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Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav

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VOL. 7, ISSUE 277, BHOPAL | WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 17, 2022 I ₹5 I PAGE 08

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FIFA SUSPENDS AIFF; 'U-17 WOMEN'S WORLD CUP CANNOT CURRENTLY BE HELD IN INDIA AS PLANNED'

NO FOOT - TOWARDS BALL

ZURICH| Agencies

FIFA, the apex football body, has suspended the All India Football Federation (AIFF) with "immediate effect due to undue influence from third parties", jeopardising the country's staging of the U-17 Women's World Cup in October.The AIFF will not be able to play any international games until the ban is removed."The Bureau of the FIFA Council has unanimously decided to suspend the All India Football Federation (AIFF) with immediate effect due to undue influence from third parties, which constitutes a serious violation of the FIFA Statutes," stated an official media release, issued by FIFA.The suspension will be lifted once an order to set up a committee of administrators to assume the powers of the AIFF Executive Committee has been repealed and the AIFF administration regains full control of the AIFF's daily affairs, it said.

AIFF needs to take some measures for suspension to be removed

New Delhi: *FIFA has suspended the All India Football Federation (AIFF) with immediate effect due to third-party interference. However the world governing body of football has enlisted several measures for lifting the ban from Indian football.*

FIFA believes that the Supreme court-appointed committee of administrators having a say in the running of Indian football as third party interference. FIFA, apparently not happy that the Supreme Court-appointed Committee of Administrators has given voting rights to former players. This could be, perhaps, the immediate reason for banning Indian football.On the third party interference FIFA said, "It's 'not a prudent idea' to have an equal number of eminent players alongside the state association representatives in the electoral college. The draft constitution submitted by the CoA to the Supreme Court states the electoral college will have representatives from 36 state associations and 36 eminent football players from all over India - 24 male and 12 female. The world body is okay with the executive committee having 25 per cent former players as Co-opted members."The bureau of the FIFA council has decided that the lifting of the suspension be subject to the following conditions and has enlisted several measures for repealing of ban:The AIFF constitution to be revised in accordance with the requirements of FIFA and the AFC and to be approved by the AIFF general assembly without interference from any third party

The AIFF to carry out the upcoming electoral process as per the statutory requirement and to hold its elections based on the pre-existing membership structure of AIFFRepeal of the CoA mandate in fullThe AIFF administration to be fully in charge of the AIFF's daily affairsAn independent electoral committee to be elected by the AIFF general assembly to run the elections of a new executive committeeIncidentally, Wednesday is the last date to file nominations for the AIFF president's post. Also, there will be a Supreme Court hearing in the ongoing matter on Wednesday.

UNFORTUNATE TO SEE SUCH A DIRECTIVE BY FIFA: AIFF COA

New Delhi: *CoA chairman Justice (retd.) Anil Dave said, "It is really deplorable that for almost last two years, the body, whose term had already been completed, had continued in an absolutely undemocratic and illegal manner, no action was taken. But when the Hon'ble Supreme Court passed an order to set things right so as to see that a democratically elected body takes charge, and when the CoA and the Sports Ministry were doing their best for the implementation of the Order of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, the order of the suspension was passed by FIFA."*

"Very unfortunate that FIFA has banned Indian football and at the same time I feel it's a very harsh decision of FIFA to ban Indian football. It's very important that all the stakeholders come together and get the system right and everybody works for the betterment of Indian football."

Bhaichung Bhutia, Former captain, Indian Football Team

India's leading goal-scorer and national team captain said, "People who are involved are doing their best to make sure that we are going to come out with the best results possible. Everyone is working hard towards it. As far as players are concerned we are going to make sure that we do our work properly."

Sunil Chettri, Captain, Indian Football Team

Russia warns of 'direct military clash' with US

WASHINGTON| Agencies

Washington's behaviour on the world stage risks direct conflict between the nuclear states, the Russian embassy in the US has warned, media reports said.

"Today, the United States continues to act with no regard to other countries' security and interests, which contributes to an increase in nuclear risks," the embassy said in a statement on its Telegram channel, RT reported."The (US') steps to further engage in a hybrid confrontation with Russia in the context of the Ukrainian crisis are fraught with unpredictable escalation and a direct military clash of nuclear powers," the statement said.The embassy noted that Washington has recently withdrawn from two key arms control agreements, the 1987 Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which banned certain classes of land-based missiles, and the 1992 Treaty on Open Skies, which allowed for surveillance flights over each other's territories, RT reported. The embassy urged the US to "take a closer look at its own nuclear policy instead of making unfounded accusations against the countries whose worldviews do not coincide with the American ones." "Our country faithfully fulfills its obligations as a nuclear-weapon state and makes every effort to reduce nuclear risks," the diplomats said.The statement comes after the US accused Moscow of using the Zaporozhye nuclear power plant in southern Ukraine as cover for its soldiers.

The plant, the largest in Europe, was seized by Russian troops during the early stages of Moscow's military operation in Ukraine, which was launched in late February. It continues to operate with Ukrainian personnel under Russian control, RT reported.

Mumbai police bust drugs factory in Gujarat, seize Mephedrone worth Rs 1,026 cr

Till the time of going for print, the total seizures in the case -- the probe was launched on March 29 with multiple raids in Govandi suburb of Mumbai, Ambernath in Thane and Nalasopara in Palghar, besides Ankleshwar in Gujarat -- has touched a staggering Rs 2,435 crore.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Notching another big success in 10 days, the Mumbai Police have busted a drugs factory at Ankleshwar in south Gujarat and seized drugs worth Rs 1,026 crore and nabbed one person, as part of an investigation into an ongoing case, officials said here on Tuesday.

In the latest action on August 13, the Anti Narcotics Cell, Worli Unit, seized 513 kg Mephedrone, plus 812 812 kg of white powder and 397 kg of chemicals used to prepare the narcotic drugs, said an official.

The factory raided is situated in the GIDC complex at Panoli in Ankleshwar, and the latest action happened barely 10 days after the previous major drugs haul worth Rs 1,403 crore from Nalasopara town in Palghar district, bordering Gujarat.

So far, seven persons have been arrested in this case, including a woman and a couple of qualified chemists, who allegedly prepared the mixtures of various chemicals to manufacture the final drugs.

Earlier on August 4, the ANC arrested three persons, including two suppliers, from Nalasopara and seized 702 kg of Mephedrone worth Rs 1403.50 crore.

Prior to that on March 29, the ANC had arrested three drug peddlers, including a woman, from Govandi in north-east Mumbai, and raided a premise in Ambernath town, to recover over 3 kg Mephedrone worth more than Rs 4.50 crore.

The sustained interrogation of these six accused led the ANC to make further detentions and the big action ahead of Independence Day in Ankleshwar where the rich haul was seized on Saturday.

ITBP BUS ACCIDENT: SEVEN KILLED, 32 INJURED IN KASHMIR

Srinagar: Seven security personnel were killed and 32 others injured on Tuesday in a bus accident in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam area.

Police said seven security men, including six ITBP personnel and a local policeman were killed when an ITBP bus carrying security personnel rolled down into the river bed in the Chandanwari area of Pahalgam tehsil in Anantnag district. "Six ITBP personnel and one local policeman were killed when an ITBP bus carrying security personnel back after their Amarnath Yatra duties, dropped into a river bed in Chandanwari area. "BSF helicopter was deployed during the relief and rescue operation to airlift the injured security personnel to Srinagar. "The bus was carrying 37 ITBP personnel and 2 local policemen," police said.

Amul and Mother Dairy raises milk prices by Rs 2 per litre

Team Absolute | Anand

Kaira District Cooperative Milk Producers Union's (Amul Dairy) has increased the milk prices by Rs 2 per litre from Wednesday (August 17).

In a statement, Amul Dairy said in Gujarat, Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, West Bengal, its Taza milk 500 ml will cost Rs 25, Shakti 500 ml pouch Rs 28 and Gold Rs 31. Rs 2 per litre is increased for three ranges of milk."According to Amul, the hike is just a four per cent increase in price and lower than prevailing food inflation. Justifying the hike in prices, Amul said production and operation cost of milk has increased.Amul says 80 paise from each rupee recovered from its customers is passed on to farmers/pastoralists.

Similarly, After Amul, another dairy major Mother Dairy raised its liquid milk prices by Rs 2/litre with effect from Wednesday (August 17). The new prices will be applicable for all milk variants.

A Mother Dairy spokesperson said that the company has been experiencing a surge in varied input costs which have increased multifold during the last 5 months. "For instance, the farm prices of raw milk have alone firmed up by about 10-11 per cent in the said period. Likewise, the cost of feed and fodder has also witnessed a significant rise during the same time due to the heat wave observed earlier in the country and on account of the extended summer season," it said.

The surge in farm prices is only being partially passed on to the consumers, thereby securing the interests of both the stakeholders -- consumers and farmers.

Targeting electoral speech will be nothing more than a wild-goose chase: AAP on freebies in SC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has told the Supreme Court that regulating electoral speech will amount to nothing more than a wild-goose chase, as it opposed a proposal to set up an expert body to examine the issues associated with "freebies" promised by the political parties to induce voters.

In its additional submissions, AAP said in the absence of any legislative guidance on the scope of policies that may be considered 'freebies' or on the consequences of promising such policies in electoral campaigns, any decision in this regard taken by a prospective expert body will be constitutionally without authority."The terms of reference that may be formulated for such a body must exclude considerations of electoral speeches and promises, since that would implicate concerns of freedom of speech. Further, if concerns over fiscal deficit and responsibility are indeed the point of the present proceedings, targeting and regulating electoral speech will amount to nothing more than a wild-goose chase," said the submissions.

It further contended that the terms of reference of the expert body may not encompass the regulation, let alone prohibition, of certain types of electoral speech.

"Such a restriction or prohibition, executively or judicially imposed, would amount to a curtailment of the freedom of speech guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) without the backing of legislative sanction," added the submissions.

The party added that electoral speeches made by unelected candidates are not, and cannot be, official statements of intent about a future government's budgetary plans.

Centre against releasing rapists, yet 11 walk free in Gujarat's Bilkis Bano case

Bilkis Bano was 21 years old - five months pregnant - when she was raped and her toddler daughter killed along with six others from the family in Dahod district on March 3, 2002. They were hiding in fields, hoping to escape the violence that erupted after the burning of a Sabarmati Express coach that killed 59 'kar sevaks' just days earlier.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The governments at the Centre and Gujarat - both run by the BJP - seem to differ in how to treat rape convicts, evident in the release of 11 men, who were serving life imprisonment for the gangrape of Bilkis Bano and the murder of her family during the 2002 Gujarat riots.

In June this year, proposing a special release policy for convicted prisoners to mark 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' (75 years of Independence),

the Centre issued guidelines to states. Rape convicts are listed among those who are not to be granted release under this policy. In 2008, a special court in Mumbai sentenced the 11 accused to life imprisonment. It was later upheld by the Bombay High Court.

In 2019, the Supreme Court even directed the Gujarat government to give her Rs 50 lakh as compnesation, besides a house and a job. Three years on, the convicts are free.

The release came after one of the convicts went to the court earlier this year, pleading for premature release under the Code of Criminal Procedure, as he had served about 15 years. The Supreme Court said a decision can be taken by the Gujarat government as per its 1992 policy, which was in place at the time of the conviction.

Upon release on Monday, the convicts were greeted with sweets outside the Godhra jail.

NITISH KUMAR DISTRIBUTES PORTFOLIOS, RETAINS HOME AND GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Patna | Agencies

After the cabinet expansion, Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar has kept his previous portfolios including home ministry, general administration, cabinet secretariat, vigilance with himself.

He has given the health ministry to his deputy Tejashwi Prasad Yadav, along with road construction, urban development and housing and rural development.

The other ministers under the JD-U quota include Ashok Chaudhary with the building construction portfolio, Bijendra Prasad Yadav with the power, planning and development department, Vijay Kumar Chaudhary with finance, commerce and parliamentary affairs ministry, Sharawan Kumar, rural development, Lesi Singh, fertilizer and consumer affairs, Sanjay Jha, water resource development ministry, information and public relations, Sunil Kumar, liquor prohibition and excise department, Jayant Raj, minor water resource department, Shella Kumari has the transport department, Madan Sahani is the social welfare minister and Jama Khan has minority affairs. The portfolios of ministers under the JD-U quota are almost the same as earlier except that Vijay Kumar Chaudhary gets the finance ministry, earlier held by Tar Kishore Prasad during the NDA government. Nitish Kumar did not give it to the RJD. The education ministry portfolio went to the RJD.

From the RJD, Alok Kumar Mehta is the new land record and revenue minister, Tej Pratap Yadav gets environment, forest and climate change, Surendra Prasad Yadav ministry of cooperatives, Dr Ramanand Yadav is the new mining and geology minister, Kumar Sarvajeet is the tourism minister, Lalit Kumar Yadav is the PHED minister, Samir Kumar Mahaseth replaces Shahnawaz Hussain as industry minister. Prof Chandrashekher Yadav is the new education minister. This post was earlier hold by JD-U leader Vijay Kumar Chaudhary. Anita Devi is the new EBC and OBC welfare minister, Jitendra Rai gets the art, culture and youth affairs ministry, Sudhakar Singh gets agriculture, Kartik Kumar becomes law minister. He is a MLC and very close to Bahubali leader Anant Singh.

Shamim Ahmed becomes sugarcane minister, Shahnawaz Alam has disaster management, Surendra Ram is the labour resource minister and Mohammad Israil Mansoori gets information technology.

From the Congress, Afaq Alam becomes animal husbandry and fisheries minister while Murari Prasad Gautam takes over as Panchayati Raj minister.

An Independent Sumit Kumar Singh gets the science and technology ministry.

K'TAKA SAVARKAR BANNER ROW: BJP MLA ESHWARAPPA'S COMMENT TRIGGERS CONTROVERSY

Shivamogga | Agencies

The situation in Shivamogga district of Karnataka continues to be tense with an attack on a Bajrang Dal activist in Bhadravathi despite prohibitory orders on Tuesday. Former minister and BJP MLA K S Eshwarappa had triggered a controversy by stating that Muslims do not own an inch of land, everything belongs to Hindustan.

Eshwarappa gave the statement while reacting to Opposition leader Siddaramaiah's statement that the banner of Veer Savarkar was being put up in a Muslim majority area. "There is not an inch of land here which belongs to Muslims. Everything belongs to Hindustan. Nothing is being given to Muslims," he said.

"Which is Muslim majority land? Siddaramaiah has given an anti-national statement," Eshwarappa lashed out.

Meanwhile, Bajrang Dal activist Sunil, who was attacked by a gang of more than five persons in Bhadravathi, has been shifted to the Meggan hospital in Shivamogga from the Bhadravathi town hospital.

Sunil suffered a nose fracture and multiple injuries in the attack by local criminal element Mubarak and his gang, according to the police. Sunil had stated that he narrowly escaped being stabbed by the miscreant.

The condition of Prem Singh, who was stabbed on Monday, has become serious. His nerves were critically damaged in the stabbing. Eshwarappa stated that first it was Harsha in Shivamogga, then it was Praveen Kumar Nettare in Dakshina Kannada, (both killed for involvement in Hindutva activities) and now again a stabbing incident had taken place on Monday.

It is the first time that a Muslim bad character has been shot in the leg and arrested. This is just the beginning. There is a lot more to come, Eshwarappa stated.

ED raids offices of TV channel head close to Mamata Banerjee

Kolkata | Agencies

Two teams of Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Income Tax (I-T) are conducting simultaneous raid and search operations at the residence and offices of Kaustav Roy, a Kolkata-based businessman and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a popular Bengali news channel, who is known for his close association with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

An ED source confirmed the raid, but refused to cite the reason for this development. Attempts to contact Roy for his comments failed as his mobile phone kept on ringing.

Roy was in the midst of controversy in May this year after the state government formed a committee for planning and monitoring of welfare and development schemes and made Roy, who has a debatable background, the chairman of the committee. However, later his name was scrapped after then Governor Jagdeep Dhankar questioned the justification of Roy's appointment in the crucial chair. Roy is involved in multiple sectors like computers, software and media. In March 2018, he, as the director of RP Infosystems, was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in connection with a Rs 515 crore bank fraud scam involving a consortium of banks, including Punjab National Bank and Canara Bank. In September last year, a Bengali channel owned by Roy, received a caution of cancellation of licence from the Union Ministry of Information & Broadcasting citing the Ministry of Home Affairs' denial of "security clearance".

TIME HAS COME TO DETHRONE BJP-LED GOVERNMENT: KCR

Hyderabad: Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao on Tuesday termed Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the enemy of Telangana and said time has come to dethrone the BJP-led government at the Centre. He said that a government which respects the states should come to power at the Centre.

Chandrasekhar Rao voiced concern over the growing unemployment, depreciation of rupee and skyrocketing of fuel prices. "The time has come to send this government at the Centre home and bring our own government," he said. KCR reiterated that the Centre is creating hurdles in the path of Telangana's development.

FIR lodged in Kanpur against magazine over deity image

Kanpur | Agencies

The Kanpur Police have registered an FIR against the editor and management of 'The Week' magazine on a complaint related to hurting religious sentiments by publishing a derogatory image of Hindu deities.

The magazine has already issued an apology for what it termed an "inappropriate illustration" accompanying a column by Bibek Debroy, who heads the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister.

Debroy ended his association with the magazine last week.

The FIR was registered at the Kotwali police station in Kanpur under Section 295A (deliberate and malicious intention of outraging religious feelings) of the Indian Penal Code, following a complaint lodged by BJP leader and former national convener of the Bajrang Dal, Prakash Sharma, on August 5.

The complainant alleged that the magazine published an objectionable photo of Lord Shiva and Maa Kali to go with Debroy's piece titled 'A tongue of fire' in its July 24 issue.

"The editor and others responsible for this objectionable act should be dealt with an iron hand," Sharma told reporter.

Issuing the apology, V.S. Jayaschandran, Editor-in-Charge of 'The Week', regretted the "unfortunate error of judgment on our part" in reproducing what he said was a 19th century Kangra painting from Himachal Pradesh. The magazine has removed the image from its website.

The author also registered his protest in a letter to the magazine and said he would no longer be a columnist with them. "There is a very tenuous link between the content of the article and the picture. I can think of many better depictions of Kali. This picture was deliberately chosen to titillate and provoke. At least, that's the way I perceive it," he wrote.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner of Police (East), Pramod Kumar, said the FIR was registered under Section 295A and added that the investigation officer has been asked to look into the charges and take appropriate action.

Flood averted with release of water from Karam dam in MP, Oppn questions govt

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Water from a newly built Karam reservoir in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district was released to Narmada river through multiple alternative passages and over 6,000 villagers returned to their homes after spending three days at relief camps.

The relentless joint efforts of army, local administration and labourers dug multiple alternate drains (passages) to reduce the water from the reservoir, as the seepage of water from its wall had become a bigger challenge for the administration to save the life of people nearby it.

While addressing on 15th August's gathering at Motilal Nehru stadium in Bhopal, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan announced Rs. 2 lakh award for all those whose efforts made this possible and flood situation was averted.

On the other hand, the opposition Congress accused the Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led BJP government of corruption in building reservoir. The Congress alleged that the government spent Rs. 305 crore to build reservoir, which could not store water, even first season of rain. The construction of reservoir was still underway.Former chief minister and MP Congress head Kamal Nath on Tuesday visited the spot and met the residents whose crops were damaged due to flood in Dhar district. Notably, due to fear of break of reservoir's wall that could have resulted flood, people of 18 villages were shifted to relief camps.

Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Sunday said the situation in Dhar district, where a breach was reported in a wall of the reservoir, is under control now. He also said about a bypass channel being created, which will help enable the discharge of water to reduce the pressure on the reservoir walls.

However, later the wall of the reservoir was swept with water but before it, alternative passages were already created and water was releases through these channels.

Another mob lynching in Alwar: Man beaten to death on suspicion of theft

Jaipur | Agencies

In what can be called yet another mob lynching incident in Alwar, Chiranjilal (45) lost his life after being brutally thrashed by 20-25 people in Rambas village of Govindgarh town in Alwar district.

Official sources confirmed that the victim went to relieve himself in a field on Sunday morning at around 5 a.m. when 20-25 people came in a Scorpio and a pickup and thrashed him mercilessly. Hearing his screams, people ran to the field and saw Chiranjilal lying unconscious on the ground. The accused were also standing there and accusing Chiranjilal of a tractor theft. The accused then called the police. When the Govindgarh police reached around 6.30 a.m., there was an argument between the assailants and the villagers. The police took the injured to Govindgarh CHC, from where Chiranjilal was referred to a Jaipur hospital at 9 a.m. Chiranjilal died here on Monday at 3 p.m. When his body reached Rambas village from Jaipur at 11 p.m. on Monday, there was chaos in the house. On Tuesday morning at 7 a.m., the agitated family members and the people of the village blocked the Ramgarh-Govindgarh road with batons and raised slogans against the government. They demanded Rs 50 lakh as compensation, a job to his family member and the arrest of the accused. The family was adamant on not performing the last rites till all three demands were met. An agreement was reached between the administration and the family at 2.20 p.m. After that the family got ready for the last rites.

ST XAVIER'S UNIVERSITY FACES SOCIAL ONSLAUGHT OVER TEACHER LOSING JOB FOR SWIMSUIT PICS

Kolkata: Kolkata's St Xavier's University is facing social onslaughts after the news became viral recently that an assistant professor of the university was forced to resign for posting pictures in swimsuit on Instagram, and that too before she joined the university.

After the news became viral, she was even slapped with a defamation notice by the university authorities, demanding damage compensation to the tune of Rs 99 crore on the ground that her action was an 'ill-motivated', 'desperate' and 'dishonest' attempt to open a closed chapter, thus causing immense and irreparable damage to the image of the institute.

St Xavier's University, a Jesuit university established in February 2017, is the post-graduation extension of Kolkata's iconic St Xavier's College, which was founded in 1860.

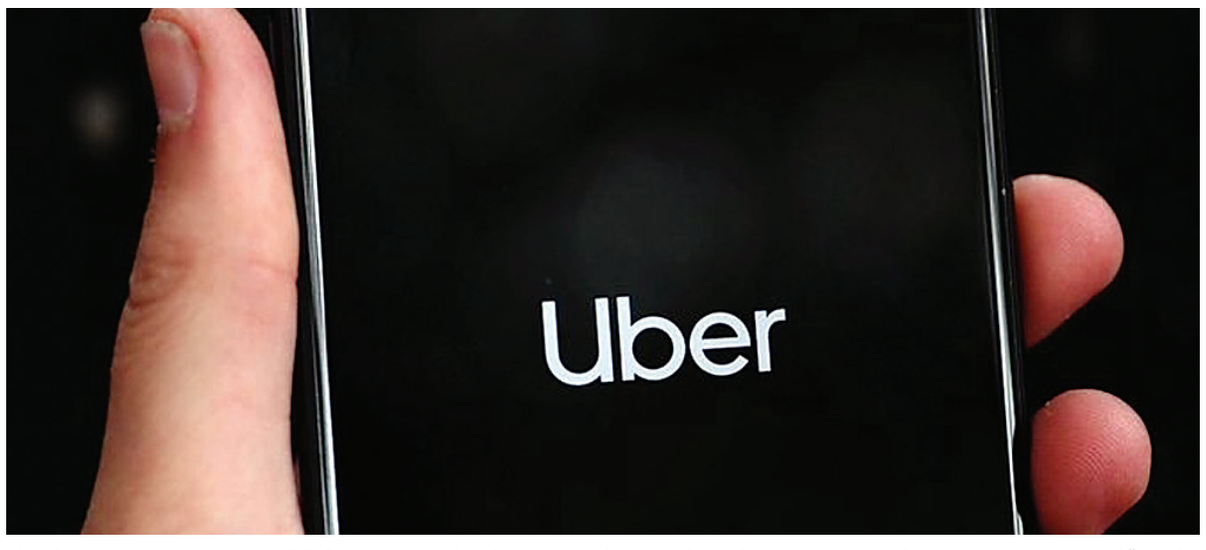
While the college is located at Park Street in Kolkata, the campus for the university is located in New Town on the northern outskirts of Kolkata.

Recently, the students of the university put up posters within the campus describing the decision to force the resignation of the assistant professor as a reflection of the patriarchal mentality of the university authorities.

Uber charges Noida resident Rs 3K from Delhi airport to home on a sunny day

If you remember a Mumbai resident who recently paid over Rs 3,000 for a 50-km Uber ride during pouring rain and stormy weather, beat this man's ordeal on a sunny day!

Team Absolute | New Delhi



A Delhi-NCR resident boarded an Uber from Delhi airport (Terminal 2) to his home on Noida-Greater Noida Expressway earlier this month and had to shell out a whopping close to Rs 3,000 on a day when the weather was just perfect and surge pricing had no chance for arrival!

Deb was shocked to see the final Uber bill as he reached home from the airport on August 5, as it showed Rs 2,935 on the meter for a 147.39 km ride, while the distance from T2 to his home in Noida Sector 143 is around 45 kms.

"Hate going public about bad service but you leave me with no choice, @Uber_India. Had to pay Rs 2,935 for a cab from Delhi airport's T2 to my home in Noida (around 45 kms) on Aug 5. I was billed for 147.39 kms -- halfway to Jaipur that I apparently covered in little over an hour!" he tweeted on Monday.

He further revealed that the actual Uber booking amount was Rs 1,143.

"Pick-up and drop locations are inaccurate too! Pls sort this mess and refund the excess amount. You also need to overhaul your complaints redressal mechanism," he further posted.

In a reply to Deb on August 5, Uber customer care said their expert team was working on his request and "need some more time to resolve this issue".

It has been more than 10 days and Deb has not heard from them after that.

KASHMIRI PANDIT SANGARSH SAMITI ASKS ALL LOCAL PANDITS TO LEAVE VALLEY

Srinagar: Sanjay Kumar Tickoo, president of Kashmiri Pandit Sangarsh Samiti (KPSS), a Srinagar-based organisation of local Pandits, on Tuesday asked all members of this minority community to leave the Valley.

Issuing a hard-hitting statement in the aftermath of Tuesday's brutal killing of Sunil Kumar and critically injuring his brother, Pitambar a.k.a. Pintu in Chotigam village of Shopian district, Tickoo asked all local Pandits to leave the Valley.

"No Kashmiri Pandit is safe in Kashmir Valley. For Kashmiri Pandits, only one option left is to leave Kashmir or get killed by the religiously fanatic minds who have support from the local population," the KPSS statement said.

The statement alleged that tourists and Amarnath Yatris remained safe in Kashmir, but non-local Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits are the target of terrorists.

The statement also accuses the government for its alleged failure to protect the Kashmiri Pandit community.

BODY FLOATED ON RUBBER TUBE TO PERFORM LAST RITES

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Absence of bridge-proper connect forced villagers to tie the body of a deceased man to a floating rubber tube to cross flooded Narmada river. Due to flood, kin of the deceased had no option but to take the body through a rubber tube to cross the water and to perform the last rights.

The incident was reported on Sunday in Madhya Pradesh's Anuppur district where due to heavy rainfall, road connecting to the village was submerged into rain water.

As per the police, the deceased identified as Vishmat Nanda (55), a resident of Thadpathara village in Anuppur, died in a government hospital in neighbouring Dindori district on Sunday after a heart attack.

A video showing some people carrying the body across the river to their village in Anuppur district surfaced on social media platforms following which a local administration official said they would investigate the matter. It showed that the body was carried on an ambulance till Patharkucha village, but it had to be stopped there as the only road connecting the Thadpathara village was closed due to the flooded river and there was no bridge. Notably, due to heavy rain in several parts of Madhya Pradesh, life of people have been disrupted as in many places roads are submerged in water and caved in. Bridges were collapsed at many places. The state administration has issued alert in areas, especially which are located on the catchment of Narmada river. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has decided to monitor the situation through a helicopter ride.

Heavy rain causes flood-like situation in parts of State

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Heavy and incessant rainfall for the past two days has caused flood-like situation in parts of Madhya Pradesh.

The state administration on Tuesday warned that a flood-like situation can also emerge in some other places, especially near catchment area of Narmada and Tawa and other rivers.

Heavy rainfall continued in several parts of the state, including the capital city Bhopal, for the last two days. The weather department has predicted continue spell of rain for the next two days.

Schools in many districts such as Bhopal, Betul, Raisen, Narmadapuram (Hoshangabad) have been shut.

The Meteorological department also issued a rain alert in Bhopal and Jabalpur for the next 24 hours. Orange alert was also sounded in Indore, Ujjain and Narmadapuram divisions of Madhya Pradesh as well. "The rain is said to have been caused as a result of a depression that currently lies on the border between Odisha and Jharkhand that will trigger widespread rain over Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and the adjoining areas with more rain expected in East and West Madhya Pradesh," said a weather scientist in IMD's regional office in Bhopal.

As per the official reports, as many as 13 gates of Bargi Dam, which is located on Narmada river in Jabalpur district, have been opened to release excess water. Similarly, six out of eight gates of the Barna dam have also been opened. District officials in and around Jabalpur have been instructed to remain vigilant in view of the water discharge from the two dams.

Rivers like Narmada, Betwa, Tawa, Chambal, Shipra, Tapti and many more are flowing above danger mark. A flood -like situation has emerged in Bhopal also, which prompted the administration to open the gates of Bhadbhada and Kolar Dams.

Due to heavy rain for the last several hours, many villages have reported flash flood. Meanwhile, in Begumganj town of Raisen district, a bridge caved in after incessant rain, disrupting road traffic in the area. Observing the situation, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday directed district administration and the police to be alert.

He directed the administration to shift people to safer places.

Meanwhile, the chief minister has also appealed citizen to co-operate with officials and shift to safer places. "SDRF teams have been deployed in the districts like Narmadapuram, Raisen, Betul, Sehore, Jabalpur and other districts located on Narmada's catchment," Chouhan said.

The chief minister said that he has asked district administration and the officials associated with dams and reservoirs to release water carefully, keeping in mind that it does not reach villages.

CONDITIONS CREATED DUE TO HEAVY RAINS UNDER CONTROL: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the situation which was created due to heavy rains in the state has been controlled through better management. The safety of the lives of the people is the top priority of the state government. Teams of District Administration, NDRF, SDERF are alert in the state and are keeping the situation under control. Instructions have been given to all the districts that pregnant women whose date of delivery is in the next two or three days, should be taken to hospitals and safe places on top priority. Chouhan was discussing virtually with the NIC of Narmadapuram regarding excessive rainfall and flood control from the districts of the state. Chief Minister said that according to information received from the Meteorological Department, there is a possibility of more rain between August 19 and 23. Chouhan received information virtually about the districts of Vidisha, Sehore, Balaghat, Narmadapuram, Raisen, Bhopal, Rajgarh, Narsinghpur from the officials. Chief Minister said that the team of Madhya Pradesh is skilled in scientific method of disaster management in a scientific manner. An example of this is evident from the management of the KaramDam disaster. As a result of better management, the catastrophic situation did not arise and we were successful in saving lives as well as animals.

Chouhan said that if the water of Bargi, Barna, Tawa and Kolar had been released simultaneously, then there could have been a situation of floods. With scientific disaster management with intelligence, drainage from the dams was systematically managed. Appreciating the arrangements made by the districts, Chief Minister said that people were shifted to higher places from places likely to be submerged. After inspecting the relief camp at Narmadapuram, Chouhan expressed satisfaction over the arrangements there. He said that arrangements should be made for relief camps in all the districts. Along with this, the district administration should also work sensitively for the safety of animals.

GOVERNOR GETS FREEDOM FIGHTERS HONOURED AT THEIR HOMES

Bhopal: Governor Mangubhai Patel got the freedom fighters honoured at their homes on Independence Day. On behalf of Governor Patel, the officials of Raj Bhavan honoured the Bhopal resident freedom fighters by reaching their homes.

Shawl, cloth gifts, shrifal and fruit baskets were presented as a mark of respect to Bhopal residents Mohd. Mukhtar Khan, Narayan Das Narolia, Habib Nazar, Mohd Jamir, Devisharan, Parvati Devi, Laxmikant Mishra, Narayani Devi, Savitri Devi Verma and family members of Chandravati Singh because she was not present in the Bhopal.

POLICE INTEGRAL PART OF SOCIETY: GOVERNOR

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel has said that the biggest truth of life is that truth and courage are always honoured in the society. Therefore, one must follow the path of integrity and truth in life with total honesty. It is important to understand that as much as it is necessary for the police to maintain law and order, it is equally important to strengthen its public-friendly image. He said that police is an integral part of the society. Development is the basis of a healthy society. For development peace is must, for peace, security is must and for security, police is must.

Patel was addressing the officers and employees of Police, Municipal Army and Jail Department who were awarded President's Medal for Gallantry, Distinguished Service and Meritorious Service at Sandipani auditorium.

Patel said that Rashtrapati Samman is a matter of pride for all of us. It is an opportunity for Madhya Pradesh Police Force to strengthen the resolve of 'patriotism and public service' with renewed vigor. It is the duty of all the officers and jawans of the police force to maintain the honor and respect of this medal even further. He said that the State Police has set high ideals of social commitment through excellent works of public safety and public service along with prescribed responsibilities. Service and assistance to the general public should be the first priority for the police officers and employees and should always ensure the performance of their duty with this spirit. Police have been repressing all anti-social elements and anti-national forces with utmost rigor. You must continue to do so with utmost sincerity. Also make sure that no innocent is ever harmed.

1L jobs, CM housing scheme & RSS founder Hedgewar's memorial, Shivraj announces on I-Day

Commemorating the 75th anniversary of India's Independence Day on Monday, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan made several announcements, including to provide one lakh government jobs in the next one year.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Commemorating the 75th anniversary of India's Independence Day on Monday, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan made several announcements, including to provide one lakh government jobs in the next one year.

Hoisting tricolor at Motilal Nehru stadium in Bhopal, Chouhan announced that increasing unemployment has become a bigger concern. In the next one year, at least one lakh youth will be given jobs under the state government, he said.

Chouhan announced that in the line of Centre's Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna (PMAY), the state government would launch 'Mukhyamantri Awas Yojna' in the state. "Those could not get house under PMAY, would be provided benefit of Mukhyamantri Awas Yojna," Chouhan announced.

Meanwhile, Chouhan also announced to make memories of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) founder Keshav Baliram Hedgewar 'permanent' in the state and a memorial for heroes of the country's freedom struggle in Bhopal.

"RSS founder Hedgewar ji had dedicated his entire life for the country and freedom struggle. His memories are associated with Rampayli in Balaghat district. We will make his freedom struggle-related memories permanent in Rampayli," Chouhan said. A memorial named 'Veer Bharat Smarak' will also be developed in Bhopal comprising statues of revolutionaries and heroes of the freedom struggle, besides showcasing their lifespan, he added.

On this occasion, the chief minister also gave away the President's police medals for meritorious and commendable services.

The Chief Minister also announced to roll out a new youth policy and constitution of the Rajya Yuva Salahkar Parishad (state youth advisory council) and said recruitment for one lakh government jobs will be made within the next one year. "Swaraj colonies will be developed on 21,000 acres of land freed from land mafia in a bid to provide houses to the poor. I also announce the Chief Minister Jan Awas Yojana for those who are not eligible under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana," Chouhan said.

'Veer Bharat Memorial' to be built in Bhopal, says Shivraj

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government will build a 'Veer Bharat Memorial', which will consist of the statues of revolutionaries and freedom fighters, chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan announced after hoisting the Tricolour on Monday.

Addressing a gathering on the occasion of the 75th Independence Day at the Motilal Nehru stadium in Bhopal, Chouhan said the freedom fighters have sacrificed their lives to end the draconian British rule and "now it is time to live for this country and to make it progressive."

"A memorial which is to be called -- 'Veer Bharat' -- would be set up in Bhopal, which will have statues of freedom fighters who sacrificed for the country's Independence. People visiting there would know about a particular revolutionary and freedom fighters in detail," Chouhan said.

The celebration of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' was held amid heavy rainfall across Madhya Pradesh. Tricolours were unfurled across the state on Monday morning. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan also hoisted Tricolour in Bhopal amid heavy rain. Chouhan said that Madhya Pradesh has achieved several milestones in the last couple of decades and it could happen due to several schemes launched by the state government.

Meanwhile, the Chief Minister also announced that the problem of seepage from Karam Dam, which has been a bigger concern for the last few days, has been resolved and water has been reduced from an alternative passage. He announced that the officials, policemen, soldiers and individuals who worked day night to ensure the safety of people would be awarded by the state government.

Notably, the continuing seepage of water from Karam Dam in Dhar district has prompted the administration to shift over 6,000 families of two adjoining districts Dhar and Khargone to relief camps. Sensing the situation as dangerous, the Army was called to lend help.

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EDITOR'S SPECS

The Green Revolution

A massive drive to convert 400 acres of unutilised or barren land into a dense forest within a period of time is underway at Tiruchi district in Tamil Nadu. The Tiruchi district administration officials said that the land identified is a "Porambokku" land at Lalgudi Taluk in the district and 25,000 palmyra saplings have been already planted. The district administration and Lalgudi Taluk officials said that around 2 lakh saplings would be planted on the 400-acre land. The palmyra saplings are planted at a distance of 12 feet from each other so that it is not crowded when they grow up. According to the District Rural development department officials, a private firm is sponsoring all the saplings and the planting and maintenance including watering is being done by the workers of the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS). Officials attached to the project informed that the tract of land could develop into an "economic zone" in ten years' time from the marketable yield and employment opportunities that it could offer. Godson Samuel. S, who is a researcher on Palmyra palms and author of the book, "A travelogue of Palmyra Palm" told reporters that the tree does not grow in a controlled environment and that the 400 acres of land where the plantation is being taken up will turn into a dense forest. He said that it will turn into a major ecological area attracting wild animals and birds. Samuel said that the Palmyra trees have a major cultural significance in the country and added that this would also lead to the revival of a lost culture.

WHEN CAREERS ARE SACRIFICED FOR ADVERTISEMENT BILLBOARDS AND STATISTICS

Vineet Goenka

Back in 1859, Macaulay's education system came into effect intending to colonise education and create a class of anglicised Indians. Post-Independence, India tried to bounce back in major sectors and education was one of them.The government at that time used its resources and planning to revive the functionality of education best suited for India those days. The year 1968 showcased the First Education Policy while the second came in 1986. Both were launched with a focus on 'Radical Restructuring' and 'Removal of Disparities' and to 'Equalise Education Opportunity'. The Central government introduced programmes like 'Adult Schools' and reforms like 'Night Schools' were introduced by various state governments. While Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee launched the 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan' (Education for All) in 2001, the intention was to attain Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE), bridging the gaps of literacy, social and gender inequality. The Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act, 2002 inserted Article 21-A in the Constitution to provide free and compulsory education to all children in the age group of six to fourteen as a Fundamental Right in such a manner as the state may, by law, determine.Article 21-A and the Right to Education Act came into effect on April 1, 2010. But India was way behind once again in the education sector as the impact of First and Second Education policies were marginal and the gap between Second and Third Education Policy was huge.It was the Narendra Modi government which launched the Third Education Policy on July 29, 2020, famously called the NEP 2020, the policy which revamped the education system and focused on fundamental growth. The NEP is holistic and future-ready, aiming to give equal opportunities in education and create good "Contributable Citizens". Prime Minister Modi's "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" clarion call had a recognisable impact on girls' education, and from 2015 to 2020, enrolments of girls in higher education increased by 18 per cent.

As per a PIB report, the school dropout rate among Muslim girls before 2014 was 70 per cent, but in 2021 it dropped to 30 per cent. This significant change in dropout rates is encouraging and reflects the efforts of the Union government since 2014.'Bharat' has always been a land of spiritual leaders, saints, and great philosophers. Vedas, Puranas, and Bhagavad Gita are the books that are relevant and impactful even today. Bharat's identity as a 'Vishwa guru' has its roots in the past. We are called 'Vishwa guru' not 'Vishwa Gyani' as we not only possessed knowledge, but also had the desire to impart it to our "knowns, unknowns, and even enemies". Guru Sandipani without any discrimination imparted knowledge to both of his disciples Sudama, the son of the poor, and Lord Krishna equally. India is a country where education has been considered a catalyst to lead us from darkness to light, from untruth to reality. "Asatoma Sadgamaya, Tamaso Maa Jyotir-Gamaya".Babasaheb Ambedkar had once said, "Education is what makes a person fearless, teaches him the lesson of unity, makes him aware of his rights and inspires him to struggle for his rights."However, an alarming trend is seen in Delhi government schools where 'artificial statistics' is hitting hard the fundamentals of Constitutional Right to Education.

(Vinit Goenka is a politician associated with the Bharatiya Janata Party for the past 25 years. Currently he is the spokesperson of Delhi BJP. The views expressed are personal)

DESPITE SABOTAGE, POJK PROTEST MOVEMENT GAINS MOMENTUM

Amjad Ayub Mirza

On August 7 a so-called All Parties Conference was held in the capital city of Muzaffarabad in Pakistan occupied Jammu Kashmir (PoJK). It was initiated by the former puppet Prime Minister of PoJK Raja Farooq Haider, allegedly on the behest of the Pakistani deep state.

It should be seen in the light of attempts of political sabotage engineered by Pakistan to quell the on-going mass movement against the draft of proposed 15th constitutional amendment in the current interim constitution of PoJK called the Act of 1974.The conference was attended, among others, by the present puppet PM of PoJK Tanveer Ilyas. None of the political parties that are playing an instrumental role were invited or participated in the conference. Hence, it was solely an exercise conducted by the pro- Pakistani establishment gang in PoJK who have for the past 75 years facilitated the occupation of our land by the Pakistan Army.

The conference ended with a vague resolution that ambiguously agreed upon not to compromise any monetary or administrative power mentioned in the draft proposal of the 15th amendment. It was followed by a symbolic release of the leader of the Jammu Kashmir National Awami Party (JKNAP) Liaquat Hayat.However, any attempt to curb the ongoing mass protest movement has only further emboldened it. Every single day protests are being held in various towns and cities by men and women who belong to all sections of our society.Total wheel jam (General) strikes collectively coordinated by the transporters, lawyers, traders, students, and nationalist political parties are being carried out in parts of Poonch and Muzaffarabad divisions.Despite being brutally tortured by the state police and paramilitary rangers the resilience of the protesters is praiseworthy. Sharp objects such as blades are being used to make small cuts on the bodies of those arrested and then red chillies are rubbed in the bleeding wound, yet the state has not been successful in breaking the will of the people to fight back.And this is for a reason. The people of PoJK have suddenly woken up to the fact that the 15th amendment is a noose around the neck of our state from which Pakistan wants to hang whatever is left of our already usurped liberty.If, and that is a big if, the draft of the proposed 15th constitutional amendment is adopted by the PoJK legislative Assembly then PoJK will not only lose monetary and administrative powers but will in actuality be reduced to a provincial entity without incorporating it into the federation of Pakistan.Currently, we are not allowed to appoint our own Inspector General of Police, Chief Secretary, Finance Secretary or even our own Accountant General. They all are appointed by Pakistan and are of non-Kashmiri descent and are called Lent Officers.

To add insult to injury, the General Officer Commanding (GOC) who sits in Murree in KPK province controls all political, economic and administrative affairs of PoJK.Dr Shabbir Chaudhary, a celebrated Kashmiri scholar and author, describes the situation as grave as an existential crisis for the people of PoJK. In his recent analysis of the draft of the proposed 15th amendment, which has been widely circulated among Kashmiri nationalist, Dr Chaudhary reveals the real danger my people are faced with.The post of President of PoJK will be replaced by a governor and that of the Prime Minister with a chief minister. Furthermore, the word 'state' will be removed from the current name of the state and will no longer be considered a part of the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.Therefore, the semi-autonomous status of PoJK will come to an end and Pakistani citizens will be allowed to buy land in PoJK. The anthem of 'Azad' Kashmir will be replaced with that of the Pakistani national anthem. A dubious body called Kashmir Council will be set up to run the affairs of the territory. Kashmir council will comprise six members from the Assembly of PoJK and seven from Pakistan, including the Chief Executive of Pakistan, Ministers of defence and foreign affairs all of who will be assisted by the lent officers appointed by Pakistan.

The chief justice of the high court as well as other judges plus the Election Commissioner of PoJK will be appointed by the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Furthermore, the Jammu Kashmir property worth Rs 80 trillion will be managed by the Kashmir Council. This means that Pakistan can sell our state property to meet its own financial needs.

The Kashmir Council will also take away tax collection powers from the legislative assembly of PoJK.In short, it is time for regional political entities to wake up to stop this gross injustice and stand by my people. After all we are Indian citizens living under the illegal occupation of Pakistan since October 22, 1947.

Meanwhile, as the Pakistan government and her touts in PoJK try to diffuse the mass revolt by political sabotage, the public resistance keeps gaining momentum.

(Dr Amjad Ayub Mirza is an author and a human rights activist from Mirpur in PoJK. He currently lives in exile in the UK)

international

UK BRACES FOR WEEK OF STORMS, FLOODING AND HEAVY RAIN

Londan | Agencies

The UK Met Office on Tuesday issued a yellow thunderstorm warning for most of the country with conditions potentially causing heavy rain and more flash flooding as well as transport disruption and power cuts.The UK Met Office on Tuesday issued a yellow thunderstorm warning for most of the country with conditions potentially causing heavy rain and more flash flooding as well as transport disruption and power cuts.The weather warning will stay in place for southern England on Wednesday, where communities could be cut off by flooded roads, and the chance of fast-flowing or deep flood water could cause danger to life, reports news agency.Heavy showers caused flooding in areas of Cornwall and Devon on Monday afternoon while thunderstorms developed in east coast counties such as Essex, Suffolk and Lincolnshire.

It came as an abrupt end to the heatwave last week and followed weeks of little rain, which had caused droughts, leaving land parched.

The National Drought Group on August 12 moved parts of the South West, parts of southern and central England, and the East of England into official drought status while at least six water companies have imposed or are planning to impose hosepipe bans.

The Met Office said localised areas in England and Wales will be hit by torrential rain, thunder and localised flooding again on Tuesday. Otherwise conditions will be warm and humid with a mixture of some sunny spells and showers. The Environment Agency has put 10 flood alerts in areas of Norfolk, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire.

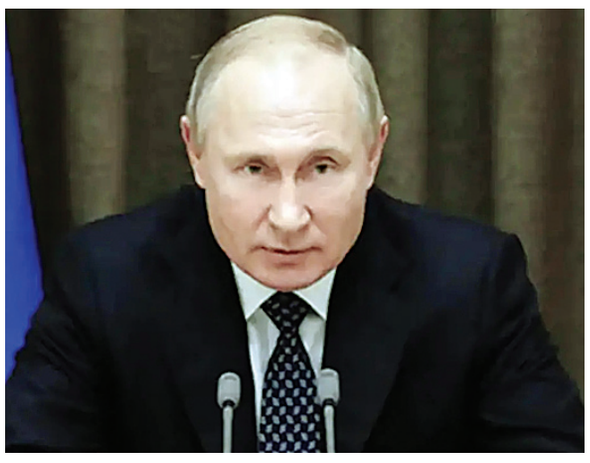
DEATH TOLL FROM ARMENIA SHOPPING CENTRE BLAST REACHES 16

Yerevan: The number of people who died after a blast at a shopping mall outside the Armenian capital of Yerevan has increased to 16, the country's civil defence agency said on Tuesday.Rescue workers pulled more bodies out of the rubble of the collapsed buildings and a pregnant woman and a child were among the dead, news agency reported citing officials as saying.Emergency crews are still looking for those who are missing.Many people are still receiving hospital treatment after the blast which left more than 60 people injured, many of them children.According to the latest investigations, the blast occurred when a warehouse where fireworks were stored blew up at the wholesale site, triggering an explosion of a gas pipeline.

Putin reaffirms goal of capturing Ukraine's Donbas region

Russian President Vladimir Putin has reaffirmed the goal of completely capturing the Ukraine's separatist Donbas region, nearly six months after launching his war against Kiev.

Moscow | Agencies



Russian President Vladimir Putin has reaffirmed the goal of completely capturing the Ukraine's separatist Donbas region, nearly six months after launching his war against Kiev.

The President told international guests at an annual military forum near Moscow on Monday that the Russian army is fulfilling its tasks in the so-called "People's republics of Donetsk and Luhansk", reports dpa news agency While Kiev accuses Moscow of the most serious war crimes and a bloody occupation policy, Putin once again claimed that "the soil of the Donbas is being liberated step by step" from Ukrainian nationalists.

putin recognised the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk as independent states in February despite international protests, and then launched a war.

Israel rejects appeal to free Palestinian prisoner on hunger strike

Tel Aviv | Agencies

An Israeli military court has rejected an appeal to release a Palestinian prisoner whose health has been worsening amid his 165-day hunger strike in protest against his detention without trial or charge, a local daily reported.Justice Eyal Yinon ruled that despite Khalil Awawdeh's deteriorated medical condition, "the danger he poses still doesn't allow his release", news agency quoted Israel's newspaper as saying in the report.The judge said that the improvement of Awawdeh's health "rests on his own hands", and the court can only hope he will end his hunger strike.Ahlam Haddad, Awawdeh's lawyer, confirmed the appeal was rejected and said that "the ruling poses a danger to her client's life", adding she plans to petition Supreme Court in an attempt to release him.Awawdeh was evacuated to a hospital on August 10 after his health condition deteriorated.Israel maintains that Awawdeh is a militant of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, while he denies the allegation.The Islamic Jihad demanded his release during the Egyptian-brokered ceasefire deal with Israel, which ended the three-day deadly fighting in the Gaza Strip earlier this month.The group did not however, identify him as a member.

CONTROVERSIAL CHINESE SHIP ARRIVES IN SRI LANKA

Colombo | Agencies

A controversial Chinese ship with ballistic missile and satellite tracking facilities which was deferred and delayed at the request of Sri Lanka arrived on Tuesday at the island nation's Hambantota port run by Beijing. The hi-tech vessel, Yuan Wang 5, which was to arrive originally on August 11 was delayed following concerns raised by India, the US and other countries. But on August 13, it was cleared by the Sri Lankan government after Beijing raising strong objections.China charged that India, Sri Lanka's closest neighbour which has helped the country in the wake of the ongoing economic crisis by providing nearly $4 billion in financial support, was responsible for stopping the arrival of the vessel. Accusing India, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin had earlier said that it was "completely unjustified for certain countries to cite the so-called 'security concerns' to pressure Sri Lanka". However India rejected China's allegations. "We reject categorically the insinuation and such statement about India. Sri Lanka is a sovereign country and makes its own independent decisions,"India's Foreign Ministry spokesman Arindam Bagchi said. After Sri Lanka cleared the Yuan Wang 5 to dock at the Hambantota port from August 16 to 22, the Foreign Affairs Ministry in Colombo said this was after the island nation"engaged in extensive consultations at a high level through diplomatic channels with all parties concerned" and seeking "further information and material".

Maharashtra erupts into joyous, patriotic fervour for 75th I-Day commemoration

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

Maharashtra on Monday erupted into joyous, colourful and patriotic celebrations of the nation's 75th Independence Day at official, political and public levels, with masses participating enthusiastically.

The state's official function was held at the Council Hall in Pune where Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari hoisted the National Tricolour in the presence of top dignitaries, police and civil officials. Chief Minister Eknath Shinde hoisted the national flag at his official residence 'Varsha' and later at Mantralaya in the presence of a large number of dignitaries, and addressed the gathering briefly. Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis hoisted the flag at Nagpur, other Bharatiya Janata Party cabinet ministers Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil, Sudhir Mungantiwar, Chandrakant Patil, Vijaykumar Gavit, Girish Mahajan, Mangal Prabhat Lodha, Ravindra Chavan, Atul Save and Suresh Khade in their respective districts.

Nationalist Congress Party's Leader of Opposition Ajit Pawar, Shiv Sena President Uddhav Thackeray, Congress state President Nana Patole did the honours at their respective party headquarters with large number of workers joining them to sing the National Anthem and chanted 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' and 'Vande Mataram'. The General Managers of Central Railway Anil Kumar Lahoti hoisted the Tricolour at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus, Konkan Railway Chairman Sanjay Gupta hoisted the national flag at the Konkan Rail Vihar in Navi Mumbai and Western Railway General Manager Prakash Butani hoisted it at the Churchgate headquarters. The Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority Chairman Sanjay Sethi hoisted the national flag and paid tributes to the freedom fighters. Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat hoisted the tricolour at the organisation's headquarters in Nagpur, while other MPs, MLAs and elected representatives also did the honours in their constituencies.

Similar functions were held at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, the Indian Army, Indian Navy and India Air Force stations in Mumbai and other parts of the state, district collectorates, at prominent Central and state government institutions, private companies, malls, multiplexes, villages, social and cultural organisations.

Thousands of housing societies, residential complexes and slums in Mumbai, Thane, Pune, Aurangabad, Nashik, Nagpur held their own I-Day flag hoisting events with a huge number of locals joining, braving the sudden showers in some areas which failed to dampen the festive spirits.

Several Bollywood celebs like Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, Salman Khan, Akshay Kumar, Ranveer Kapoor, Kangana Ranaut, Anoushka Kohli, Priyanka Chopra, and more, plus, leading industrialists, cricket stars and prominent personalities flooded the social media with pictures and messages of I-Day festivities, adding to the patriotic mood of the nation.

Shinde Group MLAs go berserk, one professes & other practices violence

Team Absolute | Mumbai

At least two MLAs of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde group are suddenly in the limelight -- one for professing and the other for practicing -- violence here on Tuesday, ahead of the Maharashtra Legislature Session starting on Wednesday.

They are Prakash Surve from Magathane (Mumbai) and Santosh Bangar from Kalamnuri (Hingoli), whose fury in words and deeds have gone viral on social media with sharp reactions.

On Sunday, while addressing a meeting in his constituency, Surve touched upon the tussle for supremacy between former CM Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena and that of Shinde Group and apparently crossed the limits.

He told his supporters that while his group will not get into a scrap with anyone, if someone antagonizes them, then they will not be spared and "nobody's 'dadagiri' (bullying) would be tolerated... you bash them up, I will protect you..."

"If you can't break their arms then break their legs... 'Thok do', show them their place. Don't worry... I, Prakash Surve will get you out on bail the next day," the Shinde Group MLA thundered, even as his band of supporters cheered him lustily.

In Hingoli on Monday, Bangar went a step ahead to allegedly abuse, threaten and even assault a catering manager for reportedly dishing out sub-standard mid-day meals to unorganised labourers in the district.

Bangar is seen shouting at the manager whose identity is not clear, hurling abuses and then slapping him for serving 'burnt chapatis', plain rice and bland vegetables, and said he had received complaints in the matter. He later called up an unidentified official to give an earful and accused him of corruption and also warned that he would "show them who is Bangar" as the person at the other end tried to mollify him.

Shiv Sena Deputy Leader Dr. Raghunath Kuchik slammed the developments and said "this is not Shinde Sena, but Goonde Sena (Goons Army) which is indulging in such tactics targetting political opponents and poor people." "Balasaheb Thackeray always taught us to protect the helpless and needy people, but see what this 'Goonde Sena' is doing... The people will teach them a lesson through the ballot box," said Dr. Kuchik, who is also Bharatiya Kamgar Sena General Secretary.

He also warned that they are awaiting a 'signal' from Uddhav Thackeray and if the 'Goonde Sena' people continue trampling others, "we will teach them a lesson in our style".

Meanwhile, taking strong umbrage over Surve's threats, the local Shiv Sena unit has lodged a complaint with Dahisar police station, demanding action against the Shinde Group MLA.

Ratan Tata invests in startup that connects the elderly with young graduates

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ratan Tata, Chairman Emeritus of Tata Sons, has made a seed investment in a startup called "Goodfellows" that aims to help the elderly by pairing them with young and educated graduates for meaningful companionship, the startup said on Tuesday.

In the last six months, "Goodfellows" has completed a successful beta and will now be available in Mumbai and soon in Pune, Chennai and Bengaluru.

"The bonds between the two generations created by Goodfellows are very meaningful and are helping to address an important social issue In India. I hope the investment helps the young team at Goodfellows grow," said Tata. During the beta testing, Goodfellows received a positive response with over 800 applications from young graduates looking to be employed at Goodfellows of which a shortlisted cohort of 20 provided companionship to the elderly in Mumbai. "In its beta phase, we discovered how organically the Grandpals bonded with the Goodfellows. Tata's investment in our venture further is a huge source of encouragement to our dedication to this concept," said Shantanu Naidu, the founder of the startup and General Manager 3in the office of Ratan Tata. There are 15 million elderlies in India living alone, either due to loss of a partner, or families moving away for unavoidable work reasons. The business model of Goodfellows is a freemium subscription model. The first month is free with only the goal of having the Grandpal experience this service. The second month onward is a small subscription fee that has been decided based on the limited affordability of pensioners.

NSE phone tapping: Delhi HC issues notice to ED on ex-Mumbai top cop's bail plea

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday issued a notice to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on the bail plea of former Mumbai Police Commissioner Sanjay Pandey, who was arrested in connection with a money laundering case pertaining to the phone tapping and snooping of the employees of the National Stock Exchange (NSE) between 2009 and 2017.

Hearing the matter, Justice Jasmeet Singh also issued a notice to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in a separate petition moved by Pandey seeking quashing of FIRs against him in offences of cheating, criminal breach of trust by a public servant, and cheating under the Indian Penal Code (IPC), under various provisions of the Information Technology Act, Indian Telegraph Act, and Prevention of Corruption Act.

During the course of the hearing, Senior Advocate Mukul Rohatgi appeared on behalf of the petitioner. The matter will be heard on September 16.

Pandey was knocking the doors of the high court challenging a trial court's August 4 order which denied him bail in the money laundering case.

The former top cop who was arrested on July 19 is currently undergoing judicial custody.

According to the CBI, "Pandey ran iSec Securities Pvt Ltd. It has been alleged that NSE's former CEO and MD Chitra Ramkrishna used this firm to tap the phones of NSE's employees. The phone calls made by NSE employees between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. were tapped and recorded by iSec Securities. It has been alleged that Pandey helped in tapping the phone calls illegally". In the last hearing, Advocate Tanveer Ahmed Mir, who represented the petitioner, argued that his client was in fact a 'whistleblower' at the NSE.

Opposing the bail plea, Additional Solicitor General (ASG) S.V. Raju and Special Public Prosecutor N.K. Matta, appeared on behalf of the ED, pointed out that Pandey is an influential person. Ramkrishna is already in the custody of ED in the same case on the basis of an FIR registered by the CBI.

INDIGO FLIGHT DELAYED OVER 'SUSPICIOUS MESSAGE' ON PASSENGER'S PHONE

Mumbai: An IndiGo Mangaluru-Mumbai flight was delayed by over five hours after a female passenger alerted officials about a suspicious text message that she noticed on the fellow passenger's mobile phone.

The incident took place on Sunday when passengers of flight 6E 5327 from Mangaluru to Mumbai had boarded the plane.

As per officials, a female passenger noticed her co-passenger's phone and panicked after reading the word 'bomber' while chatting with his female friend.

"Thereafter, she raised an alarm and the aircraft had to be taken to the isolation bay of the airport for further enquiries," said an airport official.

There were 185 passengers on board and the passengers were asked to disembark the plane for further checking. In the process, the flight got delayed by over five hours.

According to officials, no complaint was lodged as it was "a casual conversation between two friends".

FRESH THREATS TO MUKESH AMBANI FAMILY, MUMBAI COPS DETAIN MAN

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Mumbai Police have detained one person in connection with the death threats given to billionaire industrialist and his family members, officials said here on Monday.

According to an official, the threats were made in several phone calls received at the Sir H.N. Reliance Foundation Hospital in south Mumbai on Monday.

"Yes, we received eight calls, one after the other, from some unidentified person giving death threats to our Chairman Mukesh Ambani. We immediately complained to the police. We have also initiated our own internal security measures and have full faith in the Mumbai Police," the hospital CEO Dr. (Ms) Tarang Gianchandani told reporter.

Launching the probe, the local police have traced the caller and detained one person, reportedly of unsound mind, in connection with the incident, and details are awaited.

Simultaneously, as a precaution, security at the Ambani residence Antilia has also been beefed up along with the family's private security detail.

This is the second time in barely 18 months that the Ambani family has been targeted -- earlier in February 2021 when an SUV with 20 gelatin sticks plus a threat note -- was found abandoned near the family home Antilia.

It led to a massive national furore with several serving or retired policemen arrested, the SUV owner Mansukh Hiran later was found dead in Thane and a political upheaval that rocked the state for several months during the tenure of erstwhile Maha Vikas Aghadi headed by former Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.

I-DAY TRAGEDY: SENIOR COUPLE KILLED IN MUMBAI HOUSE CRASH

Mumbai: A senior citizen couple was killed when the ceiling of a dilapidated building crashed in Mulund East suburb, here late on Monday, the BMC Disaster Control said.

The tragedy struck ground-plus 2-storey privately owned Motichhaya Building in Nanepada area of the north-eastern Mumbai suburb, around 9 p.m.The victims who perished were identified as Devashankar N. Shukla, 93 and his wife Arkniben, 87.

They were rushed to the Ashirwad Critical Care Hospital where they were declared dead on arrival, said the BMC.

INDICES END HIGHER FOR THIRD STRAIGHT SESSION, SENSEX CLOSES AT 58,842

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The benchmark indices ended higher for the third consecutive session with Sensex rising more than 300 points and Nifty rising over 100 points, as sentiments of investors boosted after easing inflation print.

At close, Sensex ended up 379.43 points or 0.64 per cent at 58,842.21, while Nifty closed up 127.10 points or 0.72 per cent at 17,825.25. About 1,995 shares advanced, 1,553 shares declined, while 157 shares remained unchanged on Tuesday.

Mahindra & Mahindra, Maruti Suzuki India, Asian Paints, Hindustan Unilever, Ultratech Cement and HDFC, among others, were the major gainers on the BSE.

"The easing of inflationary pressure has encouraged domestic investors to remain optimistic about the pace of economic recovery. Better-than-expected CPI numbers, aided by slower increase in food and fuel prices, may limit the pace of rate hikes by the RBI.

"In the Asian market, the Chinese central bank surprised the market by cutting its interest rates after a weak set of economic data. Following that, oil prices slumped on demand worries," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

In July, CPI inflation had moderated to 6.71 per cent, as against 7.01 per cent in June due to moderation in food inflation.

The moderation in food prices was led by decline in prices of meat and fish, and oil and fats. Whereas, June IIP growth moderated to 12.3 per cent, while growing sequentially by 0.1 per cent. On a sectoral basis, electricity production grew by 16.4 per cent, manufacturing by 12.5 per cent, and mining by 7.5 per cent.

Meanwhile, July core inflation (CPI excluding food, fuel, pan and tobacco) remained broadly sticky at 6.25 per cent, with a sequential pickup of 0.7 per cent. This was led mainly by rising costs of education, and clothing and footwear.

Meanwhile, Asian stocks remained mixed. The Nikkei share average ended 0.01 per cent lower and Shanghai Composite Index closed flat at 0.05 per cent. European shares extended gains on Tuesday.

"Markets will continue mirroring global peers for cues. Meanwhile, we suggest investors to continue maintaining a stock specific approach. Also, investors should keep a close watch on fluctuating crude prices and currency movement," said Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

Actor Steve Toussaint got racially abused after casting announcement

Los Angeles | Agencies

When actor Steve Toussaint was cast in 'House of the Dragon, in which he plays Corlys Velaryon, he was met with racist attacks online.

His casting marks the first major role for an actor of colour in the 'Games of Thrones' universe, said an agency.

"When I got the gig, I literally was like, 'It's just another role because I have Black friends who had small parts or recurring parts in (Thrones)'," Toussaint told.

"I didn't realise it was a bigger deal until I was racially abused on social media when it was announced. Yeah, that s--t happened."

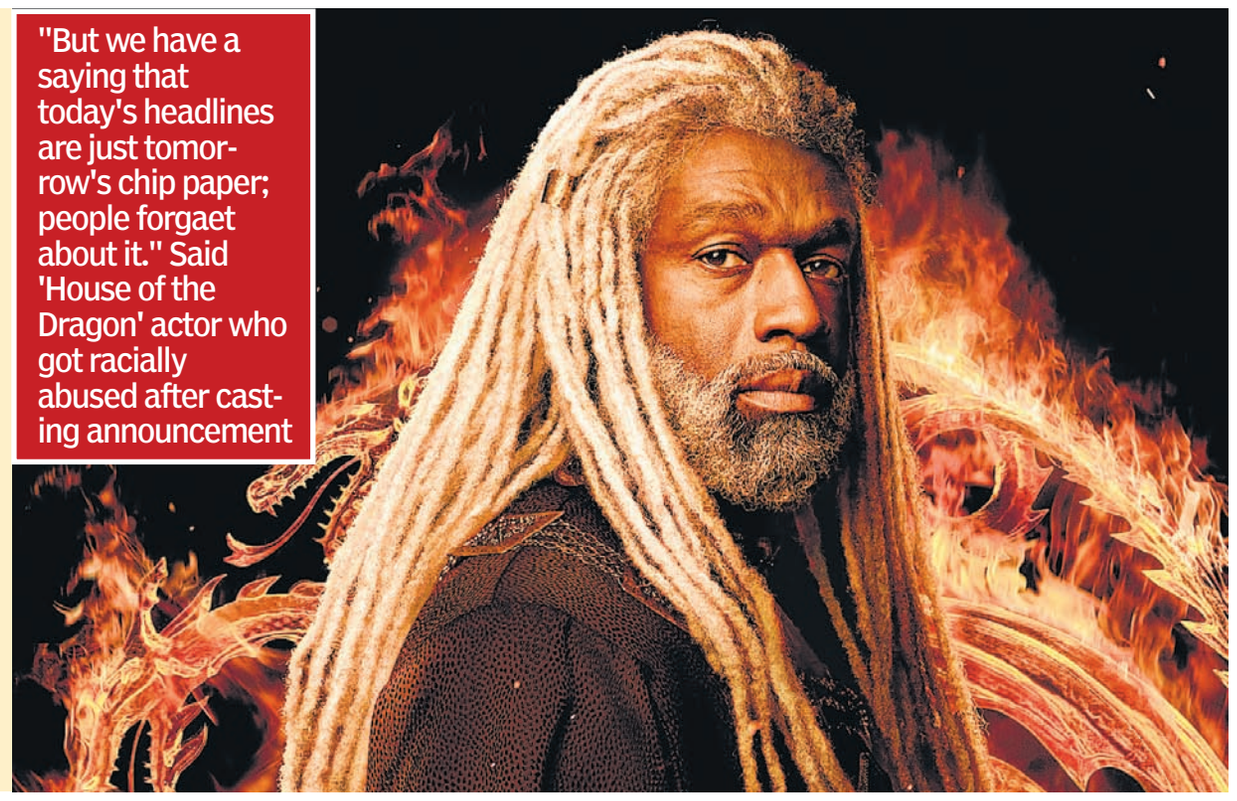
Touissant said people created art for the sole purpose of making fun of his appearance and, in at least one instance, was called the N-word. The actor, who has appeared shows like 'Doctor Who' and 'Skins', said he was approached by a 'Game of Thrones' fan who was also on the receiving end of similar hate speech.

"There was also a Black American chap who is a big fan of the show who contacted me saying that he gets abuse because he championed me for the part," Toussaint revealed.

"On platforms like Reddit, which I'm not on, there are such discussions going on about it. I was like, 'Oh wow,' and then I thought, 'Okay, this means a lot to some people,' but I can't allow that to bother me."

Toussaint is far from the first actor of colour to receive racist messages online after being cast in a high-profile project."Someone I've known for a long time, he had it [when he was cast on a Marvel project]," the actor said. "A friend of mine who played Hermione in the stage version of Harry Potter, she got it. I've worked with 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens actor' John Boyega, and he got it. If it bothers you so much, don't watch."

"There's nothing anybody can do to stop this hate. I question my purposes in even being here in front of you saying that this is happening. I don't really know."



"But we have a saying that today's headlines are just tomorrow's chip paper; people forgaet about it." Said 'House of the Dragon' actor who got racially abused after casting announcement

Horror franchise 'Saw' returns October 2023

Los Angeles | Agencies

Connoisseurs of the horror franchise 'Saw' now have a reason to rejoice. A new 'Saw' movie has been set to arrive in theatres next year.

The 10th film in the franchise has set its release date on October 27, 2023, reports a website. It will be jointly produced by Lionsgate and Twisted Pictures.

The film will be directed by Kevin Greutert, who helmed 'Saw VI' and 'Saw: The Final Chapter' while serving as the editor for the first five instalments and 'Jigsaw'.

Greutert is a fan favourite of the franchise, with many championing his chops on his two entries. In addition to the 'Saw' films, he's also helmed the features 'Jessabelle' with Sarah Snook and 'Visions' with Isla Fisher.

It further states that the plot of the new film is currently under wraps, but the studio promises the film will capture fans' "hearts, and other body parts, with all-new twisted, ingenious traps and a new mystery to solve".

Producers Mark Burg and Oren Koules said in a statement: "We have been listening to what the fans have been asking for and are hard at work planning a movie that Saw aficionados and horror fans alike will love.

"And part of that is giving the reins to Kevin Greutert, director of 'Saw VI', which is still one of the fans' favourites in the entire series. More details will be revealed soon."

Rage Against the Machine raises $1 mn for charity

Los Angeles | Agencies

American rock band Rage Against the Machine, which is known for their political expression of thought, has put up a seven-figure charitable donation because of their recent series of shows in New York City.The band has raised $1 million for charity through their Madison Square Garden residency, reports

"Charity tickets purchased by our fans for our five night Madison Square Garden residency raised $1,000,000," the band wrote in a statement on Instagram."These funds will be distributed to the Immigrant Defence Project and by WhyHunger to Neighbours Together and The Campaign Against Hunger in New York City."The famously political rockers have been long known for their vocal and monetary support of various causes.According to agency, in June, they had also donated nearly half a million dollars to a number of organisations fighting to protect reproductive rights following the overturning of Roe v. Wade by the US Supreme Court.

Earlier, the band had to cancel their UK and European legs of their reunion tour following a leg injury sustained by their vocalist Zack de la Rocha.

Agency further states that De La Rocha injuring his leg onstage in Chicago isn't the only mishap that occurred on the band's just-completed reunion tour, either.

Tom Morello was knocked over by security at their show at Toronto's Scotiabank Arena in late July during closing performance of 'Killing in the Name'.

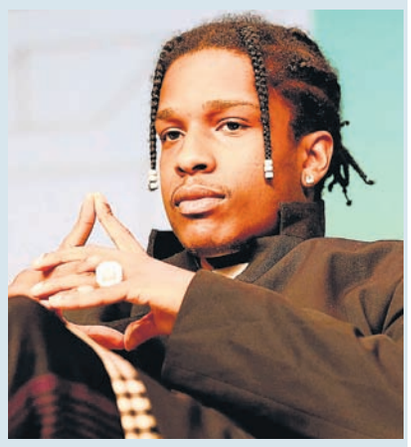
ASSAULT CHARGED AGAINST A$AP ROCKY OVER HOLLYWOOD SHOOTING

Los Angeles | Agencies

Rapper A$AP Rocky has been charged with two counts of assault with a semiautomatic firearm, Los Angeles County District Attorney George Gascon announced.

The rapper is accused of firing multiple shots at a former friend in an encounter in Hollywood back in November 2021, reports in a website.

"Discharging a gun in a public place is a serious offence that could have ended with tragic consequences not only for the person targeted but also for innocent bystanders visiting Hollywood," Gascon said in a news release.



"My office conducted a thorough review of the evidence in this case and determined that the addition of a special firearm allegation was warranted."

The 33-year-old artist, whose real name is Rakim Mayers, was arrested in April 2022 in connection to the shooting.

Mayers was returning from a vacation with Rihanna when authorities detained him at Los Angeles International Airport.

"On November 6, 2021, around 10:15 p.m., an argument between two acquaintances occurred in the area of Selma Avenue and Argyle Avenue, in the Hollywood Area," read the Los Angeles Police Department statement from the time of the apprehension.

"The argument escalated and resulted in the suspect firing a handgun at the victim. The victim sustained a minor injury from the incident and later sought his medical treatment. Following the shooting, the suspect and two additional males fled the area on foot."

The rapper is scheduled to be arraigned on Wednesday and the LAPD will continue to investigate the case.

Los Angeles | Agencies

Starting work as a child actor when she was 11 and landed a full time job in Canadian kids TV show '2030 CE' as a teenager, the 'Orphan Black' actress revealed she almost walked away from her career after becoming disillusioned with her life choices, reports a website.

"I suddenly had this urge to re-evaluate why I was doing it (acting). Was I just doing it because it was this thing I did as a kid?" she explained.

However, she changed her mind and decided to commit to her career after watching Gena Rowlands' 1974 film 'A Woman Under the Influence'.

Tatiana went on, "I thought, 'Yes, that's it! That's what I want!' I wanted that level of freedom and inventiveness and presence and connection. It was so powerful to watch. That movie showed me what was possible."Her career has since gone from strength-to-strength with a starring role in sci-fi TV show 'Orphan Black' as well as opposite Nicole Kidman in 2018 movie 'Destroyer' and she's now leading the cast of Marvel series 'She-Hulk, Attorney at Law'.

Speaking about her latest TV project, Maslany said she hopes the day will come when female superheroes are no longer considered outside the norm.

She said, "I'm really interested in when these (marginalised) voices get to speak without it being like, 'Oh my God, it's all women,' or, 'Oh my God, this is a story about a queer couple,' and those stories become as innately expected as they are now special."

'She Hulk' Tatiana almost quit acting at 20

Dwayne persuaded makers to make standalone 'Black Adam' movie

Los Angeles | Agencies

If the DC comics superhero Black Adam has an origin film today, it's because of the Hollywood star Dwayne Johnson as he fought to give his character the movie. The Rock will be joining the DC universe in a feature film revolving around the antihero. "When the first draft of the movie came to us, it was a combination of Black Adam and Shazam: Two origin stories in one movie," Johnson told a website. "Now that was the goal, so it wasn't a complete surprise. But when I read that, I just knew in my gut, 'We can't make this movie like this. We would be doing Black Adam an incredible disservice'. It would've been fine for Shazam having two origin stories converge in one movie, but not good for Black Adam," he added. Johnson would then talk to studio executives to express his opinions on breaking up the characters into having their own films and reuniting them in a potential showdown down the road. "I said, 'I have to share my thoughts here. It's very unpopular' because everybody thought, 'Hey, this script is great, let's go make this movie'. I said, I really think that you should make Shazam!, make that movie on its own in the tone that you want. And I think we should separate this as well," he further said. In the end, Johnson won, and both Shazam! and Black Adam, have their standalone films and will live in the same DC universe giving fans what they want.

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY

Sarah Hyland

ICC ANNOUNCES MAIDEN WOMEN'S FTP, OVER 300 MATCHES TO BE PLAYED BETWEEN 2022-25

Dubai | Agencies

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Tuesday announced the first ever women's Future Tours Programme (FTP) that confirms the international cricket calendar for 10 teams over the next three years and incorporates all three formats of the game.

A result of a joint effort from Members, the FTP ensures more matches for teams with the enhancement of the ICC Women's Championship (IWC) to a 10-team event.

With teams featuring in more matches across formats in bilateral series, over 300 matches will be played as part of the 2022-25 FTP, a substantial increase from the previous IWC cycle. As previously announced, Bangladesh and Ireland are two additional teams in the IWC 2022-25. "Australia, England, India and South Africa are the teams to schedule multi-format series during this period," an ICC statement said.

Among the fixtures are two multi-format Ashes series during the period consisting of one Test, three ODIs and three T20Is each - one in England in June 2023 and the other in Australia in January 2025.

Members have also scheduled bilateral ODIs outside the IWC in an effort to boost playing opportunities in the women's game, while some teams have planned five-match T20I series too.ICC General Manager of Cricket, Wasim Khan, said the confirmation of the first ever women's FTP was a watershed moment for women's cricket. "This is a huge moment for the women's game. This FTP not only lends certainty to future cricket tours but also sets the base for a structure that is sure to grow in the coming years," Khan said.

"The ICC Women's Championship, which underpins the FTP, is instrumental in propelling the game to the next level and the competitive matches that we saw in this year's World Cup in New Zealand were a result of the greater number of matches that women have got to play because of the IWC. I thank the Member Boards in helping draft this historic FTP, which I am sure will go a long way in taking the women's game to the next level," he added.

Anisimova ousts Kasatkina; Fernandez upset in Cincinnati first round

Cincinnati | Agencies

Amanda Anisimova passed her difficult opening-round test at the Western & Southern Open with flying colours, defeating world number 10 Daria Kasatkina 6-4, 6-4 on Monday.

Ekaterina Alexandrova mounted a pair of comebacks to defeat No.13 seed Leylah Fernandez, 6-4, 7-5 in the first round.

Alexandrova will face either Naomi Osaka or Zhang Shuai in the second round.

Playing her first tournament since Berlin, Alexandrova rallied from 3-0 down in the first set and 5-1 down in the second set to upend Fernandez and level their head-to-head 1-1. Fernandez served for the second set twice, but Alexandrova wiped out two set points to prolonge the set, ultimately winning the last six games of the match.

Russia's Kasatkina, who has beaten two of the world's top-seven players in the past couple of weeks, had her serve broken six times by America's Anisimova, thanks in large part to five double faults. World number two Anett Kontaveit will face Czech qualifier Tereza Martincova in the second round after she got the better of Nuria Parrizas-Diaz 6-7 (4-7), 6-4, 6-3, while world number three Maria Sakkari will play Caroline Garcia after the Frenchwoman's 6-3, 6-3 win against Petra Martic.

In a pair of top-30 clashes, Veronika Kudermetova was stylish in her 6-3, 6-3 victory over Barbora Krejcikova, while last year's US Open runner-up Leylah Fernandez has now lost three of her past four matches after falling 6-4, 7-5 to Russia's Ekaterina Alexandrova. Rising Swiss talent Jil Teichmann came up short in a near three-hour war of attrition against two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova 7-6 (7-2), 6-7 (6-8), 6-3, and Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina has now won nine of her past 11 matches after defeating Mayar Sherif 6-3, 6-2, with her only two losses coming against Kasatkina and Coco Gauff.

Alison Riske continued her march towards the top 20 with a 6-1, 7-6 (7-2) win against Sara Sorribes Tormo, while Belarus' Victoria Azarenka knocked off 37-year-old Estonian Kaia Kanepi 6-3, 4-6, 6-3.

The lowest-ranked competitor in the field will face world number five Ons Jabeur in the second round after Caty McNally (world number 179) upset Aliaksandra Sasnovich 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (7-2). Australian Ajla Tomljanovic beat fellow qualifier Taylor Townsend 6-4, 3-6, 7-5, and in the final match of the night, Sloane Stephens hammered Alize Cornet 6-1, 6-0.

Ireland all-rounder Kevin O'Brien retires from international cricket

Dublin | Agencies

Ireland all-rounder Kevin O'Brien on Tuesday announced his retirement from international cricket, leaving a lasting legacy on the game.

Making his debut for Ireland in 2006, O'Brien was a central figure in his team's rise from Associate Membership to Test match status across a career that spanned close to two decades. O'Brien bows out with a number of batting records, and as Ireland's leading wicket taker in the ODI format, claiming 114 scalps at an average of 32.68 and an economy rate of 5.20.

The batter belted 13 fours and six sixes during his breath-taking knock of 113, bringing up three figures in just 50 balls as the unfancied side chased down 328 in sweltering conditions.

The all-rounder had a knack of performing on the biggest stage, claiming a crucial wicket in a dramatic 2007 Cricket World Cup tie with Zimbabwe, and nursing home a tricky run chase alongside Trent Johnston against Pakistan at the same tournament.

FORMER BCCI ACTING SECRETARY AMITABH CHOUDHARY PASSES AWAY

New Delhi: Veteran sports administrator and former acting secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Amitabh Choudhary passed away on Tuesday following a heart attack.

Reports said the 62-year-old, who also served as Jharkhand State Cricket Association president in the past, suffered a heart attack during his morning walk. He was rushed to a nearby hospital where he breathed his last. Choudhary, who was appointed chairman of Jharkhand Public Service Commission in 2020, was the Indian cricket board acting secretary until 2019. One of the key persons behind the construction of the JSCA Stadium in Ranchi, which later got Test venue status, Choudhary is credited with the development of cricket infrastructure across Jharkhand.

Liverpool 1-1 Crystal Palace

London | Agencies

It was a mixed night for Liverpool's South Americans as Darwin Nunez was sent off on his home debut, but Luis Diaz scored a wonder goal to earn a point for the 10-man hosts in a 1-1 draw against Crystal Palace.

A frustrating night for Jurgen Klopp's team appeared to be heading for defeat after Wilfried Zaha's first-half opener and Nunez's dismissal just before the hour, reports DPA.

Diaz's superb individual effort got his team level, though, before last season's Premier League runners-up set about trying to find a winner but to no avail. It represents another early season blow to Liverpool's hopes of running champions Manchester City close again in the title race, already four points behind their rivals, but as with their opening draw against Fulham, it may feel like a point gained for Klopp in the circumstances. Liverpool started brightly as they tried to find an early opener, with Nunez mishitting a volley at the far post, while Mohamed Salah also went close to scoring from Trent Alexander-Arnold's pull back, but the Egyptian's side-footed attempt whizzed just wide of the near post.However, the Anfield atmosphere soon improved as Diaz dribbled inside several Palace defenders before unleashing a rocket of a shot past Vicente Guaita's despairing dive to his left. The hosts tried to find a winner despite having fewer players, though Palace could also have won it when Zaha missed a great chance at the far post, but both were forced to settle for a point.

THREE TEAMS SHARE LEAD AFTER LA LIGA MATCHDAY 1

Madrid | Agencies

Real Betis, Atletico Madrid and Villarreal share the leadership of La Liga following the first round of matches, after the three sides kicked off the season with 3-0 wins.

Betis beat Elche after their job was made much easier by the sending off of Elche defender John Chetauya after just 15 minutes for a professional foul on Aitor Ruibales.

Borja Iglesias opened the scoring for Betis in the 27th minute, and last season's top scorer Juanmi kicked off the season with two goals in the 38th and 59th minutes, as the home side enjoyed an easy win, reports Xinhua.

Alvaro Morata celebrated his return to Atletico Madrid from Juventus with two goals as his side opened the season with a 3-0 win away to Getafe.

Joao Felix supplied both assists for Morata, before Antoine Griezmann completed the scoring with a left-foot shot with 15 minutes left to play.

Athletic Bilbao couldn't start Ernesto Valverde's third spell in charge or celebrate Iker Muniain's 500 appearance for the club with a win, despite having over 20 shots and hitting the woodwork twice at home to Real Mallorca, whose keeper Predrag Rajkovic had a brilliant debut with several important saves in a 0-0 draw. On Sunday, second-half goals from Lucas Vazquez and David Alaba saw Real Madrid fight back from conceding an early goal to win 2-1 away to newly-promoted Almeria.

Carlos Soler's second-half penalty allowed Gennaro Gattuso to begin his spell as Valencia boss with a 1-0 win at home to newly-promoted Girona, although Valencia had defender Eray Cormet sent off early in the second half.Real Sociedad won 1-0 in Cadiz thanks to Takefusa Kubo's debut goal from an excellent Mikel Merino through-ball.

Saturday saw FC Barcelona kick off the new La Liga season with a disappointing 0-0 draw at home to Rayo Vallecano, whose keeper Stole Dimitrievski only had to make two difficult saves. Sergio Busquets was sent off in injury-time to complete a disappointing evening for Barca in a full Camp Nou.Villarreal spoiled Real Valladolid's return to the top flight, with second-half goals from Nicolas Jackson and Alex Baena giving Unai Emery's side a 3-0 win in the Jose Zorrilla Stadium. Joselu's 98th-minute penalty saved a point for Espanyol away to Celta Vigo, who had led 2-0 through Iago Aspas and Goncalo Palencia, only for Edu Esposito to pull a goal back in the 72nd minute penalty and set up the late drama. The new season began on Friday night with Osasuna winning 2-1 at home to Sevilla thanks to Chimy Avila's ninth-minute header and Aimar Oroz's 74th-minute penalty, with Rafa Mir scoring for the visitors.

Champions Chess Tour: Praggnanandhaa beats Firouzja, shares lead with Carlsen, two others

Miami | Agencies

Indian prodigy Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa came back strongly from a disadvantageous position to beat World's No. 1 junior player, Alireza Firouzja, in the third encounter of their four-game match as the FTX Crypto Cup, the American finale of Champions Chess Tour, which got off to a thrilling start here.

The 2.5-1.5 win in the first-round encounter on Sunday night in Miami, the first offline event of the tour, put Praggnanandhaa in the top spot along with World No. 1 Magnus Carlsen, Jan-Krzysztof Duda of Poland and Kevin Aronian in the eight-player all-play-all field.

With USD7,500 at stake for each match win at the Eden Roc Miami Beach Hotel, the Meltwater Champions Chess Tour Major started with plenty of fire and fighting chess.

Carlsen defeated Dutch No. 1 Anish Giri. Duda got the better of Hans Niemann of the United States while Aronian beat Liem Quang Le of Vietnam. Each match will be played over four rapid games, with blitz tiebreaks in case of a 2:2 draw.

Praggnanandhaa, India's 17-year-old hotshot, got off to the best start possible in the battle of the prodigies, sealing a first-game win by taking advantage of a tiny mistake from Alireza Firouzja.

Shahbaz Ahmed replaces injured Washington Sundar for Zimbabwe ODIs

Mumbai | Agencies

Left-arm spinning all-rounder Shahbaz Ahmed has been included in the Indian team for the upcoming three-match ODI series against Zimbabwe as a replacement for the injured Washington Sundar, the BCCI announced on Tuesday.

Sundar has been ruled out of the Zimbabwe series due to a shoulder injury. He sustained the injury to his shoulder when he landed badly on it while representing Lancashire in the Royal London Cup in England.

The all-rounder did not return to the field after suffering the injury and did not play in the subsequent games. Meanwhile, Shahbaz has been rewarded with a maiden call-up for his wonderful performances in the Indian Premier League (IPL) with the Royal Challengers Bangalore. An all-rounder by trait, Ahmed is a left-hand batter and a left-arm orthodox spinner. In the IPL 2022 season, he scored 219 runs in 16 matches and also picked up four wickets.

The 27-year-old, who is uncapped, has played 26 List A matches, scoring 662 runs at an average of 47.28 and picking 24 wickets at an economy rate of 4.43.

IND vs ZIM: Shikhar stresses importance of Rahul's return, praises youngsters

Harare | Agencies

Senior opener Shikhar Dhawan believes the series against Zimbabwe will hold KL Rahul in good stead ahead of the Asia Cup, while also praising the youngsters who are a part of the touring party.

Dhawan was initially set to lead the side in Zimbabwe before Rahul was added to the squad. A fit-again Rahul will now lead the squad, with the view of getting him some much-needed match practice.

The 30-year-old has been out of action for a while with a sports hernia, with Covid-19 extending his stint on the sidelines. After the conclusion of IPL 2022, Rahul was scheduled to captain India in the home T20Is against South Africa but missed out owing to a groin injury. The spell on the sidelines was extended after it was revealed that he would require surgery. Consequently, the right-hander missed the tour of England and Ireland. The opener was scheduled to return for the tour of West Indies and USA but following a positive Covid-19 result, the BCCI medical team advised him to rest. Apart from Zimbabwe, Rahul has already been named in India's squad for the Asia Cup at the end of this month.

"It's very good news that KL is back in the side and leading the side. He is one of the main players of the Indian team and with the Asia Cup coming ahead, it's a good outing for him and I'm sure he will gain a lot from this tour," Dhawan said on Rahul's return, ahead of the series.

With so much talent, the competition for places in the Indian team is heating up, none more so than at the top of the order. The likes of Ishan Kishan, Shubman Gill and Ruturaj Gaikwad are all vying for a spot in the team, with Dhawan set to be partnered by the returning KL Rahul, during the three-match ODI series between August 18 and 22.

Asked about how the approach of youngsters was different from him, Dhawan was full of praise for them.

"They're quite confident and everyone is different. They've got good technique," the veteran cricketer said.

RAHUL JAIN FOUND HIMSELF IN LEGAL DIFFICULTY, ALLEGEDLY RAPING A COSTUME STYLIST

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Rahul Jain debuted in the music industry in 2014, when he appeared on the MTV show MTV Aloft Star. He made his Bollywood debut with the song Teri Yaad in the 2016 Hindi suspense thriller film Fever, starring Gauahar Khan and Rajeev Khandelwal. Rahul has written around 250 musical compositions. The musician, however, found himself in legal difficulty when an FIR was filed against him for allegedly raping a 30-year-old lady costume stylist who works as a freelance costume stylist.

Rahul raped her at his residence in Mumbai's Andheri, according to the FIR. According to the accuser, Rahul contacted her on Instagram and commended her work before inviting her to his apartment in a high-rise building in the suburban Andheri neighbourhood. According to the police officer, Rahul also informed the complainant that she would be employed as his personal wardrobe stylist. On August 11, the costume designer paid a visit to the singer's residence and requested her to take her to his bedroom under the guise of displaying his possessions and raping her.

She further claimed that Rahul Jain beat her and attempted to destroy evidence when she resisted him. According to an Oshiwara police spokesman, the inquiry is now continuing. An FIR has been filed against Rahul under sections 376 (the penalty for rape), 323 (punishment for willfully inflicting harm), and 506 (punishment for criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Rahul responded to the rape charges made by the costume designer by saying, "I don't know this woman. The allegations raised by her are fake and baseless. Earlier also a woman had made similar allegations against me but I got justice. The woman may be an associate of that woman," reports.

This is not, however, the first time Rahul has been charged with sexual assault. In 2021, a female poet accused him of rape, forceful abortions, child abandonment, and dishonesty.

Kriti wants Vijay, Kartik, Ryan in her swayamwar

From Vijay Devarakonda to Kartik Aaryan, Aditya Roy Kapur and even Ryan Gosling, Bollywood actress Kriti Sanon wants them to be at her swayamvar.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

From Vijay Devarakonda to Kartik Aaryan, Aditya Roy Kapur and even Ryan Gosling, Bollywood actress Kriti Sanon wants them to be at her swayamvar.

Kriti in a conversation talks about her interest in organising a swayamwar for herself and also shared who all should be a part of it.

During a live show, Kriti said: "Vijay Devarakonda is good looking and he sounds sensible to me. I have seen some of his interviews too and he seems to be very real and sensible. He could be in the Swayamwar. Kartik Aryan could be in it and Aditya Roy Kapur too. Is there anyone else who is single?"

The actress added: "I would love to work with Ryan Gosling and I would also like him to be in my Swayamwar."

On the work front, the 32-year-old actress, who made her Bollywood debut in 2014 with 'Heropanti' starring Tiger Shroff, has a gamut of films lined up for release.

Aly Goni: OTT don't drag & On TV, you just get lost

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Aly Goni says that OTT has given him a chance to work as well as take out time for his family and he is enjoying working in the medium. He also talked about how the small screen takes up a lot of time.

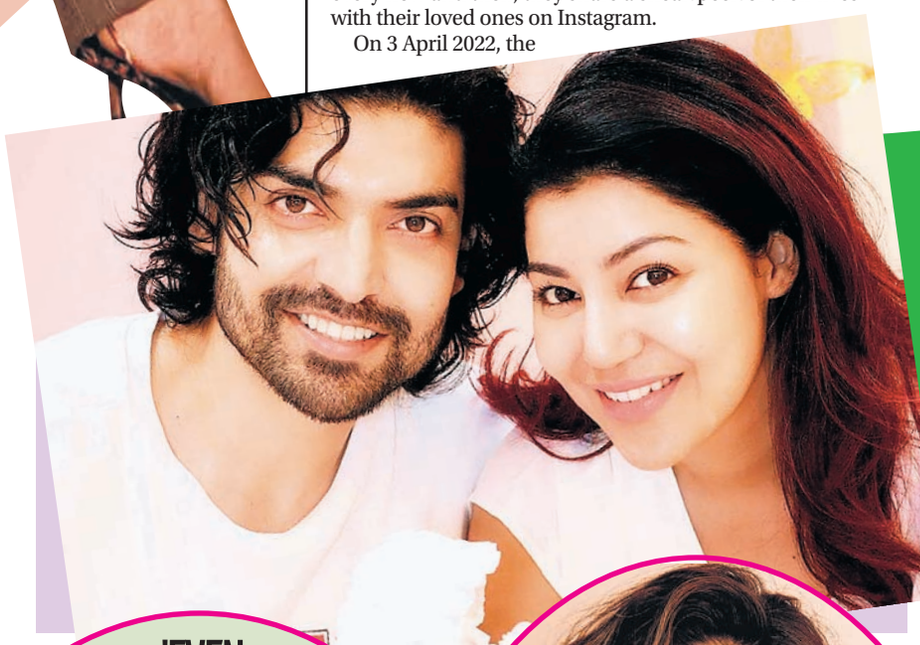
"The only difference I think is that shows on OTT don't drag. They get over in like 2 or 3 months and you get time to be around your close ones, which is very important, I feel. And I realised this after Covid," he says.

He adds that this is not the case on TV.

"On TV, you just get lost. I remember when I was doing TV, I couldn't attend any of my cousins' weddings. I couldn't attend or celebrate any occasion. I think OTT is good because you will get time to do other things as well. And I think spending time with your family is a big thing, once you miss it, you have missed out and that time won't come back again," he says.

He elaborates saying that one should know how to strike a balance between personal and professional life.

"I want to strike a balance between my personal and professional life. I don't want one to suffer at the cost of another. TV pace is fast and TRP driven mindset is there too. In TV you work many hours non-stop but in OTT in a day you shoot limited scenes."



Debina and Gurmeet expecting their second child

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Gurmeet Choudhary and Debina Bonnerjee are one of the sweetest couples in the television industry. They enjoy a massive fan following on social media and every now and then, they share a sneak peek of their lives with their loved ones on Instagram.

On 3 April 2022, the couple became proud parents to baby girl Lianna. The couple has surprised the fans by announcing that they are all set to embrace parenthood for the second time.

The actress took to her social media account to announce the same. She shared an adorable picture with her husband Gurmeet and her daughter and shared the sonography images of their to-be-born baby. She wrote, "Few decisions are divinely timed and nothing can change that...this is one such blessing..Coming soon to complete us". Talking about the couple, the two fell in love while working together and got married in February 2011 in a secret ceremony.

'EVEN WITH THE CAST ON MY LEG, I WON'T BE ABLE TO SIT IDLE': SHILPA SHETTY

Chennai | Agencies

Actress Shilpa Shetty, who fractured her leg while shooting for web series, is determined not to let the injury demotivate or demoralise her.The actress, who took to Instagram to spread a message of positivity to her followers, wrote, "I've been working non-stop for as long as I can remember now. So, the thought of being out of action for six weeks is very alien to me. Even with the cast on my leg, I know I won't be able to sit idle. I know I won't let one hurdle or obstacle become a setback. Finding a way to work around the hurdles that crop up in our lives is one of the best skills we can develop." "Don't let anything demotivate or demoralise you. Prepare yourself to work on your goals, regardless and, then see the magic unfold!" The actress also went on to post a picture of herself doing yoga, with a quote by Orison Swett Marden, that read, "Most obstacles melt away when we make up our minds to walk boldly through them."

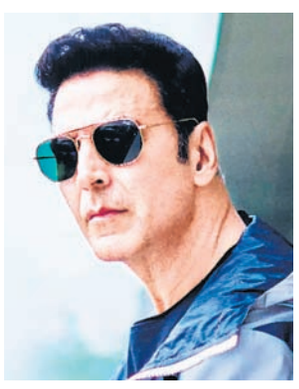
INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY

Mridula Oberoi

After 28 years Akshay grooves to his 'Khiladi' venture

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood star Akshay Kumar will be seen recreating the magic of song 'Main Khiladi Tu Anari' for the upcoming film. Taking to his Instagram, Akshay shared a video of him dancing to the song, 'Main Khiladi Tu Anari' from the film with the same name.He captioned it: "It's been 28 years but dancing again to the tunes of Main Khiladi Tu Anari still brings back fondest memories. Especially when it happens to be the birthday of my partner-in-crime in the original, Saif Ali Khan. He's not on social media but wishes reach nonetheless. Happy Birthday, brother!"Directed by Sameer Malkan, 'Main Khiladi Tu Anari' also stars Shilpa Shetty and Raageshwari. The film went on to become one of the top 5 highest-grossing movies of the year and was declared a box office success at the end of its theatrical run.Akshay and Saif have worked together in movies such as 'Yeh Dillagi', 'Keemat - They Are Back', 'Tu Chor Main Sipahi' and 'Tashan'.



Owned, Published and Printed by Yogendra Chaturvedi at P.G. Infrastructure and service Pvt.Ltd, Karond Bhanpur Bypass Road, Bhopal-462037 (MP) and published from 8/1, Malviya Nagar, Bhopal- 462011 ■ **Editor -** Yogendra Chaturvedi, **Advisory Editor-** Sarika Chaturvedi, **Executive Editor-** Nagendra Sharma| (*responsible for selection of news under PRB act). RNI. No. MPENG/2015/69891 Phone No. 0755-3577179, www.absoluteindianews.com, E-mail- absoluteindiadesk@gmail.com,(Bhopal will be the jurisdiction of any dispute.)