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Centre relaxes Covid travel norms for passengers from China, other countries

New Delhi | Agencies

Amid declining Covid cases in the country, the Centre on Thursday relaxed the travel norms for passengers from China and other six countries. However, the random testing of 2 per cent travellers coming to India will continue.

Updating the 'Guidelines for International Arrivals', the Health Ministry has dropped the existing requirements of pre-departure Covid-19 testing and uploading of Self-Health Declaration for international travellers coming from/via China, Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, Thailand, and Japan.

In a letter to the Civil Aviation Ministry, the Health Ministry has said: "As has been witnessed in the last 4 weeks, these countries are witnessing a sustained and significant decline in trajectory of Covid-19



cases. Further, as per World Health Organisation's latest situational update on Covid-19, a decline of 89 per cent in the number of newly con-

firmed cases in the past 28 days has been noted globally as compared to 28 days prior to that." "Meanwhile, India has continued

to witness a declining trajectory, with less than 100 new cases/day are being reported. In view of the above, this Ministry is updating its 'Guidelines for International Arrivals', and dropping the existing requirements of pre-departure Covid-19 testing and uploading of Self-Health Declaration on Ministry of Civil Aviation's 'Air Suvidha' portal applicable for international travellers coming from/via China, Singapore, Hong Kong, Republic of Korea, Thailand and Japan," it said in the letter.

Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan has said in the letter, "In order to monitor infections due to mutated variants of SARS-CoV-2 among international travellers to India, the present exercise of random testing of 2 per cent travellers to India (irrespective of country of origin) upon arrival India shall continue." The new arrangement will come into practice from 11 a.m. on February 13.

HALF-EATEN BODY OF MISSING WOMAN FOUND AT CORBETT TIGER RESERVE



Rishikesh: Police on Thursday found a half-eaten body of a missing woman from the buffer zone of Corbett Tiger Reserve.

Body of 38-year-old Kamala Devi was found near Badanghar canal by forest guards, Chief Conservator of Forest, Kumaon Prasanna Kumar Patra said. Kamala Devi was missing since Wednesday evening from a village in Salt area of Almora district, he said. It is not clear whether she was killed by a tiger or leopard, Patra said.

Joshimath crisis: Locals fearful as new cracks develop in houses

Joshimath | Agencies

Residents of Uttarakhand's Joshimath are living in a state of fear as five more houses have developed minor cracks along with the widening and increasing number of cracks in residential buildings already affected with land subsidence in the city. Chamoli District Magistrate Himanshu Khurana reached the area and inspected the houses on Wednesday. Khurana, on Thursday said that the size of the old cracks had increased in the houses where crackmeters were installed.

Cracks had also developed in the fields in Manohar Bagh ward in January. Suraj Kaparwan, owner of one of the affected fields, said that the administration had filled



the cracks with soil and plastic.

The development of new cracks in the holy city had stopped after January 20, but has started again, adding to the worries of the locals and the administration. Along with this, cracks in the houses of Manohar Bagh and Singhdhar ward have widened.

Locals have also been worried about the sudden drying up of a natural stream that had been flowing since the past several years in Joshimath's Singhdhar ward.

Pregnant woman, in critical condition, airlifted from Jammu & Kashmir

Jammu | Agencies

Braving heavy snowfall, the Army and the Indian Air Force on Thursday airlifted a pregnant woman in critical condition from a hamlet in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar.

Responding to a distress call, Army troops rushed to the village in the remote Nawapanchi area and carried the woman on a stretcher through snowfields, officials said.

The IAF flew a MI chopper to Nawapanchi and airlifted the woman, who was transported to the district hospital in Kishtwar for specialised treatment, they said.

"Indian Army in close coordination with the Indian Air Force evacuated a pregnant lady in critical condition from a remote winter isolated Nawapanchi area of Kishtwar district to Kishtwar town where the lady is being treated at district hospital," Defence



Spokesperson Lt Col Devender Anand said.

The people of Nawapanchi expressed gratitude towards the Army and the IAF and some of them also raised slogans praising the two forces.

Lt Col Anand said the Army has been making efforts to reduce the hardships faced by people in the area that has

harsh weather and extremely difficult living conditions especially during winters when it gets cut off from the rest of the district due to closure of roads.

"Indian Army has always been rendering life-saving humanitarian assistance to people apart from conducting counter-terrorist operations in the region," he said.

Delhi boy, 9, named in "world's brightest" list, received grand honors

New Delhi | Agencies

Nine-year-old boy from New Delhi has been named in "world's brightest" students list released by the US-based Johns Hopkins Center For Talented Youth (CTY) based on above grade level testing of over 15,300 gifted students over 76 countries. Aaryaveer Kochhar, who also claims to hold the record for the youngest author in the world, scored in the 99th percentile in Math, which places him at the top one per cent of advanced children all over the world.

A student of Raghuraj Singh Junior Modern School, Aaryaveer received 'Grand

Honours' and was congratulated by CTY Executive Director, Dr Amy Shelton for his exceptional academic abilities and achievement.

At the age of nine, Aaryaveer has committed himself to being a change maker in the world. He is the youngest member of the Inclusive United Nations and recently claims to have presented recommendations to The Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the highest global authority on child rights.

US-based Johns Hopkins Center For Talented Youth decides the list based on the results of above-grade-level tests of over 15,000 students across 76 countries. Less than

27 per cent of those participants qualified for the CTY ceremony, receiving either high or grand honours based on their test scores.

In her second attempt at the test, Indian-American prodigy Natasha Perianayagam, 13, topped the "world's brightest" students list. She was among the 15,300 students from 76 countries who joined CTY in the 2021-22 Talent Search year. "This is not just recognition of our students' success on one test, but a salute to their love of discovery and learning, and all the knowledge they have accumulated in their young lives so far," said CTY's executive director Dr. Amy Shelton had said

Lithium, gold deposits found in J&K

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The government has found lithium and gold deposits in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) for the first time. The Mines Ministry has found lithium reserves of around 5.9 million tonnes in Salal-Haimana area of Reasi district.

This report, along with 15 other resource bearing geological reports and 35 geological memorandums, were handed over to respective state governments during the 62nd Central Geological Programming Board (CGPB) meeting, held on Thursday.

Out of these 51 mineral blocks, five blocks pertain to



gold and other blocks pertain to commodities like potash, molybdenum, base metals etc. spread across 11 states of J&K, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya

Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana.

The blocks were prepared based on the work carried out by Geological Survey of India (GSI) from field seasons starting from 2018-19 till date.

Apart from these, 17 reports of coal and lignite with a total resource of 7,897 million tonnes were also handed over to the Coal Ministry. Seven publications on different themes and intervention areas in which the GSI operates, were also released during the meeting.

The proposed annual programme for ensuing field season 2023-24 was also presented and discussed during the meeting. During 2023-24, the GSI plans to take up 966 programmes comprising 318 mineral exploration projects including 12 marine mineral investigation projects. A major thrust has been given on the exploration of strate-

gic - critical and fertiliser minerals.

The CGPB is an important platform of the GSI, wherein the annual field season programme (FSP) of GSI is placed for discussion for synergy and to avoid duplication of work. The members of the CGPB and other stakeholders like state governments, central and state government mineral exploration agencies, place their requests for collaborative work with the GSI.

Based on the priorities set by the Centre and the importance and urgency of proposals presented by the members and stakeholders, the annual programme of GSI is given a final shape.

In 'Operation Dolphin', DRI recovers over 17 kg gold thrown into sea by smugglers

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Chennai

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has arrested three persons, who were trying to smuggle 17.74 kg gold worth Rs 10.1 crore on a fishing boat, and threw it overboard when intercepted, an official said on Thursday. The entire gold was later recovered by the DRI with the help of divers. "We developed intelligence that a gang based in Mandapam, Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu were planning to smuggle huge quantities of gold from Sri Lanka by engaging a fish-



ing boat. We learnt that three persons in the fishing boat would collect the gold in the high seas and landing in the coast of Mandapam," the DRI official said. The official said that accordingly, a joint operation along with

the Indian Coast Guard was planned to nab them. A team of Indian Coast Guard and DRI mounted surveillance and the fishing boat was identified on the early hours of February 8.

"On spotting the fishing boat, rigid inflatable boats from the Coast Guard ship were deployed and the said fishing boat was intercepted after a chase in the sea near the Mandapam coast. During the course of interception, the persons in the fishing boat threw the contraband parcel into the sea. The parcel containing the contraband was retrieved from the seabed with the help of Coast Guard Divers,"

the official said.

The DRI said that the parcel contained 14 packages of foreign origin gold in various forms - bars, chains, etc and totally weighing 17.74 kg - were tied in a towel and thrown into sea.

The said foreign origin gold have been seized under the provisions of the Customs Act, and the three arrested persons are being interrogated.

With this seizure, the DRI's Chennai Zonal Unit has so far seized 209 kg of foreign origin gold in financial year 2022-23. The all India gold seizure by the DRI is 950 kg in this financial year.

Youth on way to 'commit crime' arrested in Dwarka

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A 19-year-old teenager who was on his way to allegedly 'commit a crime' in the national capital's Dwarka area has been arrested along with four country-made pistols, the police said on Thursday.

The arrested individual has been identified as Sunny -- a resident of Sampla near Rohtak in Haryana. "During questioning, he said that after watching some videos of gangsters on social media, he made a plan to rob cash and vehicles with his school friend," the police said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka), M. Harsha Vardhan, said: "A police team



was tasked to regularly conduct surveillance over the members (out on bail) of different gangs active in district and adjoining states.

"On February 6, specific inputs were received by the team

regarding the movement of Sunny. The police were informed that he would come to Jharoda Kalan village to commit crime," the DCP said.

"A trap was laid at Bahadurgarh-Najafgarh Road, and Sunny was apprehended," Harsha Vardhan said, adding four country-made pistols and four live cartridges were recovered from his possession.

"In order to execute his plan, he arranged illegal arms to assert his dominance in the area or to commit any crime," the DCP said. "The source of firearms and ammunition has been identified and efforts are being made to nab the supplier(s)," the police officer added.



CAN'T REGULARISE DAILY WAGER IF NOT APPOINTED AGAINST SANCTIONED POST: SC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court has stressed that regularisation of a daily wager cannot be done unless the appointment has been made by the competent authority against a sanctioned post.

In February 2020, a division bench of the Madhya Pradesh High Court had set aside the direction passed by a single bench of the high court directing regularisation of services of Vibhuti Shankar Pandey as supervisor in the state Water Resources Department. Pandey moved the apex court challenging the division bench order.

A two-judge bench of the apex court comprising Justices S Ravindra Bhat and Sudhanshu Dhulia said: "The Division Bench rightly held that the learned Single Judge has not followed the principle of law as given by this Court in Secretary, State of Karnataka and ors. v. Umadevi and ors., as initial appointment must be done by the competent authority and



there must be a sanctioned post on which the daily rated employee must be working."

It thus junked the appeal filed by Pandey challenging an order by the Madhya Pradesh High Court on February 13, 2020. "In view of the law laid down by the

Constitution Bench of this court in Uma Devi (supra), the appellant had no case for regularization. There is no scope, hence, for our interference with the order of the Division Bench of the Madhya Pradesh High Court. Appeal is dismissed," the bench ruled.

Pandey claimed he was engaged as supervisor in 1980, on a daily rated basis, under a project of the state Water Resources Department, and had sought regularisation to the post of supervisor/time keeper.

The apex court noted that Pandey did not possess a minimum qualification, matriculation with maths, for the post, however, the government relaxed this qualification in December 2010.

Pandey had submitted that he should be regularised, as he had been working on a daily wage basis for a long period of time and pointed out that persons who were junior to him as daily wagers were regularised in 1990 or even before. The court noted that though minimum qualifications were met, the fact remains that Pandey was never appointed against any post.

The court pointed out that his appointment was never made by the competent authority and there were no posts available at the time for regularisation.

India has become 5th largest economy globally: President Droupadi Murmu

Gurugram | Agencies

President Droupadi Murmu said that India, while presiding over the G-20, is playing an active role in social and economic upliftment. With the inclusion of values, India's identity is being established globally.

"The country is constantly changing and today with economic prosperity, India is becoming a leader with 5th position in the world," the President stated.

The President was addressing the National Convention organised on the theme 'Women as Foundation of Value-Based Society' at Brahma Kumaris Om Shanti Retreat Centre in Gurugram's Bahora Kalan on Thursday.

The President inaugurated the seminar by lighting a lamp. President Murmu was jointly welcomed by Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya and Chief Minister Manohar Lal



Khattar.

Addressing the seminar, the President said, "While the government is fulfilling its responsibility for women's empowerment in society, every person should admire it and take inspiration from their working style. Today, India is establishing its dominance globally on the strength of its values."

Murmu said that today women are performing bet-

ter than men in every field. "Be it science, arts, education, engineering or political field, women have raised their flags of success at every level," she added.

Referring to India's first woman Raafel fighter jet pilot Shivangi Singh, Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya said that her achievement has shown a new path of success to other daughters of India as well.

'Over Rs 5.25cr spent on foreign visits of External Affairs Minister'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

An amount of Rs 5,25,91,827 has been spent by the Central government on foreign visits made by the Minister of External Affairs during the last one year.

As per a written reply by the Ministry of External Affairs in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday, the objective of visits abroad has been to foster closer relations with foreign countries and promote India's engagement at the regional and global level.

Such visits are an important means by which India serves its national interest and implements foreign policy objectives.

These visits have enhanced understanding of India's perspectives on regional and global issues among foreign partners at the highest level.

Understandings reached during these visits have enabled India to strengthen relations with partner countries and put forward India's viewpoint and shape the agenda on global issues such as reformed multilateralism, peace and security, climate change, transnational crime, terrorism, cyber-security, energy and food security, etc., while offering the world India's own unique solutions to partners for addressing global issues, like the



International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, said the reply.

These visits and the understandings and agreements reached therein enable India to strengthen relations with partner countries across a wide range of sectors including trade and investment, technology and defence collaboration.

Such outcomes also contribute to India's national development agenda to promote economic growth and the well being of our people and put forward the interests of developing countries in forums like the G20, said the reply.

Amit Shah to review passing out parade at National Police Academy

Hyderabad | Agencies

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will review the passing out parade of the Indian Police Service (IPS) probationers at the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy (SVPNPA) here on February 11.

A total of 195 officer trainees including 29 foreign officer trainees will participate in the parade.

SVPNPA director A.S. Rajan on Thursday revealed the details of the 74 RR batch of the IPS probationers. He said the Union Home Minister would be the chief guest and review Dikshanth Parade.

He said 37 lady officers, which constitute 23 per cent of total strength, would be participating in the Dikshanth Parade.

The parade would be commanded by Shahansha K S, IPS (P) of Kerala Cadre who is the all-round topper in phase 1 of 74 RR, he added.



Six officer trainees from Bhutan, eight from Maldives, five from Nepal and 10 from Mauritius will also pass out from the academy.

The director said the whole 105-week training involved 15 weeks of

foundation course training and a 50-week Phase-I Basic Course. This was followed by a 30-week District Practical Training at respective cadres/states and a 10-week Phase-II Basic Course at SVPNPA.

The director also said the Course module was prepared taking into consideration the current job requirements of police officers in India.

Attitude training was given special importance during the course, enabling the officer trainees to develop a more sympathetic and victim-centric approach, he added.

He said the indoor and outdoor exposures included criminal procedure code, IPC and special laws, forensics, information and communication technology, human rights, Yoga, unarmed combat, etc., so that the candidates could develop integrity and dedication towards their job and empathy towards victims.

The director said that for the first time, as a part of SVPNPA MoU with NALSAR, the officer trainees would receive post-graduation degrees and officer trainees from foreign countries would receive Diploma certificates after completing their training.

Govt willing to give cooking gas subsidy if global prices come down: Hardeep Puri

Team Absolute | New Delhi

If international gas prices come down, the government could give relief to consumers on cooking gas through subsidy, the Parliament was told on Thursday.

Petroleum Minister Hardeep Puri said in Lok Sabha during Question Hour on Thursday that the government imports 60 per cent of the total domestic requirement of gas.

"There is a (existing) subsidy of Rs 200. What is this subsidy? It is tax payer's money... The ones who are most vulnerable, we are always ready to help if it is left to this House and the honourable Prime Minister. It would be ideal if the international or the Saudi Contract Price could further come down from \$750. It would enable domestic LPG to be sold at



even more economical rates," he said.

"The import price is linked to what is called the Saudi Contract Price.

"The interesting thing is that the Saudi Contract Price during the last two years or so - if we have to use this as a reference period - has gone up

from \$250 per metric tonne to something like \$900 per metric tonne. Today also, I think it is around \$751 per metric tonne," Puri added, while replying to a starred question on providing greater subsidy to people on cooking gas.

Despite rising international gas prices, the minister said the government is sensitive to the requirements of the consuming population.

"We did not allow the cost of domestic LPG to increase. Saudi Contract Price went up by 333 per cent and yet the price increased was very small for the domestic LPG," Puri said in his response.

Even during the pandemic, when the poor were suffering due to the lockdown, the government gave three cylinders free of cost to them, he told the House.

Missing from duty, 250 govt doctors in UP to face action

Lucknow | Agencies

The Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh has drawn up a list of 250 government doctors who took leave to complete a specialisation course, but did not report back on duty.

Notices will be issued to these doctors and they will face disciplinary action if they fail to explain or report back on duty.

The health department allows doctors to pursue higher studies and they go for diploma or postgraduate degree courses at institutions after qualifying the National Eligibility-cum Entrance Test (NEET).



"The list of doctors who did not rejoin duty has had names since 2016. There are many doctors who have joined courses. They completed the course but did not

return to join duty," said a senior health official.

The doctors going for higher studies are required to report back to the place where they worked last.

Cash stash seized again in Kolkata, this time by Kolkata Police

Kolkata | Agencies

A joint team of Kolkata Police's Anti-Rowdy Squad (ARS) and Special Task Force (STF) on Thursday recovered a huge amount of cash from a vehicle at the busy Gariahat crossing in south Kolkata, officials said.

The counting of notes at a local police station is currently on in the local police stations and initial estimates have revealed the recovered cash will be nothing less than Rs 1 crore if not more.

Vehicle driver Dulal Roy and passenger Mukesh Saraswat have been detained by the police for questioning. It is learnt that being tipped off by their sources that huge amount of cash was being carried in a vehicle, the joint team of ARS and STF tracked the vehicle and stopped it on Thursday evening at Gariahat crossing. From the vehicle's boot, they recovered a bag from where the cash was



recovered.

City police sources said that after preliminary investigation it seems that this unaccounted money has some hawala trading connection. It is learnt that although Saraswat has a residence at Jamunlal Bajaj Street in north Kolkata, he hails from Rajasthan, while Roy is a resident of Belgachia area in the northern outskirts of Kolkata.

On Wednesday evening, sleuths of Enforcement Directorate (ED) recovered Rs 1.40 crore from the office of a Kolkata-based business, and claimed that this amount is a part of the proceeds of the multi-crore coal smuggling scam.

Another leopard run over by speeding vehicle in Telangana

Hyderabad | Agencies

In yet another incident indicative of growing man-animal conflict, a leopard was killed after being hit by an unknown speeding vehicle in Telangana's Nizamabad district.

The animal was run over by the vehicle on national highway near Chandrayanpalli when it was apparently crossing the road.

The leopard's remains were shifted to the district forest office for a post-mortem examination. Forest officials said they have registered a case and were trying to identify the vehicle which hit the leopard resulting in its death.

"Speed kills. Another victim of speeding vehicle on national highway. This ill fated leopard was killed near Chandrayanpalli," tweeted Mohan Pargaien,



Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Telangana.

Nizamabad and adjoining Kamareddy district have reported similar incidents in the past.

In September, a leopard was run over on the national highway in Daggi forest area of Kamareddy district. Pocharam Wildlife Sanctuary spread over Nizamabad and Kamareddy districts is known for a wide variety of

life including more than 60 leopards. Forest officials say due to growing man-animal conflict, leopards are dying in road and rail accidents.

Animal conservation activists have been demanding that the speed of vehicles on highways passing through forests be controlled to prevent such accidents. They have also suggested construction of underpasses and bridges in forests for animals.

Over 54.42 lakh old vehicles de-registered in Delhi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi Transport Department has so far de-registered 54,42,267 vehicles, as on January 31, including 10-year-old diesel vehicles and 15-year-old petrol/CNG vehicles, the Parliament was told on Thursday.

The National Green Tribunal (NGT), through its order dated November 26, 2014, has banned all vehicles more than 15 years of age to ply in Delhi and through its order, dated April 7, 2015 directed that all diesel vehicles which are more than 10 years old, will not be permitted on the roads of Delhi-NCR, Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways, V.K. Singh told the Lok Sabha in a written reply.

As per the reply, the Supreme Court, through its order, dated October 29, 2018, directed that all the diesel vehicles more than 10 years old and petrol vehicles more than 15 years old shall not ply in terms of the order of the National Green Tribunal.



"The Enforcement Wing of Govt. of NCT of Delhi regularly checks plying of more than 10-year-old diesel vehicles and 15-year-old petrol vehicles. From January 1, 2014 to January 31, 2023, the enforcement branch had impounded 446 numbers of 10-year-old diesel vehicles and 12,959 numbers of 15-year-old vehicles (petrol/diesel). The impounded vehicles are further being handed over to scrap-ers," said the reply. The Delhi government had also issued "Guidelines for Scrapping of Motor Vehicles in Delhi, 2018" on August 24, 2018. It has further adopted Motor Vehicles (Registration and Functions of Vehicle Scrapping Facility) Rules, 2021 (RVSF) as notified and amended from time to time by the Ministry, added the reply.

CHANDIGARH COP HELD FOR ACCEPTING BRIBE

New Delhi: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested an Assistant Sub Inspector (ASI) of the Chandigarh police on Thursday for allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 1 lakh from a woman.

The accused policeman has been identified as Balkar Singh, posted at Manimajra police station in the city who demanded money for helping the woman's son in getting bail and for not adding a relevant section pertaining to rape in the FIR registered against him.

A case was registered against Singh on the complaint of the woman.

The CBI laid a trap and caught the accused red handed while accepting a bribe of Rs 25,000 as the first instalment.

The Central agency said that searches were conducted at Singh's premises in Chandigarh, Manak Majra village, Tehsil Nilokheri and Haryana's Karnal district which led to the recovery of incriminating documents.



CM CHOUHAN TARGETS PCC CHIEF KAMAL NATH, SAYS, 'IT'S MY DUTY TO EXPOSE FALSE PROMISES'

Team Absolute | Bhopal

With the assembly elections to be held at the end of this year, the political temperature in Madhya Pradesh is heating up. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan once again targeted former CM and Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) Chief Kamal Nath on Thursday. He said that Nath had run the government based on commission for 15 months in the state. Nath and his government committed the sin of collecting only commission by sitting in the Vallabh Bhawan (State Secretariat). "It is my duty to expose false promises. That Congress-led government itself was stood on false promises. Don't know what promises are being made. The public has the right to know what happened to the promises made earlier," Chouhan said.

As a part of his campaign, Kamal Nath from Congress' promissory note, CM Chouhan said, "Nath said in his promissory note that soil and seed tests would be given free of cost, the amount of subsidy for means of



irrigation would be increased, but both were not done in 15 months of the government."

Chouhan also took a jibe at Nath over calling him the inevitable Chief Minister. He said, "A few people are saying future CM, some are saying inevitable CM but to keep the heart

happy, Kamal Nath this idea is good." "The leaders of congress party itself are saying that there is no chief minister confirmed at all. The public is saying that it is confirmed that the Congress government will not come. The Congress has nothing in their hands, they keep on using sticks. This

is the real condition of Congress in the state," he added.

On the other hand, Kamal Nath wrote on twitter, "CM Shivraj, you announce, pat yourself on the back and throw that announcement in the dustbin yourself. In your Nikas Yatra (Exit Yatra), the public is demanding a response to these announcements. Somewhere black flags are being shown, somewhere farmers are protesting by taking off their clothes, somewhere panchayat buildings are being locked and somewhere the chariot of fake development is sinking inside the corrupt roads."

"Still you are not answering any question of the public. My question to you (Chouhan) is, you had announced that 'Madhya Pradesh Agriculture Startup Fund' worth Rs 100 crore would be set up and agricultural entrepreneurs would be invited to set up modern enterprises in the agriculture sector using the fund. Where are that funds and that invitation? Answer it and tell the public," Nath further wrote on twitter.

I'm not the CM face of Congress, working only to save future of MP: Kamal Nath

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Congress chief Kamal Nath on Thursday said he was not the party's chief ministerial face for the state's assembly elections later this year. This development comes days after several senior party leaders questioned posters declaring Nath as the CM face.

"I am not chief minister's face of Congress but I am working hard to save the future of residents of Madhya Pradesh," Nath clarified.

Posters of Nath had come up in different cities of Madhya Pradesh claiming that he could be the CM face for the assembly elections scheduled later this year.

Soon after the posters emerged, senior party leaders such as Arun Yadav and Jitu Patwari made it clear that the party has not decided on any chief ministerial face and the decision will be taken by the party leadership. Talking to reporters,



Nath, said, "I never said I will be the chief minister. All India Congress Committee (AICC) will decide the CM after election. I am a state president and working ardously to save the future of MP residents."

"MP has now turned into a Brashtpradesh (corrupt state), kuposhit Pradesh (malnourished state), crime state and debt state. The people of Madhya Pradesh have now realised this fact," Nath said.

Nath added that he foresees a change in voter's

mindset as they will exercise their franchise in bringing about a change in regime. "People of MP have made up their mind to bring change in the state," he added.

Hitting out at Nath's claims, BJP spokesperson Rajneesh Agrawal said the former can only make false promises. "Like 2018, Kamal Nath has started lying again. He is unable to even select districts presidents as many names have been put on hold after protest, how will Congress contest elections," he alleged.

Central team bringing Cheetahs from SA to Kuno has only 1 MP officer

Team Absolute | Bhopal

State wildlife officials have expressed disappointment after the 5-member central team, in charge of bringing Cheetahs from South Africa to MP, listed only one name from the home state. The team is heading to South Africa on February 11th, to bring 12 Cheetahs to the state's Kuno National Park. The five tentative names in the list are: NTCA IG Amit Malik, DIG Rajendra Gadhwar, relative of forest DG-- Anish Gupta, ACF Kuno Amritanshu Singh and a doctor of Indian Animal Medical Research Institute. The officials of the state wildlife have alleged 'misuse of power' by the central body. They said more names from Madhya Pradesh should have been announced as the Cheetahs are being brought to state's Kuno and



the MP officials would have better know-how of the project. "The name of the custom officer in the list has no connection with deporting the Cheetahs. This is misuse of money and power by the higher officials", said an officer in the state wildlife department.

Citing a similar case from last year, principal chief conservator of forest

(PCCF) wildlife, JS Chouhan told said "Earlier in 2022, when the Cheetahs were translocated in Kuno, even then no official of the national park was in the list."

He also added that the core founder of the Kuno National Park and the backbone of the Cheetah project, Dr YP Jhala was also not included in the main list.

HIGH VOLTAGE CURRENT KILLS 7 BLUEBUCKS IN BHIND

Bhind: Seven Bluebucks died due to electrocution in Ladampura village of the Bhind district. On the wee hours of Thursday, villagers found seven Bluebuck carcasses in a field and informed the police. Cops from the Animal Husbandry Department arrived at the scene.

Notably, villagers have started using shock machines to protect the crops from animal attack. However, an irresponsible farmer from Ladampura village, Mukesh, instead of using the shock device, extended a high voltage wire directly to the transformer. As a result, seven Bluebucks got tangled and died due to electrocution.

Two of seven Bluebucks were pregnant, according to the Animal Husbandry Department. Later, police freed the cow carcass from an electric wire's grasp. Police searched for farmer Mukesh but were unable to locate him. Cops are yet to arrest the absconding farmer.

Urdu Akademi invites entries for 6 national, 13 regional awards

Madhya Pradesh Urdu Akademi has invited entries for six national and 13 regional awards on the best Urdu books which were published during the period from January 01, 2021 to December 31, 2022.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The All India Awards include Mir Taqi Mir Award (Urdu Poetry), Hakim Qamrul Hasan Award (Urdu Journalism, Research and Criticism), Hamid Saeed Khan Award (Novel, Story, Short Story), Shadaan Indori Award (Essay and Translation), Johar Qureshi Award (Satire), Ibrahim Yusuf Award (Drama, Dastan). The prize money of each award is Rs. 51,000. Similarly, the regional awards include Siraj Mir Khan Sahar Award (Urdu Poetry),

Basit Bhopali Award (Novel, Story, Short Story), Mohammad Ali Taj Award (Sketches, Reportage), Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan Award (Urdu Journalism (Urdu Magazine) Research and Criticism), Poetry Bhopali Award (Children's Literature), Kaif Bhopali Award (Urdu Teacher), Shambhu Dayal Sukhan Award (Urdu work of Urdu speaking writers/poets), Shifa Gwalyari Award (first work of the state's writer/poet), Jaan Nisar Akhtar Award (Rasai Literature / Rasai, Naat, a study of Urdu literature/

poetry), Pannalal Srivastava Noor Award, (Autobiography, Memoirs), Suraj Kala Sahay Award (Travel Chronicle), Nawab Shahjahan Begum Tajwar Award (Essay and Translation) and Nida Fazli Award (Urdu Nazm, Doha, Rubai). The prize money for the Regional Award is Rs 31,000.

Authors can send, filling the prescribed form, four copies of the book to the office of the Urdu Akademi by February 22, 2023. The prescribed form can be obtained from the website of the Akademi.

MP minister starts scratching all over body during Vikas Yatra

Team Absolute | Ashoknagar

MP's Vikas Yatra witnessed a peculiar incident on Thursday, when PHE minister Brijendra Singh Yadav, while addressing the crowd, started scratching himself. The itch turned so severe that he had to take off his kurta. The minister's video went viral on social media. On Wednesday evening, MP's PHE minister Brijendra Singh Yadav was addressing a Vikas Yatra in his constituency Mungavali. During his visit to Devarchhi village, an unknown person blew 'Kaunch' powder on the 'unguarded' minister, which caused the itching. Notably, Kaunch, also known as Mucuna Pruriens, is a herb that can cause severe itch-



ing when it comes in contact with skin.

As a result, Yadav started scratching his body in mid of his speech. He can also be heard saying in the video

'someone has thrown Kaunch on me'. Seeing the minister in discomfort, his supporters helped him wash his hands and face. He even took his kurta off. But to no

avail, Yadav had to leave the event.

Police and party members are now looking for the person who caused this commotion during the yatra.

CM CHOUHAN CONGRATULATES MP WOMEN'S HOCKEY TEAM FOR REACHING THE FINALS

Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has congratulated the team members of the Madhya Pradesh women's hockey team for reaching the finals in the Khelo India Youth Games. Madhya Pradesh team defeated Haryana 2-0 to enter the finals of women's hockey in Gwalior today. Chief Minister Chouhan has said that the game of the women's hockey team players of the state was in accordance with high standards. The Chief Minister hoped that the excellent performance of the team would continue unabated and the team would try to win in the finals as well.

Bhagwat's comment stirs Brahmins in Gwalior, case sought

Team Absolute | Gwalior

Offended by RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's alleged comment on Brahmins, the advocates from the community have sought a police case against him in Gwalior. They submitted an application to the Inderganj police station, accusing Bhagwat of promoting 'religious intolerance', on Wednesday evening. Bhagwat was speaking on the 647th birth anniversary of Saint Ravidas in Mumbai, when he allegedly said, "the caste system was not created by god but by Brahmins." This caused resentment among the lawyers of the community and they submitted an application to Gwalior's Inderganj police station, seeking a case against him. Advocates alleged that,



"Bhagwat was promoting social disharmony for his political gains." They, further, added that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief has committed a serious offence and should be punishable under the sections 153a, 153b, 295 and 507 of Indian

Penal Code. They also accused Bhagwat of spreading 'religious intolerance'.

The statement agitated the entire community. As a result, Brahmins raised slogans in the city, demanding an apology from the RSS chief.

Sapling plantation is becoming a public campaign: CM Chouhan



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that tree plantation is now taking the form of a people's campaign in the state. People are planting saplings with self-motivation on their birthdays, marriage anniversaries and other occasions. Chief Minister Chouhan said this after planting saplings in the park

located at Shyamla Hills. CM Chouhan planted saplings of Banyan, Jamun and Kachnar. Along with Chief Minister Chouhan, Prajesh Shishir and Uma Shishir of Nasrullaganj, district Sehore, social workers Prasam Jain of Rajgarh, Manoj Thakur of Sarangpur and Bhopal's advocate Tushar Kakkar planted saplings on his birthday.

Khelo India 2022

ROWING COMPETITIONS CONCLUDE WITH MADHYA PRADESH LIFTING OVERALL CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Khelo India Youth Games 2022 rowing competitions concluded on Thursday in Bhopal's Upper Lake, with Madhya Pradesh rowers winning home the overall championship trophy in the men's category in their home waters and the second-place trophy in the women's category. In Rowing Madhya Pradesh rowers came in first and lifted the overall championship trophy in the boys' category. Haryana rowers came in second and became the first runners-up, whereas Odisha rowers came in third and became the second runners-up. In the girls' category, Kerala rowers came in



first and lifted the overall championship trophy. Haryana took up the second position and became the first runner-up, whereas host Madhya Pradesh clinched the second runner-up trophy and came third.

Water sports like canoeing, kayaking, rowing, and slalom were included for the

first time in the history of the Khelo India Youth Games 2022. Madhya Pradesh's water ninjas gave tough competition to other states as they mostly grabbed the top position in every discipline. In slalom MP, water ninjas won all four golds that were at stake.

My goal is to become exactly like my coach: Shraddha

She won gold medal in Judoka

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Shraddha Chopade of Maharashtra won a gold medal in 48 kg category in the ongoing Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG), 2022 on Thursday afternoon, to loud cheers and applause at the Indoor Hall of Sports Authority of India (SAI) in Bhopal. Shraddha is an athlete from Maharashtra, but she trains at SAI and the National Centre of Excellence (NCOE), both in Bhopal. So, winning a gold medal here was like winning at home.



Chopade trains with national champion judokas like Tulika Maan, Vijay Yadav, Yash Ghangas and Olympian Avtar Singh. All of them have won medals for their states and countries. They all fight in different weight categories, but one

thing that's common is their coach, Arjuna Awardee Yashpal Solanki.

Judoka Shraddha made sure to show her coach the respect and appreciation he deserved after winning a gold medal. She said, "I joined SAI, Bhopal a year ago; I was already a good judoka before coming here, but Yashpal sir gave me the right direction." Many people say that I want to be like this judoka, etc. When they say that, they mean that they want their achievements or their game pattern.



EDITOR'S SPECS

India highest attacked country in Asia in 2022

India was the highest attacked country by hackers in Asia and the second-most attacked country globally (after the US) in 2022, a report showed. The number of cyber attacks on India increased by 24.3 per cent last year. Asia-Pacific remained the most targeted region globally, receiving 20.4 per cent of all attacks in 2021 and 24.1 per cent of all attacks in 2022. The number of attacks targeting the Asia-Pacific region increased by 26.4 per cent, according to data from cyber-security firm CloudSEK. North America, Asia-Pacific and Europe remained the most targeted regions in both the years 2021 and 2022. However, North America witnessed a decline in targeted attacks but remained the third most targeted region in 2022 (down from second in 2021), while Europe rose to the second position, possibly due to the Russia-Ukraine war. "2022 observed an increase in cybercrime with a surge in sophisticated and targeted cyber attacks. This can be attributed to an increase in underground activity leading to a rise in utility of malicious tools and malware," said a security researcher from CloudSEK TRIAD team. Emergence of numerous new ransomware groups and persistence of the old ones lead to an exponential increase in ransomware attacks. "Sectors like electric vehicles grabbed the attention of threat actors owing to the new technologies plagued with various vulnerabilities," said the researcher. Ransomware attacks increased drastically, going from the least common (0.3 per cent) in 2021 to the third most common (8 per cent) in 2022. Many new ransomware operators emerged in 2022, while some prominent ransomware groups launched their new versions (such as LockBIT 3.0). Attacks on the government sector globally accounted for 4.1 per cent in 2021, which increased to 12.1 per cent in 2022. IT and technology, e-commerce, and media, entertainment and marketing industries saw a decline in the number of attacks but remained in the top 10 industries targeted.

WORLD PRODUCING RECORD AMOUNT OF SINGLE-USE PLASTIC WASTE THAN EVER: REPORT

BRISBANE

The world is producing a record amount of single-use plastic waste, mostly made from polymers created from fossil fuels, despite global efforts to reduce plastic pollution and carbon emissions, according to a new report released.

The second Plastic Waste Makers Index, compiled by the Western Australia-based philanthropic Minderero Foundation, found the world generated 139 million metric tonnes of single-use plastic waste in 2021, which was 6 million metric tonnes more than in 2019, when the first index was released, CNN reported.

The report found the additional plastic waste created in those two years equates to nearly one 1 kg more for every person on the planet



and was driven by demand for flexible packaging like films and sachets.

In recent years, governments around the world have announced policies to reduce the volume of single-use plastic, banning products like single-use straws, disposable cutlery, food containers, cotton

swabs, bags and balloons, CNN reported.

In July, California became the first US state to announce its own targets, including a drop of 25 per cent in the sale of plastic packaging by 2032.

In December, the UK extended its

list of banned items to include single-use trays, balloon sticks and some types of polystyrene cups and food containers.

Bans are also in place in the European Union, Australia and India, among other places.

But the report found that recycling isn't scaling up fast enough to deal with the amount of plastic being produced, meaning that used products are far more likely to be dumped in landfills, on beaches and in rivers and oceans than to make it into recycling plants, CNN reported.

"It demonstrates beyond any doubt that the plastic pollution problem is getting much bigger and is being driven by the polymer producers, which are of course, driven by the oil and gas sector," said Andrew Forrest, Minderero founder. He's proposing a "polymer pre-

mium" on every kilogram of plastic polymer made from fossil fuels to give people, companies and governments a financial incentive to recycle more.

"In the advanced world, that polymer payment will lead to automatic mechanize collection. In the developing world, it'll lead to people who would not otherwise have any work, having work making sure there's no plastic waste going into the ocean, there's no plastic waste on streets, there's no plastic waste poisoning wildlife," he said.

Last year, the UN Environment Assembly agreed to create the world's first-ever global plastic pollution treaty. An intergovernmental committee is working to a 2024 deadline to draft a legally binding agreement that would address the full lifecycle of plastic, from its production and design to its disposal.

INDIA TO LEAD DEMAND FOR OIL TILL 2045, SAYS OPEC REPORT

ANIMESH SINGH

After China driving the initial demand growth, it is going to be India which will take the leading role in crude requirement, along with other Asian and African countries, as per an OPEC report.

According to the OPEC's "World Oil Outlook 2045" report, released during the ongoing India Energy Week here on Tuesday, besides India, fairly robust growth during this period is also projected for African and other Asian countries where economic progress, urbanisation, industrialisation, and vehicle fleet expansion will be fastest among all regions.

This, the report said, "will result in respective demand increases of around 1.4 mb/d, 0.8 mb/d and 0.7 mb/d, for India, Africa and Other Asia respectively during the 2040-2045 period".

Even by 2045, oil demand will still grow at a rate of more than 2 per cent per annum in India and Africa

and 1 per cent per annum in Other Asia region, the report, which charts a roadmap for oil sector from 2022 till 2045, said.

In another significant observation, the OPEC report said that it would be a global challenge to meet oil-related investment requirements of \$12.1 trillion by 2045.

"Cumulative oil-related investment requirements are projected at \$12.1 trillion over the entire 2022-2045 period (in 2022 US dollars). This is slightly higher than assessed in the World Oil Outlook (WOO) 2021, as upward-revised demand projections and assumed cost inflation in the short- and medium-term more than offset the forecast period being one year shorter," it said.

Upstream needs make up \$9.5 trillion, while downstream and mid-stream requirements are \$1.6 and \$1 trillion, respectively, it noted.

The report further pointed out that "risks to the economic outlook, high inflation, energy policy goals confronted with energy security

challenges, and questions regarding a perceived shortfall in upstream investment, coupled with persisting and new geopolitical uncertainties, means that significant risks regarding the longer-term liquids supply outlook remain".

Detailing a roadmap for the future, the report said that "in the current geopolitical context, besides a pressing need to increase climate ambitions, countries are increasingly focused on energy security issues. There is now more attention on an energy sustainability trilemma, related to affordability, energy security and reducing emissions, evidenced in many countries



publicly recognising the need for inclusive and resilient approaches, through more invest-

ments in oil and gas projects going forward".

international

THOUSANDS WITHOUT FOOD, WATER IN TURKEY & SYRIA AS QUAKE TOLL TOPS 16,000

Ankara/Damascus | Agencies

Amid freezing temperatures, thousands are without food, water and shelter in Turkey and Syria as the death toll in the devastating 7.8-magnitude quake increased to 16,035 on Thursday, authorities said.

In its latest update on Thursday, Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management Agency (AFAD) said the death toll currently stood at 12,873, while the number of injured persons shot up to 62,937, reports Anadolu News Agency.

The victims and the widespread damages have been reported from the 10 regions of Adana, Adiyaman, Diyarbakir, Gaziantep, Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Kilis, Malatya, Osmaniye, and Sanliurfa.

More than 113,200 search and rescue personnel are currently working in the field, AFAD said in its update, adding that a total of 28,044 people have been evacuated from quake-hit regions so far -- 4,607 by road and railway and 23,437 by air.

"As a result of negotiations with the Turkish Foreign Ministry, 5,709 personnel coming from other countries to give help were dispatched to the disaster area," it added.

Besides rescue teams, blankets,



tents, food, and psychological support teams were also sent to affected areas. A total of 92,738 family tents were set up to shelter survivors, AFAD also said. It added that 5,557 vehicles, including excavators, tractors and dozers, were sent to the disaster area.

In Syria, the total number of fatalities stood at 3,162, CNN reported.

Of the overall deaths, 1,900 were reported in rebel-held areas in the country's northwest, while 1,262 fatalities were registered in government-controlled parts of the war-torn

nation, according to Syrian state media and other officials.

Meanwhile, over 5,000 people were reported injured and the toll is likely to increase as search operations continue. Syria's White Helmets, a civil defence group in Syria, have said that "time is running out", with "hundreds of families" still stuck under the rubble of collapsed buildings, the BBC reported. The group said their teams continue to search for survivors "amid great difficulties" and with a need for heavy machinery to remove

rubble.

"Every second means saving a life," they added.

Addressing the media earlier in the day in Geneva, Robert Holden, the World Health Organization's (WHO) incident response manager, said there were thousands of people now surviving "out in the open, in worsening and horrific conditions", with disrupted access to water, fuel, electricity and communications.

"We are in real danger of seeing a secondary disaster which may cause harm to more people than the initial disaster if we don't move with the same pace and intensity as we are doing on the search and rescue. This is no easy task... The scale of the operation is massive," the BBC quoted the WHO official as saying.

The devastating 7.8 tremor struck Turkey's southern province of Kahramanmaraş at 4.17 a.m. on Monday morning, which was followed by a 6.4-magnitude tremor a few minutes later in Gaziantep province. The epicentre of the 7.8-magnitude quake was 23 km east of Nurdagi in Gaziantep, at a depth of 24.1 km. At around 1.30 p.m., a third 7.5-magnitude tremor hit Kahramanmaraş, which officials said was "not an aftershock".

Pakistan Army not available for poll duties

Islamabad | Agencies

The Pakistan Interior Ministry has informed the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) that the armed forces would not be able to perform security duties during the provincial assembly elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) as well as by-elections on 64 National Assembly seats as it was busy conducting census and counter-terror operations, media reported.

Earlier this week, the electoral body had written to the federal government, seeking the deployment of troops of civil armed forces for the conduct of general and by-elections in various constituencies of the national and provincial assemblies.

The Interior Ministry said that Pakistan was going through a difficult security situation as evidenced by a recent spike in incidents of terrorism across the country.

It mentioned the multi-dimensional security concerns which include border security, internal security duties, maintenance of law and order and deployment at forward posts to counter the increased terrorist activities by miscreants and anti-state elements, Dawn reported.

The ministry noted that intelligence agencies and the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) have been issuing threat alerts regarding the security situation prevailing in the country, which have also been shared with the provincial governments.

It regretted that a number of terror incidents took place in the last month leading to the loss of precious lives. One of these was the suicide bombing at a mosque in the Peshawar



Police Lines that killed more than 80 people, mostly policemen.

In this context, it is to be noted that security forces are fully engaged in combatting the threats posed by terrorists to the peace and stability of the country and the life and property of the people, the letter said, Dawn reported.

It said the onslaught of terrorist activities tested the capacity of the law enforcement agencies to the maximum extent leaving little room to spare for other activities.

It further highlighted that a terrorist organisation had openly threatened politicians and there was apprehension that the political leadership could be potential targets during the election campaign.

The Interior Ministry said that the ECP's request was also taken up with the Military Operations Directorate at the General Headquarters (GHQ) as it was a key stakeholder, Dawn reported.

4 DEAD IN 5.4-MAGNITUDE INDONESIA QUAKE

Jakarta: At least four people were dead and several houses and buildings destroyed after a 5.4-magnitude earthquake jolted Indonesia's Papua province on Thursday, a disaster agency official said.

"The quake damaged houses, a restaurant and buildings. Four people were killed during the earthquake. Now we are carrying out risk assessments of the quake," the official told Xinhua news agency.

According to country's meteorology, climatology and geophysics agency, the earthquake occurred at 1.28 p.m. with its epicentre located 1 km southwest of the provincial capital of Jayapura and a depth of 10 km. The earthquake did not have the potential to trigger a tsunami, it said. Several aftershocks occurred after the main tremor, according to the agency.

Thousands of retirees protest in Wuhan against cuts in medical benefits

New Delhi | Agencies

Thousands of people turned out in protest outside municipal government offices in the central Chinese city of Wuhan over major cuts to their medical benefits, according to local residents and video footage posted on social media, media reports said.

Video clips uploaded to social media showed a large crowd of older people in raincoats and holding umbrellas gathered in rainy weather in a public space outside the gates of the city government compound, with police in high-visibility jackets linking arms to prevent them from approaching the gates, RFA reported.

A resident of Wuhan, the epicentre of the Covid-19 pandemic, surnamed Zhang said both uniformed and plainclothes police were out in large numbers at the



protest, with several official buses parked at the scene, RFA reported.

"There were a lot of police officers there protecting [the municipal government], but this is a matter of public feeling," he said.

The protest came after warnings from the central government in Beijing that it won't be bailing out cash-strapped local

governments, whose coffers have been drained by three years of President Xi Jinping's zero-Covid policy, which ended in December last year, RFA reported.

"This country is in trouble, and they haven't raised medical payments -- how can they reduce them? How are people supposed to manage," Zhang asked.

He said the authorities had known the protest was coming and had held a "stability maintenance" meeting at city hall to deal with the issue.

"Retirees are demanding an explanation from the government as to why their medical benefits have been cut from 260 yuan (\$38) a month to less than 100 yuan (\$15)," a subtitle on one of the videos said, RFA reported.

"If they don't get an answer from the government, they will hold an even bigger rally," the text said.

Singapore to lift remaining Covid measures

Singapore | Agencies

Singapore will lift few of its remaining Covid-19 measures from February 13 as the country's pandemic situation has remained stable in recent months, the Ministry of Health (MOH) announced on Thursday.

The Ministry said that Singapore will adjust the current Disease Outbreak Response System Condition (DORSCON) level from the second lowest level Yellow to the lowest level Green, reports Xinhua news agency.

The country will also lift a group of community measures related to mask-wearing, health advisory, and public health measures for migrant workers living in dormitories.

One of the adjustments is that

mask-wearing on public transport and indoor healthcare and residential care settings will no longer be required under the temporary Covid-19 regulations.

Meanwhile, Singapore will lift the remaining Covid-19 border measures, in view of the stable and improving global pandemic situation, and the low impact of imported cases on Singapore's healthcare capacity. Besides, as Covid-19 is being treated as an endemic disease, the city-state will further scale back pandemic subsidies and re-align the provision of financing support for testing and treatment to that of other acute illnesses from April 1.

"MOH will continue to keep a close watch on the evolving Covid-19 situation and our healthcare capacity," the Ministry added.



BOMBAY HC SAYS BULLET TRAIN PROJECT OF 'NATIONAL IMPORTANCE', JUNKS GODREJ PLEA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Declaring that the upcoming Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project is of 'national importance', the Bombay High Court on Thursday dismissed a plea of Godrej & Boyce Manufacturing Co. challenging the acquisition of its land in Vikhroli.

The verdict by a division bench of Justices R.D. Dhanuka and Justice M.M. Sathaye said: "The project is of national importance and public interest... No interference is required. No illegality found in the compensation."

The judgement signalling a green flag comes as a breather for the mega-project on the eve of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Mumbai on Friday.

Justices Dhanuka and Sathaye also said that it is the paramount collective interest that would prevail and not private interest "Project would be first of its kind. Petition is dismissed".

When Godrej group's counsel, Senior Advocate Navroz Seervai sought a stay on the order to enable them appeal in the Supreme Court, the high court refused to entertain the plea. Opposing, the state's Advocate-



General Ashutosh Kumbhakoni told the court that the land acquisition for the project was completed except for the stretch owned by Godrej group, and pleaded that the company's plea should be dismissed.

Additional Solicitor-General Anil Singh argued that the entire land acquisition in Gujarat was complete

and the (project) work had started, while in Maharashtra, 3 per cent of the acquisition was remaining to be done. He contended that the Godrej petition was delaying the project and led to cost escalations, and if the compensation amount was a concern, then a higher payout could be considered, but the project could not be

made to suffer more.

For the past four years since August 2019, the government and the Godrej group have been squabbling over the acquisition of the company's land for what is billed as Modi's pet project coming up with Japanese collaboration. Slated to cost around Rs 1.60 Lakh-Crore, the bullet train project will be 508 kms long, including 21 kms running underground and one of the entry points to the subterranean tunnel will fall on the land owned by Godrej in Vikhroli which was taken over by the government.

After the acquisition of around 9.69 acres of its land, Godrej group had challenged the compensation of Rs. 264 crore awarded by the Deputy Collector in Sep. 2022, claiming it was a fraction of the original offer of Rs 572 crore, and how there were multiple and patent illegalities in the entire process. The company had also challenged the August 2019 notification under the Right To Fair Compensation and Transparency In Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 and the constitutional validity of certain sections, which has been upheld by the high court.

President Murmu calls CM Eknath Shinde on his b'day

Team Absolute | Mumbai

President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday called Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde to greet him on his 59th birthday, an official said here.

The President wished Shinde a long and healthy life and said the day would give strength to us to achieve the comprehensive and all-round development of Maharashtra.

Shinde reciprocated by thanking the President for her gesture, even as his supporters organised gala celebrations in Thane and other parts of the state since midnight.

As part of the celebrations, 366 blood donation camps were held in the state, minor students (under-18) were given a health check-up in 1,800 schools and Shinde announced expansion of the 'Aapla Dawakhana' scheme named in memory of the late Shiv Sena supremo



Balasaheb Thackeray.

The scheme will now expand to 500 locations in the state, including up to the taluka levels for the benefit of the masses. On the occasion, Shinde recalled the late Thackeray's teachings of public life which comprises 80 per cent social service to the people and 20 per cent politics.

Meanwhile, huge cutouts greeting Shinde came up in his hometown Thane, his residential bungalow was lit up brightly, birthday messages, banners and posters were put up in Thane, Mumbai, Pune and other places, while Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis visited his home to convey his personal wishes.

Maharashtra Congress Leader Claims "Threat To Her Life"



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Congress MLC Pradnya Rajeev Satav has claimed she was attacked by an unknown person in her native Hingoli district and that there was a threat to her

life. Satav in a tweet on Wednesday said, "Today I was brutally attacked at Kasbe Dhawanda, village Kalamnuri. An unknown person attacked me from behind. It was a serious attempt to injure me and there is a threat to my life."

"An attack on lady MLC is an attack on Democracy. Fight from front don't be a coward," said the legislator, who is the wife of late Congress leader Rajeev Satav. Local police officials could not be contacted for further details.

Congress snubs Shiv Sena (UBT) for pontificating on party crisis

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra Congress on Thursday frowned at its ally, Shiv Sena (UBT), for making snide remarks on the turmoil within the party, terming it as inappropriate and 'uncalled for'.

Commenting editorially on the current crisis in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MV) constituent, the Sena's (UBT) newspapers, Saamana' and Dopahar Ka Saamana', seemed to bash state Congress President Nana Patole in the face-off with another senior leader Vijay Balasaheb Thorat, who recently quit as the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) Leader.

Among other things, the edits suggested that Patole's decision to quit as Assembly Speaker (in February 2021) was hasty, which ultimately led to a series of crises culminating in the fall of the MVA government last year.

In a sharp rebuke, Congress spokesperson Atul Londhe said that



there is a well-established decision-making process in the Congress and all major decisions taken by the party President are respected and implemented by all.

On the resignation of Patole as Speaker after he was named as the state party chief, Londhe said: "It was the decision of the (then) party

President Sonia Gandhi in the overall interest after considering the prevalent political situation."

Slamming the Sena (UBT), Londhe said there is no sense in the contentions that Patole's resignation as Speaker triggered a chain of events that could have been avoided. "Such if-then' has no meaning in

politics... It is wrong to say that Patole's quitting the Speaker's post was the sole cause for the MVA's woes, there may be other reasons behind it," Londhe hinted without detailing.

He reiterated that all decisions taken by the Congress are its internal matter and the Sena (UBT) must respect them while adhering to the principles of alliance politics.

The Saamana group's edits argued that the main reason for the collapse of the MVA government headed by then CM Uddhav Thackeray in June 2022 "was Patole's hasty and unwise resignation as Assembly Speaker from where the entire crisis started".

The Sena (UBT) rued that after the success of Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra, the Congress is in a revival mode in many states, but the opposite is happening in Maharashtra owing to egos which would be detrimental to the party's interests.

Maharashtra Journalist Dead, Man Named In Expose Arrested

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The death of a journalist in Maharashtra has triggered shock, anger and demands for an investigation. Shashikant Warishe, was run over at a petrol station in Ratnagiri on Tuesday, a day after he wrote an expose on a controversial refinery project in Konkan. The man allegedly driving the SUV was Pandharinath Amberkar, a land dealer who had featured in his article on Monday.

Warishe died in a hospital. Amberkar, has been arrested and charged with murder. He was initially charged with culpable homicide.

Warishe's Monday article in the Mahanagari Times had described Amberkar as a "criminal" who had been photographed with top leaders like Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, and his deputy Devendra Fadnavis.

Amberkar is said to be a supporter of the Ratnagiri Refinery and Petrochemical project that



Shashikant Warishe had written about in a series of articles in Marathi newspapers.

Several media organisations have demanded a probe into Warishe's death, alleging that he was

killed because of his stories on the multi-billion-dollar project that has been strongly opposed by many locals over land acquisition. In a statement last evening, the Mumbai Press Club said the "brutal, public murder" brought to light the "plummeting standards of civil liberties and free speech and brazen attempt by both state and non-state players to crush any media reporting that proves to be inconvenient."

Warishe had written several reports highlighting "the local resistance to a petroleum refinery in Barsu" and had recently pointed out banners where Amberkar featured alongside the Chief Minister and the Prime Minister, the statement said.

"Amberkar, a leader of the local land mafia, was known to threaten and harass those who resisted any land acquisition on behalf of the upcoming refinery," the Mumbai Press Club alleged.

A group of Marathi journalists also met with Devendra Fadnavis, who is Maharashtra's Home Minister, to press for an investigation.

MAN KILLS BROTHER-IN-LAW WITH AXE: POLICE

Team Absolute | Palghar

A 25-year-old man allegedly killed his sister's husband after the latter had a fight with her in Maharashtra's Palghar district, police said on Thursday.

The incident took place in Mokhada taluka on Wednesday following which the accused was arrested, they said.

The brother-in-law, Mahendra Bhoje, a resident of Bramhangaon in Mokhada area, used to have frequent quarrels with his wife.

The woman's brother Dileep Mahale was concerned about her and had settled the couple's dispute on various occasions, an official from Mokhada police station said.

Bhoje and his wife again had a fight on Wednesday and Mahale, who was pres-



ent in their house, made an unsuccessful attempt to resolve the same. Later, Mahale caught hold of his brother-in-law and allegedly attacked him with an axe. Bhoje died on the spot, the official said.

After being alerted, police reached the spot and arrested Mahale, he said.

A case was registered against the accused under Indian Penal Code Section 302 (murder), the official said, adding that the body was sent to a government hospital for post-mortem.

RPF constable kills police officer for halting increment; arrested

Team Absolute | Thane

A constable attached to Railway Protection Force (RPF) allegedly killed a police sub-inspector for investigation that led to the 'stoppage of his increment' for 4 years on Wednesday night inside barracks in Thane. Police sources said that the constable had decided to kill 3 more officials who were responsible for the punitive action taken against him 3 years ago. Thane Police nabbed him from Pen - a town in Maharashtra's Raigad district - while he was running away. On Wednesday night, at around 11 pm, RPF personnel rushed to Kolvewadi police station (Kalyan, East) and informed, a constable had killed a police sub-inspector. The PSI was identified as



Basavraj Garg while the constable who allegedly killed him was identified as Pankaj Yadav. A team was immediately dispatched to track down Yadav. Police traced Yadav at Pen and nabbed him. Police claimed that during the interrogation, Yadav revealed the reasons behind killing Garg. "In 2019, PSI Garg and constable Yadav were posted at Kalyan RPF. Yadav had a fight with some of his subordinates resulting

in an FIR against him. PSI Garg was part of the committee which conducted departmental inquiry and concluded on increment stoppage for 4 years and reduction of his basic salary," said M R Deshmukh, Senior Inspector of Kolvewadi police station. On Wednesday night, at around 9.45 pm, the RPF constable arrived at Kalyan railway station and went directly to the barracks, said police sources.

PFI WANTED TO BRING ISLAMIC RULE IN INDIA BY 2047: MAHARASHTRA ATS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) in its charge sheet has claimed that the Popular Front of India (PFI) wanted to target the police machinery and establish an Islamic rule in India by 2047, and for this they were getting funds from some Muslim countries.

"To achieve their goals, they held secret meetings at seven places in Maharashtra. The accused wanted to establish Sharia Law by replacing the Indian constitution. The accused had planned to disrupt the law and order situation in India by taking the help of international firms," the charge sheet reads.

The ATS seized a booklet from the cell phone of Mazhar Mansoor Khan, one of the accused, in which the sinister plot was mentioned. The booklet says that they will establish Islamic State when India completes 100 years of Independence.

In the booklet, which they were circulating to the PFI members, it was mentioned as to how they will make the Islamic State a reality by 2047. The book was titled - 'India 2047, Towards rule of Islam in India. Internal document, not for circulation'.

A nationwide crackdown was carried out by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) last year. In Maharashtra, five persons connected to the PFI were arrested. The ATS has filed a charge sheet in this matter in which sensational claims have been made.



The charge sheet reveals that the PFI members were conspiring against the state. "The PFI members were working against the state government. The PFI members conducted secret meetings at Chembur, Dharavi, Kurla, Thane, Nerul, Panvel and Mumbai in which conspiracy theories were made. The PFI had planned to include Muslim youths by telling them that their religion (Muslim religion) was in danger. They well mobilised gullible Muslim youths and provoked them against other religions,"

read the charge sheet.

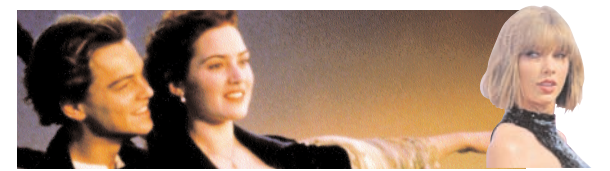
The charge sheet further reads that the PFI wanted Muslim youths to only be identified as 'Muslims' and not as Indians. The charge sheet has revealed that they were planning to provide gullible Muslim youth arms training.

"The accused wanted to play the victim card by showing that Muslims were being targeted in the country. The book seized from one of the accused revealed that they wanted Muslims of Kashmir and Lakshadweep to join them as these places have the largest Muslim population. The accused wanted to take the help of local religious Muslim leaders to make gullible Muslim youths think that Muslims were under target. To achieve the goal the accused had made a four-stage programme," the charge sheet says.

The charge sheet has also mentioned that the PFI was also working to dismantle the RSS.

There are allegations in the charge sheet that the PFI was also seeking help from Islamic countries to create unrest in India. The PFI had also allegedly planned to provoke people from the SC/ST and tribal communities so that their help could also be taken.

"A PFI leader would help SC, ST tribe people so that they would work for them. They wanted to use the tribal community. They wanted their cadre to be part of judiciary and police," the ATS has alleged in the charge sheet.



SALMA HAYEK HAD THE 'MAGIC MIKE' STRIPPERS OVER TO HER HOME

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Salma Hayek Pinault, who stars as Maxandra Mendoza in 'Magic Mike's Last Dance', says her co-stars were "such great guys" who "were all hanging out with me" while filming. The actress told 'People' she became good friends with her castmates who play the various strippers and, eventually, so did her husband French businessman Francois-Henri Pinault. "My husband is not a jealous man," she says. "I used to call him all the time (from set) and say, 'Oh my God, I feel so bad,' because I had this predisposition about how the guys, the strippers were going to be. But they're not. They're lovely. They're such great guys. And (my husband) goes, 'Oh God, you're becoming best friends with the strippers, aren't you?' And I said, 'Yes!'" "And then he came a couple of times to the set. There was especially one who would come and ask him advice for business. He spoke French and he knew everything about Francois. He says, 'I'm a big fan.' He reacted more to Francois than to me!"

He adds: "By the end of the movie, they all came to the house. They were all hanging out with me. Then Francois was saying, 'You're right, they're adorable, they're lovely.'" She also says that working with costar Tatum was a delight: She "found him to be a real gentleman." "He's like a Southern gentleman and he cares about that. Because he's so cool, goofy and funny. He can be that. Or he can also be very smart and intense and focused." "He's always kind. ... And I told him, I said, 'Your mom taught you well.' I think that normally comes, most of the times, from the mother. I think that is true." She adds, "He's very respectful and he's very thoughtful."

DiCaprio attacked by a radio host after it was rumored he is dating teenage model

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio has been attacked by a radio host named Megyn Kelly after it was rumored he is dating teenage model Eden Polani, with the Kelly ranting he will never be happy if he continues going to with younger women.

The 'Titanic' actor is renowned for his habit of dating women no older than 25 and has been most recently linked to 19-year-old model Eden Polani after he split from his long-term girlfriend Camila Morrone last August a few months after she turned 25.

Radio host Kelly slammed his taste for younger woman and claimed he will never find someone "who he can fall in deep love with".

She said on her SiriusXM show about his rumored relationship with Eden: "He is now dating a teenager, literally a teenager."

He's in the news every week for how he won't date anybody past age 25. If he does, it makes news.

"And now he's actually gone down to a teenager. She could literally be his daughter. I feel like this guy from the rate of things is never going to know the joy of meeting somebody who he can fall in deep love with and build a family with."

"He's just going to keep banging teenagers for the rest of his life. It doesn't strike me as something to emulate."

Eden deleted her Instagram account following reports she and Leonardo are an item - and after he apparently denied they are in a relationship.

The pair was photographed sitting next to each other at Ebony Riley's EP release party over the weekend, but Page Six said a source close to the actor had insisted they are not an item.

They said: "There is zero truth to this. He was seated next to (Eden) at a music party, along with many other people."

"It's just silly. Leo clearly can't be dating every single person that (he's) in a room with."

Leonardo has also recently been linked to model Victoria Lamas, and sparked talk he was dating model Gigi Hadid shortly after breaking up with Camila.

'Everything I saw publicly was wrong'

Steven Soderbergh debunks rumour Thandiwe Newton got fired from 'Magic Mike 3'

Los Angeles | Agencies

'Magic Mike's Last Dance' director Steven Soderbergh is gearing up for its theatrical release with Salma Hayek playing the female lead opposite Channing Tatum, but that wasn't how the film originally went into production. The movie started filming with Thandiwe Newton, but she exited the project after only 11 days and was replaced with Hayek, reports 'Variety'.

A studio spokesperson told Variety at the time that Newton exited the film "to deal with family matters," but outlets like Page Six ran with headlines that claimed it was an on-set fight between Tatum and Newton that got her fired from the movie. Rumours circulated the two actors had an explosive fight over Will Smith slapping Chris Rock at the Oscars. Soderbergh now told Rolling Stone that none of the headlines he saw about Newton's exit were factual, reports 'Variety'. "Nothing I ever saw was accurate, and there's really no upside for anybody involved in litigating this or excavating it, because I consider it private," Soderbergh said.

"Everything I saw publicly was wrong. It was just...I don't think anybody sees any benefit in running through this publicly. It becomes something you can't control. Right now, to keep it private means all of us can control it, and I think that's where it should sit for the time being." "The film is showing up at a good time because it's such a joyful movie," Soderbergh recently told Variety. "I'm also curious if there is a space still for mid-range movie budget aimed at adults - one that's not by standard definition a fantasy spectacle."



'THERE WERE AWFUL WORDS'

Lily Collins recalls being slut-shamed by toxic ex-boyfriend

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Lily Collins is plunged into anxiety by memories of an abusive ex who branded her a "w***e." The 'Emily in Paris' actress, who is now in a healthy relationship with husband Charlie McDowell, revealed that she still gets "triggered" about her previous toxic romance. During her appearance on the February 8 episode of the 'We Can Do Hard Things' podcast, Lily talked about her ex. "He would call me 'Little Lily'... and he'd use awful words about me in terms of what I was wearing and would call me a w***e and all these things," she recalled. Adding about how his behaviour sparked feelings of "panic" and "anxiety," Lily said, "There were awful words and then there were belittling words. I became quite silent and comfortable in silence and feeling like I had to make myself small to feel super safe. The situations are completely different 10 years ago to now. That panic is what I can still get triggered by."

She added, "Even if I'm in the healthiest relationship, there can be a moment that happens throughout the day where history comes back like that. It's like a millisecond, or shorter than a millisecond, and your gut reacts, your heart starts beating, and all of a sudden you're taken back to that moment where they said that thing to you 10 years ago, but you're not in that situation now and that's the trigger and it's f***king hard. It's awful."

Lily, who did not share the identity of her toxic ex, has previously been romantically linked to famous faces including Taylor Lautner, Zac Efron, Chris Evans and Nick Jonas, but there is no suggestion she was talking about any of them.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE



Charli XCX

Dwayne Johnson went to "great lengths" to surprise Adele at Grammys

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Dwayne Johnson went to "great lengths" to make sure Adele was "authentically surprised" at the Grammy Awards. The actor stunned the singer, who has expressed multiple times how much of a fan she is of the former wrestler, during host Trevor Noah's opening monologue at Sunday's, February 5, when he appeared from behind her to give her a hug, and he insisted the singer's shock was genuine. He told Variety, "We wanted to do something special for Adele. I know that she is a very big fan of mine and has made that clear publicly many times."

But I've got to tell you, I am a huge fan of hers, as well - her music, her journey, her openness and directness in how she speaks." "I've always admired that about her. We were trying to figure out something to do that was going to be fun and surprise her, and we had kicked around ideas all week. The key to a surprise like that is to actually keep it a surprise." He added: "I and the Grammys went to great lengths to make sure that Adele was authentically surprised in the moment, and she was. It was just a great surprise and I was able to chat with her a little bit and her boyfriend, Rich Paul."





IND vs AUS 1st Test, Day 1

JADEJA'S 5/47, ROHIT'S 56 NOT OUT PUT INDIA ON TOP AFTER AUSTRALIA BOWLED OUT FOR 177

Nagpur | Agencies

Skipper Rohit Sharma struck a breezy half-century after Ravindra Jadeja claimed a fiver in his first Test after a five-month injury break as India bowled out Australia for 177 in their first innings and shaved off 77 runs from that on the opening day of the first Test.

Rohit slammed his half-century off 66 deliveries and shared a 76-run partnership with K.L. Rahul as India set themselves up for a big total. But they let slip some of that advantage when Rahul (20 off 71 balls) was caught and bowled by debutant off-spinner Todd Murphy off the penultimate over of the day. At stumps, Rohit was batting on 56 off 69 balls, nine fours and 1 six, with Ravichandran Ashwin yet to score a run as India trailed Australia by 100 runs with nine wickets in hand.

Earlier, Australia skipper Pat Cummins won the toss and elected to bat first on a pitch with low bounce which offered occasional spin and were soon down to 2-2 in the third over. Their struggles on the opening day were interspersed by two half-century partnerships -- an 82-run stand between Marnus Labuschagne (49) and Steve Smith (37) for the third wicket and a 53-run stand for the sixth



wicket between Peter Handscomb (29 batting) and Alex Carey (36). Though the pitch was difficult to bat on, Labuschagne and Smith showed that one can score runs on it as they carried Australia to 76/2 at lunch.

Jadeja made the breakthrough for India in the fourth over after lunch when he bowled Smith for the third wicket between Labuschagne

and Smith. Peter Handscomb and Alex Carey denied India the next success as they raised a 53-run partnership for the sixth wicket, upping the pace of scoring as they attacked the bowlers. Carey was the more aggressive of the two as he struck seven boundaries in Ashwin for his 450th victim in Test cricket as the Aussie keeper bottom-edged into the stumps.

Brief scores

Australia 177 all out in 63.5 overs (Marnus Labuschagne 49, Steve Smith 37, Alex Carey 36, Peter Handscomb 31; Ravindra Jadeja 5-47, Ashwin 3-42) lead India 77/1 in 24 overs (Rohit Sharma batting 56; KL Rahul 20, Murphy 1-13) by 100 runs.

WOMEN'S T20 WORLD CUP

India thrash Bangladesh by 52 runs in final warm-up game

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India wicketkeeper-batter Richa Ghosh slammed a fabulous 91 not out from 56 balls, hitting three fours and nine sixes, to set up India's 52-run thrashing of Bangladesh in their warm-up match of Women's T20 World Cup at Coetzenburg Oval, Stellenbosch.

Richa, who was in India's squad of winning U19 Women's T20 World Cup in South Africa last month, put on a stand of 92 runs with Jemimah Rodrigues who made 41 from 27 balls before being dismissed by Jahanara Alam. The duo was instrumental in India's build-up after Yastika Bhatia, Shafali Verma and Harleen Deol fell in quick succession.

Jahanara, the fast-bowler, was expensive in her four overs, going for 54 as she faced the brunt of Ghosh's hitting as India reach 183 for five, minus their main players, captain Harmanpreet Kaur



and vice-captain Smriti Mandhana. In reply, Bangladesh put up a good fight, thanks in part to captain Nigar Sultana's 40 from 36 balls. Murshida Khatun had got Bangladesh off on a strong note as she made a run-a-ball 32 before leg-spin all-rounder Devika Vaidya took two for 21.

Bangladesh fell 52 runs short in their chase, ending on 131 for eight from their 20 runs but showed improvement from their loss in their first warm-up match to Pakistan. Shafali, Radha

Yadav, stand-in captain Deepti Sharma, Rajeshwari Gayakwad and Anjali Sarvani picked up a wicket each for India.

Brief scores

India 183/5 in 20 overs (Richa Ghosh 91 not out, Jemimah Rodrigues 41; Nahida Akter 2/24, Salma Khatun 1/18) beat Bangladesh 131/8 in 20 overs (Nigar Sultana 40, Murshida Khatun 32; Devika Vaidya 2/21, Shafali Verma 1/13) by 52 runs.

LEBRON JAMES BREAKS NBA'S ALL-TIME SCORING RECORD



Los Angeles | Los Angeles Lakers star LeBron James broke NBA's all-time scoring record, held by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar for nearly 39 years, in the game against the Oklahoma City Thunder.

With the last 14 seasons for the Lakers, Abdul-Jabbar, six-time NBA MVP, scored 38,387 points in his 20-year career.

James needed 36 points to break the NBA's all-time scoring record. With 10.9 seconds left in the third quarter at Los Angeles' Crypto.com Arena, James got the last two points he needed with a fadeaway jumper. NBA officials paused the game for minutes to honor James in a ceremony on the court.

Abdul-Jabbar was in attendance, witnessing James' accomplishment with cheering crowds. The Lakers lost 133-130 to the Thunder despite James' 38-point performance.

Ranji Trophy semifinal

Bengal reduce MP to 56/2 at stumps on Day 2 after posting 438

Indore | Agencies

A disciplined seam attack from Bengal reduced defending champions Madhya Pradesh to 56/2 at stumps after posting 438 in their first innings on the second day of their 2022-23 Ranji Trophy semi-finals at Holkar Stadium.

Resuming from 307/4, Abhishek Porel (51 off 102 balls) played a gutsy knock and was supported by veteran Manoj Tiwary scoring 42 off 129 balls.

After losing Shahbaz Ahmed early in the day, Madhya Pradesh had some hopes of a comeback. But those hopes were thwarted by Porel combining with Tiwary to keep Bengal on top through a crucial 78-run partnership.

Post the fall of Tiwary, Bengal suffered a collapse, losing their last five wickets for just 37 runs. For Madhya Pradesh, left-arm spinner Kumar Kartikeya Singh was the pick of the bowlers, taking 3/95 in



36.3 overs.

In reply, Madhya Pradesh openers Yash Dubey and Himanshu Mantri were extremely cautious in front of the new ball. But that didn't last long as Akash Deep broke the 27-run opening stand by having Dubey caught behind off Akash Deep.

Brief scores

Madhya Pradesh 56/2 in 28 overs (Himanshu Mantri 23; Ishan Porel 1/4) trail Bengal 438 all out in 141.3 overs (Anustup Majumdar 120, Sudip Gharami 112; Kumar Kartikeya 3/95) by 382 runs.

SOUTH AFRICA BEAT PAKISTAN, WEST INDIES GET BETTER OF SRI LANKA IN WARM-UPS

New Delhi | In the final day of warm-ups at Women's T20 World Cup, hosts South Africa defeated Pakistan by six wickets, while West Indies got the better of Sri Lanka by four wickets with just two balls to spare in a low-scoring thriller.

For Pakistan, all-rounder Aliya Riaz was the star of the show making 48 from 30 balls as her side set hosts South Africa 143 to win. Lower-order batter Ayesha Naseem provided useful runs late on as she scored 21 runs from 12 balls before she was dismissed by Ayabonga Khaka, who took two for 23, while spinner Nonkululeko Mlaba took one for 16 from her four overs.

In reply, Laura Wolvaardt headlined South Africa's response, making 65 in an 107-run opening partnership with Tazmin Brits. Tazmin went on to make 36, before a mini-collapse left South Africa on 116/4 as Anneke Bosch and captain Sunne Luus both fell for three runs.

On the other hand, Sri Lanka stuttered on their way to posting 107 all out from their 20 overs, with only Nilakshi de Silva able to deliver with the bat. She arrived with Sri Lanka two for 29 after 5.2 overs, and scored 29 off 26 balls to help steer her side to a modest total.

After taking three for 17 with the ball, captain Hayley Matthews gave the West Indies the perfect batting platform with a fifty before she was run out by some brilliant glove work from Anushka Sanjeevani. They slipped to five for 76 before Chinelle Henry steered her side home alongside Afy Fletcher.



Brief Scores

Pakistan 142/5 in 20 overs (Aliya Riaz 48 not out, Ayesha Naseem 21; Ayabonga Khaka 2/23, Nonkululeko Mlaba 1/16) lost to South Africa 143/4 in 18.2 overs (Laura Wolvaardt 65, Tazmin Brits 36; Aliya Riaz 2/24, Sadia Iqbal 3/22) by six wickets. Sri Lanka 107 all out in 20 overs (Nilakshi Silva 29, Harshitha Samarawickrama 16; Hayley Matthews 3/17, Afy Fletcher 2/13) lost to West Indies 111/6 in 19.4 overs (Hayley Matthews 46) by four wickets.

World Club Cup

Real Madrid beat Al Ahly to reach final

Rabat | Agencies

Real Madrid will play Saudi Arabian side Al Hilal in the final of the World Club Cup here on Saturday after beating Egyptian outfit Al Ahly 4-1 in the second semifinal.

A first-half goal from Vinicius Jr and strikes from Fede Valverde at the start of the second period and Rodrygo and Aribas in injury time gave Carlo Ancelotti's men the win against a rival that had the European Champions under pressure in the closing minutes. Real Madrid went into the game without Karim Benzema, Thibaut Courtois, Ferland Mendy and Eder Militao and had Marcos Asensio added to their injury list ahead of kick-off with a slight muscle problem.

Madrid controlled the first half, but apart



from an effort that Vinicius flicked wide from a narrow-angle with his right foot, the Al Ahly defense was able to control them with relative ease. The Brazilian did put Madrid ahead four minutes before halftime after taking advantage of a defensive error to clip the ball over Mohammed El Shenawy in the Al Ahly goal.

AIZAWL FC MOVE TO TOP HALF OF THE TABLE WITH 2-1 WIN OVER RAJASTHAN UNITED

Aizawl | Agencies

Aizawl FC moved to the top half of the table after recording a 2-1 win against Rajasthan United in their I-League 2022-23 games at the Rajiv Gandhi Stadium.

The People's Club looked all set to lose three points at one point in time, but they suddenly woke up to hammer two goals in the last 20 minutes to pick up the victory.

After an early goal was scored by Rajasthan United's Aidar Mambetaliev, Aizawl's R Ramdinthara scored the equaliser in the 71st minute before substitute and debutant Ivan Veras headed in the winner in injury time.

Aizawl started the better of the two teams and went close to opening the



score in the ninth minute. Khawlhing Lalmawsawma received the ball on the right before crossing it for R Lalthanmawia, who headed it towards the goal, in a move started by their captain Lalchawnkima in

his own half. Aizawl continued their early dominance but Lalchhanhima Sailo gave away a free kick in the 17th minute, which led to the first goal. The second half began on a fast

note. Rajasthan United, who had shifted to a counter-attack strategy, went close to doubling their lead twice. In the 52nd minute, Captain Lalliansanga Renthlei's shot went wide, while Zokirov pulled off a great save off a shot by Lalmuansanga from around 30 yards.

For the hosts, Lalthanmawia hit the post with his header following a corner kick in the 63rd minute and seven minutes later, R Ramdinthara brought the People's Club back into the game.

After the scores were level, it became an end-to-end affair and with just a minute of regulation time left, substitute Ivan Veras nearly put the hosts in the lead. The Belarusian received the ball inside the box and took a shot that was off target.

Pretoria Capitals march into SA20 final

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Pretoria Capitals advanced to the inaugural SA20 final with Rilee Rossouw and Eathan Bosch playing starring roles in a tense 29-run victory in the first semi-final against the Paarl Royals at the Wanderers.

Rossouw held the Capitals' innings together with 56 off 41 balls as the table-toppers posted a competitive 153/8 after being inserted by the Royals.

It was a surface that was not conducive to fluent strokeplay and Rossouw had to restrain his natural attacking game after the Royals spinners Bjorn Fortuin (1/24) and Tabraiz Shamsi (2/19) had started well.

Royals' all-rounder Andile Phehlukwayo (3/29) maintained the pressure during the middle period, but Rossouw kept the scoreboard ticking over with a few timely boundaries. At the interval the match was



evenly-poised before opening bowler Bosch provided the Capitals with the perfect start.

Bosch (2/22) struck with the second delivery of the Royals innings when he removed England opener Jason Roy. But then Bosch delivered arguably the moment of the match when he clean bowled the in-form Jos Buttler (13) in his next over.

However, the return of Anrich Nortje to the attack in the penultimate over saw to the demise of Miller (31) who was caught on the square-leg boundary before the tournament's leading wicket-taker closed out the match when Colin Ingram claimed a brilliant catch off Shamsi to set off the Capitals' celebrations.

The Capitals now wait for the winner of the second semi-final between Joburg Super Kings and Sunrisers Eastern Cape at Centurion on Thursday to see who they will face in Saturday's showpiece at the Wanderers.

German Cup

Dortmund down Bochum to progress into quarters

Berlin | Agencies

Marco Reus' second-half winner secured Borussia Dortmund a 2-1 victory over Bochum in the German Cup last 16.

BVB assumed control from the kick-off, but Bochum's well-positioned defense gave the visitors a hard time.

Dortmund needed 13 minutes to produce its first noteworthy opportunity as Jamie Bynoe-Giters tested Bochum goalkeeper Manuel Riemann from close range.

The visitors increased the pressure and came close through Sebastian Haller, who slipped from a promising position before Bynoe-Giters missed his second chance from inside the box.

Bochum still had to swallow the deficit before the break as Riemann's short clearance allowed Emre Can mark the opener with a long-range effort into the empty goal.

The hosts gained the upper hand after the restart but for all that Christopher Antwi-Adjeki couldn't beat Dortmund custodian Gregor



Kobel in quick succession. Bochum eventually restored parity at the hour mark when Kevin Stoger converted a handball penalty into the center of the goal.

Dortmund answered in the 70th minute after joker Marco Reus tapped home Jude Bellingham's square pass, three minutes after his substitution. Bochum pressed frenetically for the equalizer in the closing period, but Dortmund's defense stood firm to ensure a quarterfinal berth. Elsewhere, second-division outfit Nuremberg knocked out Fortuna Dusseldorf following a dramatic 5-3 penalty shootout.



SRK'S 'PATHAAN' IS THE FIRST FILM EVER TO SHUT DOWN BURJ KHALIFA BOULEVARD

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The brutal battle that superstar Shah Rukh Khan's character Pathaan has with John Abraham's, the anti-hero Jim in Dubai was possible because the entire Burj Khalifa Boulevard was shut down for the first time ever for any film in the world. Director Siddharth Anand reveals, "The toughest action to execute in Pathaan - one is on top of a moving train, one is mid-air with planes, one is in Dubai which takes place in the boulevard around the Burj Khalifa which no Hollywood film has been able to do this."

"To shoot this sequence in Dubai, it just looked impossible. But the Dubai police and the authorities made it happen for us." He adds, "My friends, who live at the Boulevard, came and told me that they got circulars saying on this day between these times, you will not be able to access the boulevard so please plan your days. And they were amazed that - oh my god... that's for my film!"

Siddharth further states, "I said I can't believe it and this wouldn't have been possible if they had not agreed to our vision and supported us wholeheartedly. So I want to thank the Dubai police and the authorities in Dubai."



UORFI DANCES IN A SAREE AHEAD OF SHOW'S FINALE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As the curtains are all set to drop for 'MTV Splitsvilla 14' on Friday, social media sensation Uorfi Javed, who was a part of the youth-based reality show as a mischief maker, has shared a music video dancing on the song 'Villa Wala Pyaar' with the other contestants.

Uorfi took to Instagram on Thursday, where she shared a music video. She captioned it: "Bas ho gaya ab bohot intezaar. Uorfi aa gayi hai lekar Villa Wala Pyaar. Ab hoga entertainment non stop mere yaar! Isko sunte sunte ho jao iss season ke grand finale ke liye bhi taiyyar. Fully Faltoo laya hai yeh drama aapke liye from samunder paar."

In the clip, Uorfi is dancing alongside Justin D'Cruz, Sakshi Shrivastava, Soundous, Joshua Chhabbra, Tara Prasad, Akashlina Chandra and Kashish Ratmani. Unlike her usual self, Uorfi, who is known for her bizarre fashion style, is seen wearing a peach floral saree.

The finale of 'MTV Splitsvilla 14' will take place on Friday.



SID-KIARA RECEIVES A WARM WELCOME; SHAKE A LEG TO DHOL BEATS BEFORE ENTERING HOME

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Newly-weds Sidharth Malhotra and Kiara Advani received a warm welcome at his home in Defence Colony after returning from their wedding held in Jaipur. The couple was welcomed with high power dhol beats as they danced outside before making an entry into the brightly-lit house.

A video of Sidharth and Kiara dancing with their friends and family at the gate are doing the rounds on social media.

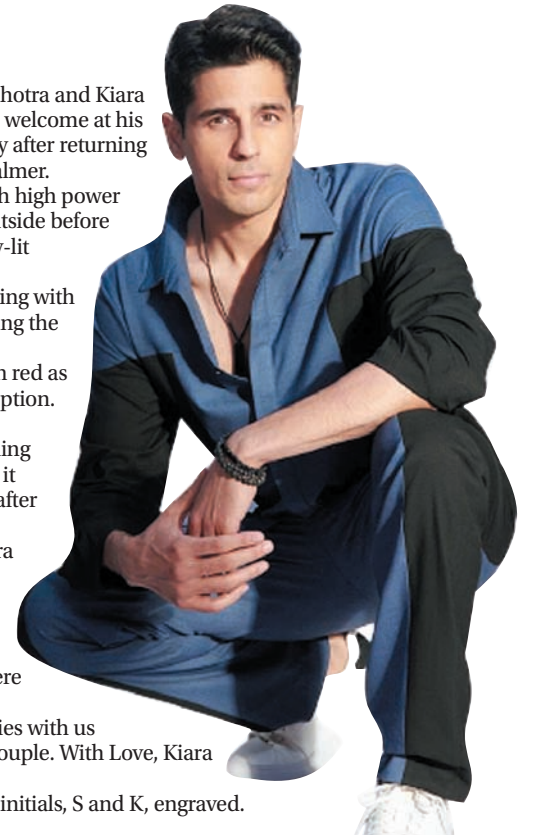
The 'Shershaah' actors were twinning in red as they arrived in Delhi for the wedding reception.

Also a note from newly-weds Sidharth Malhotra and Kiara Advani for their wedding guests has gone viral on social media and it talks about making memories with them after the party.

In the note, Sidharth Malhotra and Kiara Advani penned: "Thank you so much for sharing in the joy of our wedding day. We are so fortunate to have such wonderful family and friends in our lives that have travelled from near and far to celebrate here with us."

"Please drink, dance and make memories with us tonight as our first evening as a married couple. With Love, Kiara & Sid."

They also gave a coin with the couple's initials, S and K, engraved.



VIJAY SETHUPATHI IS A PURE ARTIST: SHAHID KAPOOR

Shahid worked with Vijay and found him to be extremely innocent and a pure artist

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actor Shahid Kapoor, who is gearing up for the release of his show 'Farzi', worked with south sensation Vijay Sethupathi for the first time and he shared that he found him to be extremely innocent. Talking about Vijay, Shahid said on IMDb Original 'Burning Questions': "He is very childlike and innocent in the way he comes across. There is a lot of integrity to him as an actor, and he is also unpredictable as an actor. He's a pure artist; you can just sense it when you work with him. That's the biggest compliment you can give anybody. It was a pleasure working with him."

With Farzi streaming in a few days from now, Shahid said, "I am very happy with the show. It takes away a lot of nervousness when you feel satisfied with what you've done. I feel very happy with the way it's turned out and is excited to share it with people. It's my first time on a digital platform, and I'm excited to see how people respond to that."

Shahid made his debut in the Hindi film industry 20 years ago.

When asked how he deals with adversity, he shared some words of wisdom. "Adversity is challenging, but when you are challenged, you become a better version of yourself, so it's an opportunity." About his biggest challenge till date, he said, "People Management. I think it's more challenging than what I do." On the one film he wants everyone to see, Shahid spoke about a classic. "Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro is a film I'd want everyone to see. It had dad (Pankaj Kapur), Naseer uncle, Satish Kaushik ji and some fantastic actors. I don't know how many people have seen it. It even had Vidhu Vinod Chopra as an actor."

"They were all a bunch of friends who came together and made it. Kundan Shah directed it. It's one of the funniest films I have seen. It can make me laugh anytime. If you want to have a fun time, just watch it, it's great!"

He also revealed that 'Dunki' is the movie he is looking forward to watching in 2023, as it brings together Shah Rukh Khan and Rajkumar Hirani.



Kapil suffers heartbreak as he features in Guru's latest track

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Comedian Kapil Sharma suffers heartbreak as he features in Guru Randhawa's latest track 'Alone' ft. Yogita Bihani. Talking about the song, Guru said: "I have known Kapil Paji for a while and was always a fan of his wonderful voice which makes me glad to be working with him on his debut single. I am so happy that when we suggested this song, he was immediately ready for it. I think the listeners will agree with me when I say that he has nailed this song with his voice."

'Alone' is an emotional heart-break song presented by T-Series, which shows the amazing chemistry between couples played by Kapil Sharma and Yogita Bihani, also features Guru Randhawa.

Kapil said, "I have been passionate about music for as long as I can remember. My long-term dream has finally been realised... all thanks to Bhushan Kumar sir and my dearest friend and brother Guru Paji." "I think the credit for this song goes to Guru as he has sung it, written its lyrics as well as composed this song. I had a blast working with both Yogita and Guru for my first music video, I honestly couldn't have asked for a better team for my debut."

Yogita Bihani, who features in the music video alongside Kapil Sharma and Guru Randhawa, said, "I was extremely ecstatic when I found out that I am going to be a part of this amazing song by Guru Randhawa and Kapil Sharma."



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Anu Emmanuel