poster of 'Kaali' on Twitter allegedly depicting the goddess in a "disrespectful"

manner. The poster of the movie has evoked sharp reactions on social media with some people alleging that it hurt their religious sentiments and demanding the arrest of the filmmaker. Amid the immense backlash, the director had said she was willing to pay with her life and added that she had nothing to lose.

What an idea! MP residents throw party on pothole-filled road

In an effort to draw the attention of the authorities towards the poor condition of roads ridden with potholes, the residents in Anuppur district in Madhya Pradesh have found a unique way of protest.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In an effort to draw the attention of the authorities towards the poor condition of roads ridden with potholes, the residents in Anuppur district in Madhya Pradesh have found a unique way of protest.

In a viral video filmed to highlight the poor condition of a road connecting Anuppur with Bijuri Manendragarh, the residents of the area could be seen sitting on chairs on a big crater on the road, dipping their legs in the muddy water that has accumulated after the rains to

"chill". To add to the ambience, they also put up some disco lights with dance music playing in the background along with beach balls to play. Setting the mood with party music, the residents could be seen having a blast, enjoying drinks and snacks. The video also shows saplings planted in the smaller potholes around the crater as decoration. In a similar symbolic protest last year, the residents of Jammu and Kashmir's Budgam district planted paddy on the muddy road leading up to their village in order to highlight the poor condition of the road.

SERIES OF MONSOON SYSTEMS TO BRING PROLONGED RAINS OVER MP

Bhopal: Both East and West Madhya Pradesh are expected to see some good rains in view of the passage of a series of Monsoon systems across these areas. Right from July 6, a week long rainfall activity is expected. Moreover, there is a possibility of some heavy rains with some localised flooding in some regions as well during this period. There may be a break around July 11, but then again around July 12, another widespread spell of rains may be observed.



These rains will be seen due to a series of Monsoon systems appearing in Bay of Bengal. There was no Monsoon system in June, and the first Monsoon system that did form in the Bay of Bengal was in the first week of July. It has moved across central parts through and through and is currently over Gujarat region.

Another system has formed in the Bay as a Cyclonic Circulation over the north-west regions of Bay of Bengal, which is expected to follow a similar track. Not only this, after the system finishes, in the subsequent 4-5 days, another system may form over Bay of Bengal after this Circulation. Thus, a series of systems are likely to form in Bay and move across the Madhya Pradesh region.

CM PAYS TRIBUTE TO MUKHERJEE AND DAVE

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan paid tributes to the great educationist, thinker and founder of Bharatiya Jana Sangh Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and former Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Anil Madhav Dave on their anniversary. CM Chouhan paid floral tribute by garlanding their portraits in the auditorium at his residence office.

Reminiscing the contribution of Mukherjee, Chouhan has tweeted that "The striking views of the revered Dr. Mukherjee, the luminary of Indian culture, the



founder of Akhil Bharatiya Jana Sangh, who dedicated his life for the service of the nation, will always continue to inspire countrymen for the service of Ma Bharti. The India of Mukherjee's dreams, who gave his all to

achieve the goal of 'Ek Desh Mein Do Vidhan, Do Pradhan Aur Do Nishan Nahi Challenge' (two laws, two heads and two symbols will not work in one country), is being built under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. We will all build a strong nation of Mukherjee's dreams."

Chouhan, while paying homage to Narmada son Late Anil Madhav Dave, who dedicated every moment of his life for the protection of river, forest, environment, urged the people of the state to keep his memories intact by undertaking sacred works of plantation, natural farming and river and environment-conservation.

CM PLANTS SAPLINGS IN SMART CITY PARK

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted Neem, Banyan and Saptaparni saplings in the Smart City Park. Viva Joshi, Tarun Bhargava, Seema Singh and Manju Srivastava of Madhuri Ayam Education and Welfare Society also participated in the plantation. On this occasion, children affected with physical problems and mental infirmity from the Society including Payal, Pooja, Sonam and Sapna, introduced themselves to Chief Minister Chouhan in sign language. The society is working for better education and rehabilitation of normal and differently abled children coming from slums of rural slums and Bhopal city. An ashram is being run for the care and education of children in Neelbad. The Society is making special efforts to provide better education to the children on the basis of the principle of inclusive education. Along with this, activities are also being conducted in the field of women empowerment, vocational and skill development and drug de-addiction. Banyan has religious significance. Banyan tree helps cure several diseases through Ayurvedic treatment. Similarly, Neem rich in antibiotic elements is known as the supreme medicine. Saptaparni is an evergreen medicinal tree, which has great importance in Ayurveda.

COVID VACCINATION PRECAUTION DOSE INTERVAL IS NOW 6 MONTHS

Bhopal: The interval of precaution dose in Covid-19 vaccination has been reduced from 9 months to 6 months. Director (Vaccination) NHM Dr Santosh Shukla said that for the eligibility of the precaution dose, a gap of a period of 6 months or 26 weeks is necessary from the second dose of Covid-19 vaccine.

France's Alstom to supply trains for Bhopal, Indore Metro projects

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (MPMRC) has awarded French mobility company Alstom the contract to supply 156 Movia metro cars with 15 years of comprehensive maintenance for the Bhopal and Indore Metro projects, official said on Wednesday. A contract (memorandum of understanding) was signed between MPMRC and Alstom worth Rs 3200 crore aiming to provide benefit of Metro services to over 5.7 million people in Bhopal and Indore. As per the MPMRC, Alstom will be responsible for installation of latest generation of communications-based train control (CBTC) signalling system as well as train control and telecommunication systems, each with seven years of comprehensive maintenance.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, Alstom stated that it would be responsible for the design, manufacture, supply, installation, tests and commissioning of 52 standard gauge Movia metro passenger trains of 3-car config-



uration each. It said that 27 trains will be delivered for Bhopal and 25 trains for Indore. These metro trains would be built at Alstom's state-of-the-art rolling stock manufacturing facility in Savli (Gujarat). These ultramodern, light-weight trains will operate at a top speed of 80 km/h, across the 31 km line in Bhopal with 30 stations and the 31.5 km line in Indore with 29 stations.

"We are delighted to be awarded this significant contract from MPMRC and this collaboration will lay a strong foundation for an efficient and sustainable mass transport system for the cities of Bhopal and Indore. As India moves towards its vision of using green and clean energy for public mobility, Alstom takes pride in being its long-standing partner in this journey and help write the country's growth story. Following the Agra-Kanpur metro project, winning this contract is a strong validation of our commitment to deliver mobility solutions that meet the specific requirements of our customers," said Olivier Loison, Managing Director, Alstom India cluster.

"Alstom India has a history of successfully delivering world-class metro trains for major cities, including Delhi, Chennai, Mumbai, Lucknow, Kochi in India and internationally for Sydney, Queensland and Montreal. The company is currently manufacturing metro trains for Agra-Kanpur, Mumbai Metro Line 3 and modern traintsets for India's first semi high-speed Delhi-Meerut RRTS project," Loison added.

OVER TWO LAKH CHILDREN APPLIED FOR ADMISSION IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS UNDER RTE

Bhopal: Over two lakh children have applied for admission in private schools in Madhya Pradesh under the Right to Education Act (RTE) for the 2022-23 session, an official said on Wednesday. Of the two lakh applications received till Tuesday evening, nearly 70 per cent have been verified so far by concerned officials, said Dhanraju S, the director of Rajya Shiksha Kendra (RSK). The last date for applying for admission in private schools under the RTE was July 5, he said.

The applications were submitted on the RTE portal and the concerned officials will verify these applications till July 9, it was stated. Schools will be allotted to children in a random selection process through an online lottery.

Schools will be allotted on July 14 and children will be able to take admission in the allotted institutions till July 23, the official said.



EDITOR'S SPECS

ESSENCE OF INDIA IS COMMUNAL HARMONY

India is known for its unity in diversity. Though from time-to-time various external forces tried to disturb it, the larger, strong undertone of unity is integral to the culture of the country. As Bakri Eid is approaching on July 10, Muslim organisation Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind (JUH) announced that it will send letters to mosques in India to ensure that no cow slaughter takes place as "it hurts the religious sentiments of our Hindu brothers". In another such glorious example of communal harmony, in a village called Khaderabad (now the Mylavaram dam) at Jammalamadugu, a small town in Kadapa district in Andhra Pradesh, Hindus and Muslims observe what may seem a strange religious practice. According to the traditional historical sources, or stalapurana, Hindus who visit this place initially offer prayers at a dargah of a Muslim saint Pir Gaibushah Vali located on a hill, before they offer their prayers to Lord Shiva, known here as Gurappa, reported a daily. The village is an important pilgrim centre for the Hindu as well as the Muslim devotees -- Hindus visit the dargah before worshipping Gurappa and Muslims venerate the Neem tree planted next to the dargah, a typical Hindu tradition. It stated that a glance at the annals of Indian history, it is an established fact that from the late 12th century onwards Muslim empires began to rise to authority throughout the subcontinent, the prominent ones being Delhi Sultanate and Mughals, who adopted local culture. They developed their own culture and traditions through intermarriages with natives. The Muslim rule in India, which lasted for nearly 500 years until the British established their supremacy in Bengal after the Battle of Buxar in 1764. Therefore, whether it was the Muslim emperors or the British administrators, both had left their own imprints on the course of Indian history, the Deccan Herald report emphasised.

HIS HOLINESS THE 14TH DALAI LAMA, THE AUTHENTIC ROLE MODEL TO ALL LEADERS

Ven Lenagala Sirinivasa



He is now celebrating his 87th birthday and what he has achieved on a global level over the period of his exile would need many pages history to record.

His commitments on global peace, the relevance and importance of Buddhist teachings to the contemporary world, individual peace and happiness, health of planet earth, the liberation of his motherland and its people, the importance of education and a reconciliation between Buddhism and science.

In his lectures, deliberations, discourses

His Holiness the Dalai Lama lives in exile for over 60 years; having forfeited his active role as the spiritual and temporal leader of the over 7 million Tibetan Buddhists due to Chinese aggression. But he reflects the inimitable characteristic of a divine presence on earth, not losing his composure, his sense of humour, altruistic tendencies, the simple child-like nature and relentless hard work towards his global and national commitments.

and meetings held in world capitals over the years, he has conveyed his messages very clearly on these issues, aside from establishing institutions in India for the propagation of these concepts.

His simple child-like nature, and the capacity to laugh aloud without any trace of concern or worry while engaged in grave global issues and threats, his unreserved pure, willful, sacrificial love that intentionally desires another's highest good and his equilibrium and blissfulness at all occasions have all been clearly witnessed by people in the events that he attended or conducted over the years.

His remarks at a symposium at the Cambridge Union are worthwhile mentioning to 'geeta' glimpse of his simplistic nature: "I never think of myself as a leader, I think of myself as a simple Buddhist monk. It's part of my practice to serve sentient beings as best I can. My body, speech and mind are dedicated to their welfare. If someone asks, I share my experience with them, but I don't impose my views without a request or invitation."

Hundreds of quotations, such as the one below, from his lectures and discourses in world capitals and at institutions of international repute can be cited to portray his outlook on fellow human beings and his approaches to the contemporary world:

"Brothers and sisters, I dislike formality. When I meet you I like to think that we are all human beings. Any idea that I am somehow different from you because I am Asian, Tibetan or Buddhist, or that I am somehow

special because I am the Dalai Lama is nonsense. You are human beings, I'm a human being; you want a happy life, and I want a happy life. But I think that aim will not be fulfilled only on the basis of material values; what we all want is affection and what we all need is to be more warm-hearted. This is how we create the healthy mind that ensures our physical health."

He has consistently advocated policies of non-violence, even in the face of extreme aggression. His Holiness has travelled to more than sixty-two countries spanning six continents. Since 1959, His Holiness has received over 84 awards, honorary doctorates, prizes, among others, in recognition of his message of peace, non-violence, inter-religious understanding, universal responsibility and compassion. His Holiness has also authored more than 72 books. His Holiness describes himself as a simple Buddhist monk.

Three Main Commitments. His Holiness has three main commitments in life.

Firstly, as a human being, His Holiness promotes human values such as compassion, forgiveness, tolerance, contentment and self-discipline. Secondly, as a religious practitioner, His Holiness is committed to promoting religious harmony and understanding among the world's major religious traditions. Despite philosophical differences between them, all major world religions have the same potential to create good human beings.

Therefore, all religious traditions need to respect one

another and recognize the value of their respective traditions.

Thirdly, His Holiness is a Tibetan and as the 'Dalai Lama' is the focus of the Tibetan people's hope and trust. Therefore, his third commitment is to preserve Tibet's Buddhist culture, a culture of peace and non-violence and protect the natural environment of Tibet. The institutions that he established range from educational institutions for the Tibetan refugee children to institutions dealing with controversial global issues.

At last, His Holiness has lately spoken of his commitment to reviving awareness of the value of ancient Indian knowledge among young Indians today. His Holiness is convinced that the rich ancient Indian understanding of the workings of the mind and emotions, as well as mental training such as meditation are of great relevance today. He is confident that ancient Indian knowledge can be combined with modern education.

As one of the most revered spiritual leaders, the 14th Dalai Lama is an icon who advocates democracy and freedom not only for his country but also for the world. He is a role model to everyone who wish to see positive differences in the world.

(Ven Prof Lenagala Sirinivasa is Dean of Faculty of Language Studies at the Buddhist and Pali University, Sri Lanka)

international

IMRAN THREATENS TO SPILL SECRETS IF IGNORED BY ESTABLISHMENT

Hamza Ameer | Islamabad/Agencies

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman and former Prime Minister Imran Khan has warned of revealing all the secrets and details of every player behind the 'conspiracy' that led to his ouster, if he and his demand of early elections is ignored and negated.

Khan said that he would unmask all the characters involved in the alleged regime change conspiracy if pushed against the wall, hinting indirect pressure and threat to the country's military establishment, which has been one of the targets of PTI's social media campaigns and has also been openly called out by Khan in public gathering, interviews and statements.

"I know the role of each character involved in this conspiracy. I have recorded a video, which I have kept at a safe place. If anything happens to me, the video will be shared with the nation," Khan said.

"I am aware of what happened. I am only sitting quite because I know that if I start revealing everything, it will harm the country," he added.

However, Khan said that if he, his party and his narrative is pushed against the wall, if his party members are harassed and intimidated, he will be



left with no option but to bring what he claims as the truth out for the whole nation to see and

decide.

Khan's statement is part of a consistent campaign, in which he claims that his government was ousted through a US-led regime change conspiracy, implemented through his opposition, along with the support of the military establishment, which, despite Khan's repeated calls, refused to stand by his side. Social media handlers of PTI have been engaged in a major anti-army, anti-establishment campaign, creating trends and lashing out at Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa for not coming to Khan's rescue and becoming party to the regime change conspiracy against his government. Khan, since then, has been demanding intervention of the military establishment in the country's political outlook, accusing them of bringing a government of "thieves and convicted criminals".

Khan's narrative has been widely accepted by millions of his supporters, who are now seen openly questioning the military establishment with derogatory statements on social media platforms and creating trends that target the army chief to the level of even calling him a 'traitor'.

On the other hand, the Pakistan Army has maintained that it is not going to get involved in any political maneuvering, opting to stay neutral and not take sides.

Five civilians killed in Russian shelling in Ukraine's Donetsk Oblast



Kiev/Agencies

Five civilians were killed in shelling by Russian forces in Ukraine's Donetsk Oblast.

"Russia continues to kill civilians! On 5 July, the Russians killed five civilian residents of Donetsk Oblast: two in Avdiivka, one in Sloviansk, one in

Krasnohorivka, and one in Kurakhove," Ukrayinska Pravda quoted

Donetsk governor Pavlo Kyrylenko as saying. Twenty-one civilians sustained injuries in the Russian attacks.

At least 570 residents of Donetsk Oblast have been killed since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The number

of casualties and fatalities in Mariupol and Volnovakha could not be determined, Kyrylenko added. On Monday, Russian President Vladimir Putin had declared victory in eastern Ukrainian region Luhansk after Ukrainian forces withdrew from their last stronghold in Lysychansk.

AFGHANISTAN WANTS GOOD RELATIONS WITH ALL NATIONS: TALIBAN LEADER

Kabul: Supreme leader of the Taliban-run administration Haibatullah Akhundzada on Wednesday said that Afghanistan wants to have good relations with all countries.

"We assure our neighbours, the region and the world that we will not allow anyone to use our territory to threaten the security of other countries. We also want other countries not to interfere in our internal affairs," Akhundzada said in a congratulatory message on the eve of Eid al-Adha, an annual Muslim festival. The Taliban leader noted that "within the framework of mutual interaction and commitment, we want good, diplomatic, economic and political relations with the world, including the United States, and we consider this in the interest of all sides." The country will celebrate Eid al-Adha on or around July 9, depending upon moon sightings.

Following the US military defeat and pullout from Afghanistan last August, Washington has imposed sanctions on the Taliban-run administration and frozen more than 9 billion US dollars of Afghanistan's central bank, which battered the economy in the war-torn country, Xinhua news agency reported. Akhundzada noted that the Taliban-run administration was aware of all the problems that Afghans are facing. "Strengthening the economy, rebuilding the country and removing the remaining problems is a shared responsibility of us and our nation. Let's work together in all legitimate matters, support each other and rebuild this country into a prosperous one," he said. "The Islamic Emirate pays special attention to the needs of the families of the poor, orphans and the disabled and other needy people in the country," he said.

25 KILLED IN RAIN-RELATED ACCIDENTS IN BALOCHISTAN

Twenty-five people were killed in separate rain-related accidents in Pakistan's southwest Balochistan province, the director-general of the provincial disaster management authority (PDMA) has said.

Islamabad/Agencies

The torrential rains started lashing various districts of the province on Monday and the downpour has continued, resulting in a number of accidents. The provincial capital Quetta declared a calamity-hit area after eight people including kids died in the rain-triggered accidents, Xinhua news agency reported.

Director-General Naseer Ahmad Nasar said that over 200 houses were damaged and about 2,000 animals perished in heavy rains.

He said that the heavy downpour also caused flash-flooding in large water drainage and inundated several low-lying areas.



He added that over 40 people were injured in the rains and the critically wounded people were being treated in various hospitals in the province.

According to local media reports, several people

including five coal mine laborers, a shepherd with his cattle, and two kids were swept away by flash floods in the province.

Rescue and relief operation is underway in the province, with the district

administration distributing food items and other necessities to rain-affected families.

The monsoon rains are expected to continue till Thursday in various districts of the province, according to the PDMA.

Iran urges US to choose between clinching nuke deal or insisting on "unilateral demands"

Tehran/Agencies

The Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on Wednesday asked the US to choose between clinching an agreement in the ongoing nuclear talks or insisting on its unilateral demands.

"Agreement is possible only based on mutual understanding and interests," Amir-Abdollahian tweeted after a phone conversation with EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell on Tuesday night. "We remain ready to negotiate a strong and durable agreement," he said, insisting that the United States "must decide if it wants a deal or insists on sticking to its unilateral demands."

The conversation between Tehran and Brussels followed



recent attempts by the EU to engage the United States and Iran in a fresh round of indirect talks over the revival of the Iranian 2015 nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Xinhua news agency reported. Tehran and Washington held indirect talks last week in the Qatari capital of Doha. EU coordinator for the Vienna talks, Enrique Mora, mediated the negotiations to revive the JCPOA, with no agreement reached after two days.



AFGHAN SUFI CLERIC KILLED IN MAHARASHTRA'S NASHIK, MANHUNT FOR ASSAILANTS

▶ IN A SHOCKING CRIME, A REFUGEE SUFI CLERIC FROM AFGHANISTAN WAS SPRAYED WITH BULLETS IN THE YEOLA TOWN OF MAHARASHTRA'S NASHIK DISTRICT, POLICE SAID HERE ON WEDNESDAY.

Team Absolute | Nashik

In a shocking crime, a refugee Sufi cleric from Afghanistan was sprayed with bullets in the Yeola town of Maharashtra's Nashik district, police said here on

Wednesday. According to the Investigation Officer, the incident occurred around 7.15 p.m. on Tuesday in an open deserted plot near the MIDC industrial zone in the town. Preliminary probe revealed that at least four unidentified persons suddenly came there and fired multiple rounds at the Afghan cleric, targeting him in the head and neck, leading to his instant death. The victim has been identified as Khwaja Sayyed Chishti, 35, a refugee from Afghanistan, popular locally as 'Sufibaba' and used to preach in several religious gatherings or mausoleums. After committing the crime, the four assailants fled with an SUV parked nearby, reportedly owned by the Chishti, and efforts are on to track it. Nashik Superintendent of Police (Rural) Sachin Patil said that

a case of murder has been registered and investigations were underway to trace the four suspected assailants. The police officer said that Chishti was an Afghan passport holder who had come to India around four years ago and was living legally. "Initially he was in Delhi, then moved to Karnataka and since recently was living in Maharashtra, having permission from the Centre to stay in the country," said Patil. The motive behind the ghastly crime -- tentatively suspected to be a property-linked matter -- is being probed, and a manhunt has been launched for the killers and efforts to find the get-away vehicle. The Yeola Police have formed a special team to probe the incident which has sent shockwaves in the local Muslim communities.

NDRF stations 17 teams in Konkan, West Maharashtra amid heavy rains

On Sunday, the NDRF had deployed its seven teams - five in Mumbai and one each in Ratnagiri and Raigad districts - following an orange alert issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

Team Absolute | Mumbai

With heavy to very heavy rain being reported in Konkan and Western Maharashtra, the 5th Battalion of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has sent 17 of its 18 teams to these areas to tackle any emergency. The move comes after the government requested the NDRF to send its teams to these regions. One team of the NDRF is on standby at its headquarters to handle any situation in the Pune district. Earlier on Sunday, the NDRF had



deployed its seven teams - five in Mumbai and one each in Ratnagiri and Raigad districts - following an orange alert issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD). As on Wednesday morning, 10 more of its teams were being deployed in the coastal districts and Western Maharashtra. As on Wednesday morning, the district-wise deployment of NDRF

teams was as follows: Sindhudurg (one), Ratnagiri (two teams in Chiplun area), Raigad (two teams in Mahad area), Mumbai (five), Thane (two), Palghar (one), Kolhapur (two), Satara (one). One team has been deployed in Nagpur for response to any situation arising in Vidarbha. One team is stationed at NDRF headquarters at Sudumbare for response in Pune, especially on the

backdrop of very heavy rains being reported in the Ghat areas of Pune district. The teams have been holding meetings with respective local administrations, authorities from flood-prone and landslide-prone areas and have chalked out a plan of action in each of these regions. On Monday evening, rising water levels were reported from the low-lying areas of Chiplun town. The 5th Battalion of the NDRF is headquartered at Sudumbare near Talegaon in the Pune district and has 18 teams comprising 45 personnel each. The teams are equipped with boats, rescue equipment and the members include engineering, paramedic, technical experts and also a dog squad. The configurations of these teams change according to the nature of the emergency. During the monsoon last year, heavy flooding was reported in Chiplun as the Vashisht river overflowed into the town after heavy rainfall.

Maha: Oppn slams gas price hike, terms it fallout of new 'ED govt'

The Opposition Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Congress on Wednesday attacked the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government at the Centre for the steep hike of Rs 50 in the prices of LPG cooking gas cylinders, terming it as a "fallout" of the new government assuming power in Maharashtra.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Opposition Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Congress on Wednesday attacked the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government at the Centre for the steep hike of Rs 50 in the prices of LPG cooking gas cylinders, terming it as a "fallout" of the new government assuming power in Maharashtra. NCP Chief Spokesperson Mahesh Tapase said 50 MLAs from the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) rebelled against the then Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and a week later, the cooking gas prices were increased by Rs 50. "The 50 MLAs were taken to Surat, flown to Guwahati and then to Goa, everywhere pampered in deluxe hotels... The 'invisible force' behind that operation to topple the MVA government must have cost a huge amount. Is there any connection between the 50 MLAs and Rs 50 spike in gas cylinder prices," Tapase asked.



He also referred to the development as a consequence of the 'E.D.' government -- of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis -- as pointed out by the latter (Eknath-Devendra) last week. In a sharp attack, Congress state President Nana Patole asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi how can the masses afford the huge hike of Rs 50 for domestic gas cylinders in the all round inflation. "The Modi government has a new slogan now - 'Na khaunga, Na pakaane doonga'. With the latest hike, the domestic gas cylinder prices have touched Rs 1,053," Patole pointed out. Tapase pointed out that barely 24 hours ago, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde had promised to reduce taxes on petrol-diesel and today, people got a shock when the BJP government hiked the gas

cylinder prices, indicating that the reality is very different from perceptions. Patole recalled how, ever since the Modi regime came to power, the inflation graph has been rising and the government has "failed to control" the price rise. "Owing to the continuous price hikes, essential commodities have also gone out of reach of the common masses. In 2014, during the Congress-led UPA government, the gas cylinder cost Rs 450, ensuring the commoners were not hit by inflation," said the Congress chief, adding: "The subsidies extended by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh have also been removed by the Modi government, and Indians are using the most expensive gas in the world." Claiming that it is impossible to get a new gas connection, Patole said it cost Rs 2,200, plus Rs 4,400 security deposit, regulator price has gone up by Rs 100, and then highly-priced monthly refill cylinders costing Rs 1,000-plus. Referring to the Centre's figures of 9-crore gas connections given under the Ujjwala Yojana, Patole demanded to know how many of those beneficiaries can afford the revised cylinder prices, and now they cannot go back to kerosene which has been stopped to them. "The economy is on downslide, the Indian Rupee falling daily against US Dollar, but the government has already looted the people of Rs 26 lakh crore on fuel taxes and filling its own coffers as the masses continue to suffer in the whirlpool of inflation," said Patole. The fresh increase in cooking gas prices has attracted severe flak even on the social media groups.

▶ MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER EKNATH SHINDE ON WEDNESDAY ORDERED THE APPOINTMENT OF A NODAL OFFICER WHO CAN COORDINATE WITH THE BRIHAN MUMBAI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (BMC) AND THE INDIAN RAILWAYS ESPECIALLY DURING THE MONSOON.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Wednesday ordered the appointment of a nodal officer who can coordinate with the Brihan Mumbai

Municipal Corporation (BMC) and the Indian Railways especially during the monsoon. He called upon the Railways - the Central Railway, Western Railway and Mumbai Metro - to remain vigilant and coordinate with the BMC to ensure that train services do not break down during heavy rain in the city. Saying that commuters should not be inconvenienced in case of torrential rain, Shinde asked the Railways to seek help from BEST, the local state transport service, while taking an overview of the monsoon situation in the state. The CM also asked for sufficient information on the rainfall status to be relayed to the people for which various agencies should appoint liaison officers or coordinators. "Deploy the officers to go and work in the field. The situation can be better managed if the officers work in actual ground conditions," Shinde said. Recalling deaths on bad roads during monsoon in Mumbai and other cities, he called upon the

civic administration to fill up all the potholes carefully with cold-mix methods to avoid casualties. The BMC must monitor the flood situation and take care that lives are not lost in the flood-prone areas, and the administration should be prepared to shift the affected people to safer locations in time. In areas facing the risk of landslides or hillslides, the CM said the local people must be urged to remain cautious, be prepared to move them and in case they are shifted to safer locations, suitable arrangements for their accommodation and meals should be made. The CM's proposal is considered important as in the past, during monsoon tragedies, various central, state and civic departments have pointed fingers at each other. Since Monday evening, Mumbai, the coastal Konkan region and other districts of the state have been lashed by heavy rain, with many towns inundated disrupting normal life even as the IMD has issued Orange and Red Alerts for several districts till Friday.

NIA searches multiple locations over Amravati pharmacist killing

During the searches at the premises of the accused and suspects, digital devices like mobile phones, SIM cards, memory cards, DVRs, besides knives and pamphlets carrying hate messages and other incriminating documents and materials were seized.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Wednesday carried out searches at multiple locations in connection with the killing of a pharmacist in Amravati, officials said. Union home minister had last week handed over to the NIA the case of killing of Umesh Kolhe on June 21. An NIA spokesperson said the agency conducted searches at 13 locations in Amravati district of Maharashtra on Wednesday. During the searches at the premises of the accused and suspects, digital devices like mobile phones, SIM cards, memory cards, DVRs, besides knives and pamphlets carrying hate messages and other incriminating documents and materials were seized. Kolhe was stabbed to death allegedly for supporting the comments of sacked



spokesperson of BJP Nupur Sharma on Prophet Mohammad. The case was initially registered on June 22 at police station city Kotwali in Amravati. The NIA had re-registered the case on July 2 and taken over the investigation. Further investigations in the case are underway, the spokesperson said.

TRAFFIC JAMS WORSEN, BEST BUSES DIVERTED DUE TO WATERLOGGING IN CITY

The India Meteorological Department on Wednesday issued a yellow alert for Mumbai and an orange alert for adjoining areas like Thane and Palghar.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

With the monsoon hitting Maharashtra, rains have been lashing parts of the state, including the capital Mumbai, and its adjoining areas. The India Meteorological Department on Wednesday issued a yellow alert for Mumbai and an orange alert for adjoining areas like Thane and Palghar. Besides, the sea level is expected to significantly rise, hence, people have been asked to stay away from the sea today. A high tide of 3.94 meters is expected in Mumbai, at around 4:32 pm today. The waves are expected to rise above 13 feet. Meanwhile, Mumbai and its adjoining



ing areas were lashed by heavy showers on Tuesday, causing water-logging at a number of places, including railway tracks, which slowed the movement of trains and vehicles on roads. As for other parts of Maharashtra, rains have been lashing the Rajapur Taluka area, with several crops washing away. Floods have submerged several parts of Rajapur, and the local market is expected to completely submerge if the rains continue. Water-logging was reported near the Neelam Junction, Deonar, Mankrud Hillway bridge, Everard Nagar, Antop Hill, Chembur, Dadar T Junction, Hindmata junction, Sakkar Panchayat, Wadala, Kings

Circle, Matunga, Kurla Kamani area and some other places, due to which traffic movement was slow. Three people were injured after a landslide near a chawl in Mumbai on Wednesday, as the city continued to witness heavy rains for the third day in a row, with no respite to citizens as many low-lying areas were water-logged causing traffic disruptions, officials said. An aggrieved citizen in a tweet said they now need a boat to commute, instead of a car. Due to heavy rainfall while several tracks had been inundated, Mumbai local trains were delayed but didn't stop. Due to the torrential rains for two consecutive days, the water level

of Panchganga river in Kolhapur district is significantly higher, due to which the water level of all the rivers of the district is increasing rapidly. With the river water spreading everywhere, direct connectivity to more than 40 villages has been cut off and alternate routes are being used. In the last 24 hours, 11 dam areas of the district including Gaganbavda taluka have received heavy rains. **CM SHINDE GIVES INSTRUCTIONS TO OFFICIALS AS RAINS HITS MUMBAI** Mumbai: As Mumbai continues to be hit by heavy monsoon rains, CM Shinde gave instructions to the officers to work on the field. This will make it easier to control the situation. All the pits should be filled properly. There should be no accidents due to potholes. Fill the pits using a cold-mix pattern. Keep an eye on the flood situation. There should be no loss of life due to flood, people should be shifted to safer places, CM Shinde told officials. **FOUR DETAINED FOR THREATENING PEOPLE SUPPORTING NUPUR SHARMA ON SOCIAL MEDIA** Mumbai: Nilima Araj, Police Inspector, City Kotwali PS in Amravati told ANI that all the four detainees are being questioned. On Wednesday, Amravati Police detain four people for making threat calls to people who posted social media posts in support of now-suspended BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma. Nilima Araj, Police Inspector, City Kotwali PS in Amravati said that all the four detainees are being questioned. Amravati Police has also appealed to people to contact the nearest police station if someone threatens them directly or indirectly over their post on Nupur Sharma. Amravati Police Commissioner Arti Singh also added that the details of the complainant will be kept confidential.

INDIAN EMBASSY, 'BHAROSA' CELL HELP RETURN COUPLE HELD CAPTIVE IN KUWAIT

Team Absolute | Thane

Dreams of a woman and her husband from Thane district to earn decent money in were shattered when their employer exploited them and held them captive, but thanks to the efforts of the 'Bharosa' cell of the local police and the help extended by the Indian embassy in that country, the couple returned to India safely, a police official said on Wednesday. Assistant Police Inspector of Bharosa cell, Meera Bhayander Vasai Virar (MBVV), Tejashree Shinde said a woman from Bhayandar in the Thane district had lodged a complaint some time back stating that a maid servant and her husband had been held captive by their employer in Kuwait. The woman told the police that she knew the couple as she had worked with them in the past. "She stated in her complaint that the couple moved to Kuwait on April 5 this year through a recruitment agency. They were hired as domestic helps by a Kuwait national. They were promised a monthly salary of Rs 40,000 and supposed to take care of two children besides doing housekeeping and cooking, Shinde said. However, their employer, Mosab Abdulla, forced the couple to take care of nine children and maintain a flat with six rooms. They were forced to work for 22 hours a day, she said quoting the complaint. Due to the workload, the woman fell sick and was admitted to a



hospital in Kuwait. "Meanwhile, she somehow managed to get in touch with the woman (the complainant) in Bhayandar and tweeted her a picture of the hospital in Kuwait and urged her to rescue her," Shinde said. After the employer came to know that the woman had tweeted her whereabouts, he snatched her mobile phone and didn't allow her and her

husband to step out of his house. Meanwhile, the complainant woman rushed to the Bharosa cell of the MBVV police and sought their help to rescue the couple, the police officer said. MBVV Police got in touch with the Indian Embassy in Kuwait and sought help. "The embassy after enquiry reverted stating that the couple had entered into a contract with the house owner and had to fulfill it. However, if the victim woman comes to the embassy in person and lodges a complaint, they could help her," Shinde said. On the night of June 20, the victim stepped out of Abdulla's house under the pretext of buying vegetables and reached the embassy, police said. Two days later, the embassy produced the couple in the Kuwait labour court which summoned Abdulla, who returned their passports. Meanwhile, Abdulla lodged a case for the violation of the contract against the couple. "The court ordered the couple to return to India by July 4 on their expenses and if they failed to do so, the statement of their owner will be recorded for the alleged violation of the job contract," Shinde added. The couple did not have the money to fly back to India but were helped by their old employer, friends and relatives in India. "With the help of the Bharosa cell, they finally returned to India," Shinde said.



Kendall Jenner teams her sexy yellow string bikini with button up sweater for poolside shoot

CARDIGANS AREN'T JUST FOR GRANS!

Los Angeles | Agencies

Kendall Jenner appeared on Instagram on Tuesday with a trio of new snapshots for her 247 million followers. The 26-year-old modeled a golden yellow string bikini topped with a micro cardigan. The supermodel is the creative director for the brand, regularly offering an evolving list of fashion staples dubbed Kendall's Edit.

In the post, which was also shared on the official FWRD Instagram account, Jenner teased a new Bottega Veneta Small Metal Loops Shoulder Bag.

She stylishly slung it over her shoulder in the triad of outtakes, showing the black bag's gold hardware detail.

Striking a pose poolside, Kendall gave life to the two-piece swimwear, Sommer Swim's Xena Plumage Halter Bikini Top paired with Naomi Plumage Tie-Side Bikini Bottoms.

She layered a paprika-colored cardigan by MIAOU on top of it, making for a bright summer color combination.

Ever fashionable, the Keeping Up with the Kardashians alum teamed it with a pair of dark brown Gucci shades.



'Faithless'

being made into TV series

Los Angeles | Agencies

Swedish film 'Faithless', based on the script by legendary filmmaker Ingmar Bergman, is getting a TV adaptation and the director Tomas Alfredson, who is known for his work on 'Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy', is attached for all the six episodes, reports 'Deadline'.

Fremantle-owned 'The Rain' producer Miso Film is behind the six-episode adaptation of the 2000 Cannes

entry, which explores the relationship between passion and love through an erotic triangle as David falls in love with his best friend Mark's wife, the beautiful Marianne, leading

to painful conse-

quences for the two families.

Each episode will last for 45 minutes. The original story is loosely based on Bergman's experiences of adultery and was directed by Norwegian actress-director Liv Ullmann. 'Deadline' noted that Sara Johnsen ('The Occupation') is writing the adapted script for the TV special.

Alfredson said in a statement accessed by 'Deadline': "Now it is finally time to make a television series of Ingmar Bergman's shocking love triangle drama. I have a hard time seeing that I have ever faced a bigger task and promise that I will lift my hat for what has been and roll up my sleeves for what will be."



Actress Margot Robbie celebrated her 32nd birthday on the set of her new Barbie movie with a pink cake themed around the beloved children's character.

Los Angeles | Agencies

The Australian actress is currently playing the children's character in a new live action movie opposite Ryan Gosling as Ken and she rang in her big day on set with a very special pink cake emblazoned with the words 'Happy Birthday

Barbie Margot', reports femalefirst.co.uk.

The cake had a Barbie doll sticking out of the top with the base arranged to look like a pink ballgown. Robbie was also pictured carrying a big box of doughnuts on set along with a white party hat, while her husband Tom Ackerley was also seen on set helping the actress celebrate her special day.

The actress previously opened up about the movie role in an interview with Vogue magazine, insisting the Greta Gerwig-directed film is not what most people expect it to be.

She explained: "It comes with a lot of baggage! And a lot of nostalgic connections. But with that come a lot of exciting ways to attack it. People generally hear 'Barbie' and think, 'I know what that movie is going to be,' and then they hear that Greta Gerwig is writing and directing it, and they're like, 'Oh, well, maybe I don't.' Amy Schumer was originally cast in the role of Barbie but later dropped out and explained her exit was due to creative differences.

Barbie's Birthday



CHRIS EVANS TO STAR IN OTT FILM WIYH EMILY BLUNT

Los Angeles | Agencies

'Captain America' star Chris Evans is set to join Emily Blunt in the streaming movie 'Pain Hustlers'. The project was first reported out of Cannes by Deadline where the streamer landed global rights to the film. Pain Hustlers, a Netflix movie, will be directed by David Yates. The script is written by Wells Tower. Netflix, which had offered no comment on Evans potentially joining the film, bagged the rights to the film for \$50 million during the French Riviera Film Fest. Deadline further reports that the film centres on Liza Drake (played by Blunt), a high-school drop-out dreaming of a better life for her and her young daughter. Liz lands a job with a failing pharmaceutical startup in a yellowing strip mall in Central Florida. Her charm, guts and drive catapult the company and her into the high life, where she soon finds herself at the centre of a criminal conspiracy with deadly consequences. Cameras are expected to start rolling in late August. The film has been billed as being tonally similar to The Big Short, American Hustle and The Wolf of Wall Street. Lawrence Grey is producing Pain Hustlers under his Grey Matter Productions banner alongside Yates and Yvonne Walcott Yates' Wychwood Pictures. Lewis Taylor and Ben Everard are EPs, with Cyrus Mojibi, Patrick Wade, Lawrence Kao and Lloyd Everard serving as co-producers. Evans is reteaming with the Russo Brothers after his streak with them on The Avengers and Captain America as well as Netflix's The Gray Man opposite Ryan Gosling. He recently wrapped production on the Dexter Fletcher-directed Ghosted for Apple.



BLACKPINK to drop new album in August

Seoul | Agencies

Top K-pop girl group BLACKPINK will make a long-awaited comeback in August. "BLACKPINK is now at the final stage of recording its new album. They will embark on the filming of a music video within this month and release new songs in August," YG Entertainment said in a press release. Yonhap news agency reported. It did not give details of the upcoming album but said the band has

devoted itself for a long time to completing "multiple tracks featuring the band's signature music style."

The quartet will hold the largest-ever world tour by a K-pop girl group by the year's end to meet its international fans, YG added.

It will mark the band's first project with all four members in one year and 10 months.

The last whole-group release was in October 2020 with the band's first full-length album "The Album," including

the main single "Lovesick Girls" and "How You Like That," a pre-released song.

"The Album" became the first million-selling album from a K-pop girl group, selling more than 1.4 million copies. It was a big success in the global market, debuting at No. 2 on Billboard 200 and the British Official Chart for albums upon its release.

In 2021, individual albums by members Rose and Lisa were as successful as the group's first studio album.

'Squid Game' star Lee Jung to debut as director in Spy Movie

Seoul | Agencies

'Squid Game' star Lee Jung-jae said that his directorial debut 'Hunt' is a mix of his decades-long experience as an actor and his dream of making a new type of spy movie. Hunt is a story about two rival intelligence agents in South Korea, Park Pyong-ho (Lee) and Lee Jung-do (Jung Woo-sung), who separately chase after a North Korean spy leaking top secret information that could jeopardise national security. The two end up discovering a plot to assassinate the South Korean president,

Yonhap news agency reported.

It premiered as part of the non-competition Midnight Screening section at this year's Cannes Film Festival held in May. It is Lee's first film where he works behind the camera in his 30-year acting career, during which he has starred in about 40 films and TV series. He also wrote the script of his maiden film.

"Although I've been in this world for



build emotions of each character who confronts unknown and unseen spies, and combines them with his own

a long time, I thought writing and directing are different from acting. So I hesitated a lot," Lee said in a press conference.

"But I decided to take charge of this project and dived into it." For his directorial debut, he said that he spent most of pre-production, which lasted for four years, in writing the script. He tried to

style of suspense, thrill and action from the beginning.

"As many male actors do, I used to enjoy espionage films. As a director, I wanted to create a new type of spy film with Hunt," said Lee, who rose to international fame with the global sensation Squid Game. "Before going into an action sequence, I help actors build their emotions and get deeply immersed in the situation. I think this emotional building explains the violence and rage behind the action scenes." The 48-year old actor-director-writer said it was not easy for him to direct himself.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Stassie Karanikolaou



Malaysia Masters

SINDHU, S PRANEETH, P KASHYAP ENTER SECOND ROUND; SAINA BOWS OUT

Kuala Lumpur | Agencies

Top Indian shuttlers -- PV Sindhu, B Sai Praneeth and Parupalli Kashyap -- advanced to the second round while compatriot Saina Nehwal made a first-round exit at the Malaysia Masters 2022, here on Wednesday.

Former world champion Sindhu advanced to the second round women's singles event after a hard-fought 21-13, 17-21, 21-15 win over China's He Bing Jiao in 56 minutes at the Axiata Arena.

Sindhu, who had lost to He Bing Jiao in the first round of the Indonesia Open last month, dominated the early exchanges to build a massive 11-3 lead heading into the first break. The Indian player then controlled the game to take a 1-0 lead.

After the change of ends, Jiao led the two-time Olympic medalist Sindhu 11-7 at the break. The Indian ace, with a four-point streak, levelled the game at 11-11 but He Bing Jiao regrouped quickly and stretched the match into the decider.

The third game saw both shuttlers engage in long rallies. After the scores were tied at 3-11, World No. 7 Sindhu struck 10 points on the trot and weathered a late comeback to progress into the second round of the BWF Super 500 badminton tournament.



ment.

This was Sindhu's ninth win over the world No. 9 He Bing Jiao in 19 games. PV Sindhu also defeated He Bing Jiao on her way to the Tokyo Olympics bronze medal last year. In the second round, the Indian shuttler will face the winner of the match between world No. 47 Putri Kusuma Wardani of Indonesia and world bronze medalist Zhang Yi Man of China.

However, London Olympics bronze medalist Saina went down 21-16, 17-21, 14-21 to Kim Ga Eun of South Korea. The 32-year-old had also made a first-round exit from the Malaysia Open Super 750 tournament last week.

Meanwhile, world championships bronze medalist B. Sai Praneeth, ranked 20th, beat former Pan American Games champion Kevin Cordon of Guatemala 21-8, 21-9. On

the other hand, P. Kashyap came back from a one-game deficit to dispatch local favourite Tommy Sugiarto 16-21, 21-16, 21-16.

However, world No. 30 Sameer Verma lost to world No. 4 Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei 21-10, 12-21, 14-21 to make an early exit.

Later in the day, H.S Prannoy and the women's doubles pair of N. Sikki Reddy and Ashwini Ponnappa will begin their campaigns.

Shikhar Dhawan to lead India in ODIs against West Indies

Team Absolute | Mumbai

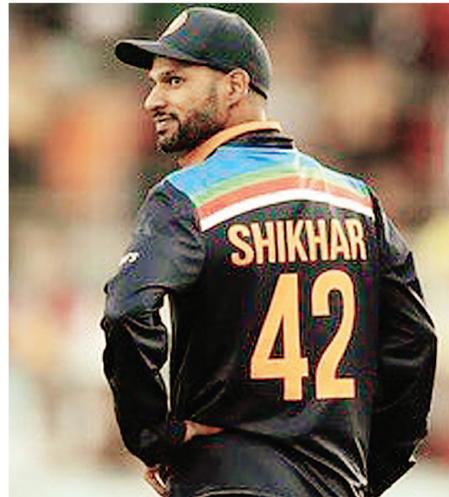
opener Shikhar Dhawan will lead India against West Indies in the upcoming three-match ODI series to be played in Trinidad, starting on July 22, the BCCI announced on Wednesday.

All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja has been named as Dhawan's deputy in a 16-member squad that has notable absentees.

India have decided to rest several key members of the squad for the ODI series, including regular captain Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, and Mohammed Shami as well as the injured K.L Rahul.

The 36-year-old Dhawan previously led India in three ODIs last year on the tour of Sri Lanka when other senior players were involved with the Test side in England. As in that series, he'll have Ruturaj Gaikwad as a possible opening partner with India also including Shubman Gill into the ODI side for the first time since the tour of Australia in December 2020.

Meanwhile, Sanju Samson is also back after a year, hav-



ing played his lone ODI so far in Sri Lanka last July. Samson and Ishan Kishan are the two wicketkeepers in the squad.

Arshdeep Singh, the left-arm pacer who has been included in a full-strength squad for the England ODIs later this month, has been retained alongside Prasad Krishna, Mohammed Siraj and Shardul Thakur.

Jadeja, Yuzvendra Chahal, Axar Patel along with spin-

bowling all-rounder Deepak Hooda, are the spinners in the squad.

India's tour of the West Indies begins with the ODI leg in Trinidad starting July 22. They will subsequently play five T20Is against the two-time world champions, in Trinidad, St Kitts and Lauderhill (Florida) with the tour finishing with the two T20Is in the USA on August 6 and 7.

Rishabh storms to No.5, Kohli drops out of top-10 in ICC Test ranking

London | Agencies

Team India wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant broke into the top-5 of the ICC Test ranking for the first time after scoring a century and fifty in the rescheduled fifth Test at Edgbaston, while star batter Virat Kohli dropped three places to 13th after a string of poor performances.

Wicketkeeper-batter Pant put India on top early in the Test against England with 146 runs off just 111 balls in the first innings then followed up with 57 later in the match. Pant's recent form with two tons and three half-centuries in his past six Test innings has earned him a highest-ever position in the Test batting rankings, moving six



places to fifth.

Virat Kohli, who only managed scores of 11 and 20 against England in rescheduled Edgbaston Test and slipped out of the top-10 in the ICC men's Test player rankings. Bairstow climbs 11 places

to tenth in the Test batting rankings. Bairstow has 1218 runs at an average of 55.36 with six centuries in the current ICC World Test Championship cycle.

Joe Root continues to hail supreme at the top of the rankings with highest rating points (923).

MEN'S T20I RANKINGS

Akeal Hosein has surged 10 places and into the top 10 of the T20I bowling rankings after his economical efforts against Bangladesh ended with figures of 22/1 and 27/1. The left-arm orthodox spinner is now equal-eighth with Sri Lanka's Maheesh Theekshana.

Wimbledon 2022

Simona Halep reaches semis

London | Agencies

Former champion Simona Halep reached the semifinals of the Wimbledon 2022 after defeating Amanda Anisimova 6-2, 6-4 in their quarter-final match, here on Wednesday.

Halep hadn't set foot on court at the All-England Club since she lifted the trophy in 2019, as the 2020 Championships were cancelled and she was forced to withdraw last year due to a calf injury.

The Romanian's return to the site of her second career major title has been stellar as she hasn't lost a set in five matches so far, losing just 28 games in 10 sets. In fact, Halep has won the last 21 sets she's played at Wimbledon.

In Thursday's semifinals, she'll face No 17 seed Elena Rybakina of



Kazakhstan, who rallied for a three-set win over Australia's Ajla Tomljanovic.

ONS JABEUR: FIRST ARAB WOMAN TO ENTER A GRAND SLAM SINGLES SEMIS

London: Tunisia's world No.2 tennis player Ons Jabeur rallied from a set down to defeat Marie Bouzkova of the Czech Republic 3-6, 6-1, 6-1 at Wimbledon to become the first Arab or North African woman to reach a Grand Slam singles semifinal. A year after reaching the last-eight in a historic first for Arab women, Jabeur, the third seed at The Championships, went one step further in 2022, reaching the semifinals at a major for the first time and setting up a last-four clash against Tatjana Maria of Germany. Across both men's and women's tennis, Arabs and North Africans were previously winless in major quarterfinals in the Open Era, including two losses by Jabeur herself; she lost to eventual champion Sofia Kenin at the 2020 Australian Open, and Belarusian Aryna Sabalenka at Wimbledon 12 months ago.



INDIA'S SHAFALI HEADLINES ICC'S '100 PER CENT CRICKET SUPERSTARS'

Dubai | Agencies

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Wednesday included India's 18-year-old right-hand opening batter Shafali Verma among the first five players selected as '100 per cent Cricket Superstars' ahead of a historic month for women's cricket, which culminates in the Commonwealth Games at Birmingham.

The youngest player to debut for India in international cricket, and the youngest half-century, Shafali has made a smooth transition to the highest level of cricket. A hard-hitting opening batter, Shafali has shown the capability to play crucial roles, with her power-hitting separating her from her peers.

"For all the power and aggression though, it'd be remiss not to acknowledge Verma's early success in the long format of the game. Averaging over 60 across her four Test innings, Verma has shown a maturity to bat long periods in



trying and foreign conditions," said ICC, lauding the India cricketer's achievements.

Among the other cricketers the ICC chose for its '100 per cent Cricket Superstars' promotional programme includes, Sophie Ecclestone (England), Amelia Kerr (New Zealand), Hayley Matthews (West Indies) and Laura Wolvaardt (South Africa).

The five are the first crop of what will ultimately be a '100 per cent Cricket Superstars' squad that fans can pick from to decide on a final XI.

"100 per cent Cricket Superstars celebrates the best talent in the women's game as part of the ICC's ongoing 100 per cent Cricket campaign during a period that sees some of the sport's most significant events take place," said Wasim Khan, ICC General Manager, Cricket.

The first '100 per cent Cricket Superstars' inductees were selected with the input of the ICC Women's Cricket Committee.

PAUL POGBA SIGNS FOUR-YEAR DEAL WITH JUVENTUS: REPORTS

London:

Juventus have reached an agreement to sign Paul Pogba on a free transfer on a four-year contract.

According to a report in Sky Sports, Pogba is expected in Turin on Saturday (July 9) for a medical and to formally sign the contract. The France international has been free to negotiate with clubs over his next move since January. Pogba left Manchester United at the end of his contract last month. The move to Juventus would mark a return to a club where Pogba spent four years before rejoining United in 2016.

For Pogba, it will represent an emotional homecoming to the club he left in 2016, having first come to Juve from United in the early stages of his senior career.



England's win one of the hosts' best-ever run chases in history of Test cricket: ICC

Edgbaston | Agencies

England's historic come-from-behind win against India in the rescheduled fifth game at Edgbaston, with the hosts managing their highest successful run chase in Test history, has given a new direction to the team under skipper Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum.

It's extremely rare that a team 378 runs in deficit comes back to win a Test, but England played patiently on Day 4 and 5 and rode on superb unflinching performances from their most consistent batters -- Joe Root and



Jonny Bairstow -- to carve out a win against one of the most feared Test sides in the world.

On Wednesday, the ICC listed the most successful Test run-chases ever by England before the historic Edgbaston victory.

Will include high jumper Tejaswin Shankar in CWG squad, Delhi HC told

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) on Wednesday told the Delhi High Court that it will include Tejaswin Shankar, India's high jump national record holder, in the 2022 Commonwealth Games squad.

Shankar was knocking the doors of the High Court as he was not included in the list of 36 names picked by the federation for the CWG squad.

AFI's counsel submitted that one of the athletes was disqualified from the relay event which enabled Shankar to place in the contingent. As Adv Hrishikesh Baruah, appeared on behalf of the federation, apprised of the AFI's decision, the bench of Justice Yashwant Varma told him to immediately inform the selection of Shankar to the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) as well as the Commonwealth Games authority.

However, the matter was kept pending by the court as it was stating that the discrepancies in AFI's selection process merit further consideration to prevent "national embarrass-



ment" in the future.

In the last hearing, the court had recorded that Shankar is the major contender for this year and only two people above him have the better jumps in the world. He met the qualification marks set by the AFI itself.

The federation has been actively told to consider his participation in the selection meeting, the court had noted.

The Delhi-based Shankar is studying business administration at Kansas State University in the US and is on a four-year athletics scholarship since 2017.

Women's hockey world cup

INDIA EYE WIN AGAINST NEW ZEALAND FOR QUARTERFINALS SPOT

Amstelveen (Netherlands) | Agencies

The Indian women's hockey team put up a spirited fight in their second match of the FIH Women's Hockey World Cup 2022 as they drew 1-1 against Asian rivals China at the packed Wagener Hockey Stadium here.

A goal from Vandana Katariya in the 45th minute of the match helped the Indian team in picking up a point after Jiali Zheng had opened the scoring for China in the 26th minute.

India will next face off against New Zealand in their third Pool B game on Thursday. It will be a must-win contest for the Indian Women's Hockey Team to make it to the quarterfinals.

India and New Zealand will be meeting each other for the first time



in five years. The two teams last faced off against each other in May 2017, when India had travelled to New Zealand for Test matches. In the five games played between the two teams in the tournament, India were unable to pick a win.

New Zealand are currently sitting on top of the Pool B table with four points in two games, having drawn

2-2 against China, and picking a 3-1 win over England.

Speaking on their upcoming match against New Zealand, Ekka said, "New Zealand have been in good form in this tournament so far. We will be watching videos to study the opposition and we hope to be prepared going into the contest. It will be a tough game, but we hope

we can get a win in our corner to climb up in the pool table."

Coach Janneke said that the New Zealand will be a tough opposition, and gave a glimpse on the team's strategies going into the match.

"New Zealand will be a tough team to play against. They are very dangerous in their counterattack and we will have to be ready for that, on the ball we have to play to our strengths," she concluded.

Reflecting on the performance against China, Indian Women's Hockey Team Chief Coach Janneke Schopman said, "I thought we started well against a tight Chinese defense. We were unlucky to not score early on and one moment of not paying attention defensively resulted in us conceding a goal. After that we struggled for a bit but when we found the space, we were able to play some good combinations."



Shraddha Kapoor returns to the bay

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shraddha Kapoor is one of the most followed Indian actresses on social media. Shraddha Kapoor returned to Mumbai last night after finishing the last schedule of her untitled Luv Ranjan film alongside Ranbir Kapoor in Spain and Mauritius. The actress was shot there for 32 days. Taking to her Instagram handle, Shraddha shared a selfie as she drove back home. She captioned the post, 'Home sweet home after 32 days!'

The actress was also

papped at the airport and she was at her casual best. Dressed in a chic blue jacket over her white t-shirt and black trousers, the actress looked pretty as ever. To note, for this untitled film, Ranbir and Shraddha will be seen together for the first time and we surely can't keep calm to witness their chemistry. Also, several pictures and videos were doing rounds on the internet from the sets which have amped up our excitement level. Touted to be a rom-com, this film is slated to release in March 2023.

Sanya's secret of tackling challenging scenes

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Sanya Malhotra, who will be seen playing the role of a forensic lady in the upcoming film 'Hit: The First Case', has talked about the challenging scenes she dealt with in the film, which also stars Rajkumar Rao.

Talking about the difficulties during the shoot, Sanya shared: To be honest, when you're working with actors like Rajkumar Rao, it becomes more collaborative. You just have to follow their lead and react to what they're doing beautifully."

"So, I never felt anything was too challenging or difficult for me and also the credit has to go to Rajkumar Rao because he is not only a good actor but a brilliant co-actor too. So, it never felt like I'm in a scene reciting my dialogues or anything and it never felt that way because it all felt so natural and all felt conversational to me as an actor."

Gulshan Kumar and T-Series present in association with Dil Raju Productions' 'Hit: The First Case'.

Directed by Dr. Sailesh Kolanu, the film is produced by Bhushan Kumar, Dil Raju, Krishan Kumar, and Kuldeep Rathore. It will hit the theatres on July 15, 2022.



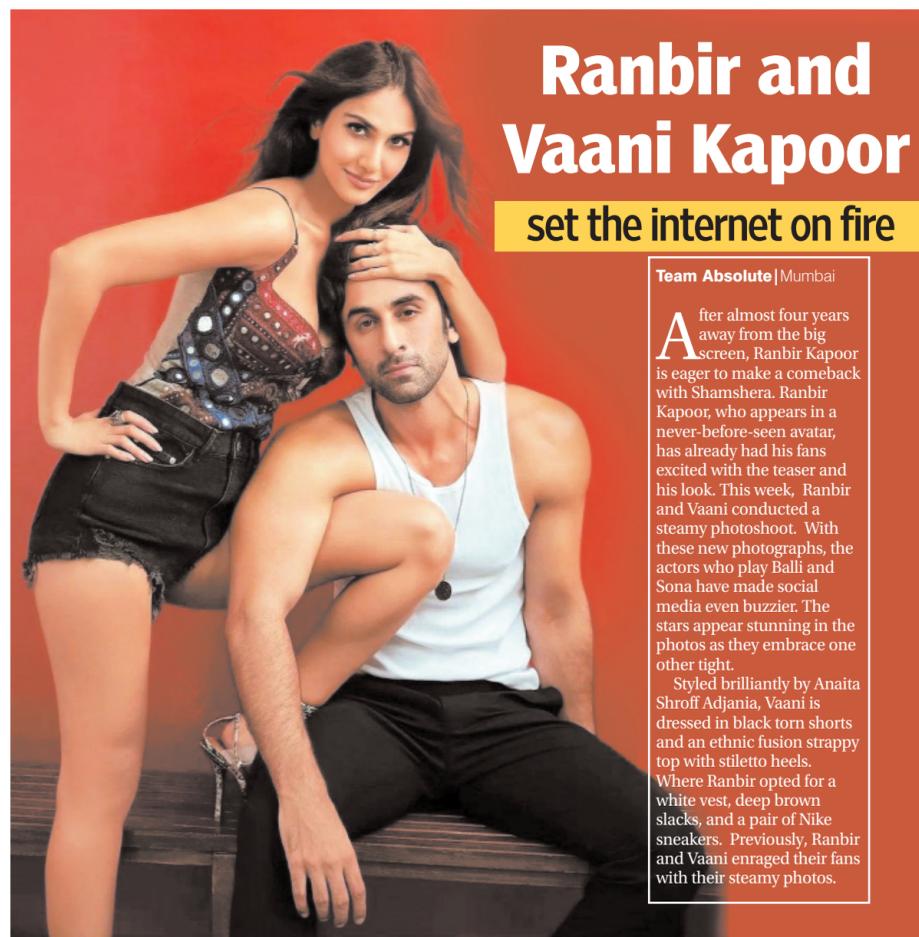
HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Ranveer Singh

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Known for his versatility and eccentric fashion choices, heartthrob Ranveer Singh turns a year older today. This guy from Delhi, who made his big Bollywood debut with Band Baaja Baraat, managed to entice audience with his flamboyance and cemented his space in the tinsel town. Be it playing the street-smart Bittoo Sharma in his debut film Band Baaja Baraat, an aspiring rapper in Gully Boy or the ferocious Alauddin Khilji in Padmaavat, the actor is a treat to watch everytime he appears on screen. Not only is he a talented actor, but also a doting family man who never shies away from expressing his love for wifey Deepika Padukone.

Along with his on-screen work, Ranveer Singh is many-a-times spotted making the headlines for his "unique and different" fashion sense. Be it his airport look or walking the red carpet, the actor manages to astonish us all with his outfits. Be it formal, retro or funky wear, the actor carries everything with elan and there is no doubt about that. To note, Ranveer Singh is one of the first actors to embrace the concept of gender neutrality when it comes to his clothes.



Ranbir and Vaani Kapoor set the internet on fire

Team Absolute | Mumbai

After almost four years away from the big screen, Ranbir Kapoor is eager to make a comeback with Shamsheera. Ranbir Kapoor, who appears in a never-before-seen avatar, has already had his fans excited with the teaser and his look. This week, Ranbir and Vaani conducted a steamy photoshoot. With these new photographs, the actors who play Balli and Sonu have made social media even buzzier. The stars appear stunning in the photos as they embrace one another tight.

Styled brilliantly by Anaita Shroff Adjanja, Vaani is dressed in black torn shorts and an ethnic fusion strappy top with stiletto heels. Where Ranbir opted for a white vest, deep brown slacks, and a pair of Nike sneakers. Previously, Ranbir and Vaani enraged their fans with their steamy photos.

AISHWARYA RAI: A BREATHTAKING QUEEN

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Aishwarya Rai is set to be back on the silver screen with Mani Ratnam's Ponnin Selvan. The actress was last seen in Fanny Khan. Recently, the makers dropped new poster of the film giving a glimpse of Aishwarya Rai as Queen Nandini in which she looks every bit regal. Sharing the glimpse of her look, Aishwarya Rai wrote, "She is not merely beautiful but also very intelligent. Her determination and resourcefulness makes her a femme fatale unlike any other in Literature."

Ponnin Selvan is touted to be Mani Ratnam's most ambitious project. This historical drama is based on Kalki Krishnamurthy's 1995 novel of the same name. Talking about the plot of the film, the movie chronicles the tale of one of the most mighty kings in the South. Capturing the early days of Arulmozhiarman, Ponnin Selvan narrates how the powerful king went on to achieve the title of great Chola emperor Rajaraja Chola I. Also starring Vikram, Jayam Ravi, Karthi, Trisha, Jayaram, Sobhita Dhulipala, Aishwarya Lekshmi, Vikram Prabhu and Ashwin Kakumanu, Ponnin Selvan is slated to release on September 30, 2022.



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Sonali Raut

Bollywood films that landed into religious controversies

Team Absolute | Mumbai

India is well-known for its culture, traditions, and religious beliefs. People are deeply attached to their faith and deity. Because of the personal connection that individuals feel, several Bollywood films have sparked controversy, with some organisations accusing the films of infringing on religious feelings.



PK

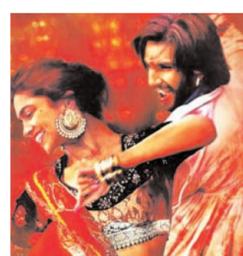
The controversial film 'PK', starring Amir Khan, was released in 2014 and sparked outrage for offending Hindu religious feelings. Hindu groups demonstrated against the film's principal star, Amir Khan, and requested that it not be screened. They said that the film not only disrespectfully depicted Lord Shiva but also displayed booklets declaring Hindu deities such as Hanuman and Laxmi to be "missing."



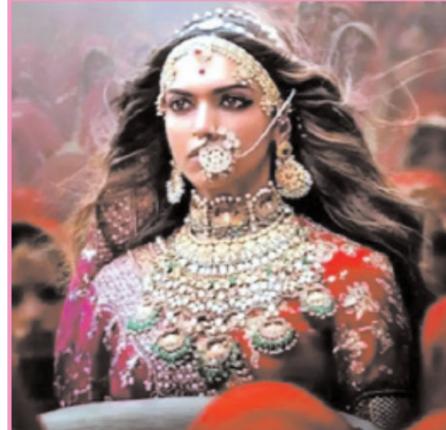
OH MY GOD

Following a protest alleging that the film featured insulting allusions to Hindu gods, screenings of "Oh My God" were halted in Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Amritsar, Navanshahr, Hoshiarpur, and other towns in Punjab. "Oh My God," directed by Umesh Shukla, is a comedy film about an atheist.

GOLIYON KI RASLEELA RAM-LEELA



Due to its association with the Hindu god Rama, a petition was made against the film, which was originally titled, Ram Leela. In India, the word "Ram Leela" refers to the life narrative of Rama, the seventh incarnation of Vishnu and one of Hinduism's most popular gods. Later the name changed to Goliyon Ki Rasleela Ram-Leela.



PADMAVAT

Hindu organisations and a Rajput organisation claim that the film contains an intimate moment in which the Muslim monarch fantasises about being intimate with the Hindu queen. Which is not acceptable to them. Apart from that, the communities demanded a title change for the film.