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STAMPEDE OF SUPERSTITION

Over 20,000 vehicles got stuck in a traffic jam on Indore-Bhopal highway allegedly due to mismanagement and over 3,000 people, visiting the Dham, fell ill or were injured due to the stampede-like condition, Police said.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A woman from Maharashtra died and three women went missing in a stampede-like situation on the first day of the Rudraksh Mahotsav at Kubereswar Dham in Madhya Pradesh's Sehore on Thursday, police said.

According to police and district administration officials, over five lakh people reached Kubereswar dham to collect Rudraksh being distributed by self-styled god man and spiritual story teller Pradeep Mishra.

Mandi police station assistant sub-inspector Dharam Singh Verma said, "Mangala Bai (50), a resident of Malegaon in Nashik, Maharashtra, suddenly fell ill. She fell down and died. Three women from Bhilai in Chhattisgarh, Gangapur in Rajasthan and



Buldhana in Maharashtra went missing and the family members have filed missing complaints at the police station."

The district administration and police officials are trying to manage the crowd along with 15,000 volunteers. Pandit Pradeep Mishra accused the administration for mismanagement. "People are afraid of death. They said they will not go to Kedarnath. It is very cold there, what if something hap-

WOMAN ON WAY TO KUBERESHWAR DHAM DIES IN ROAD ACCIDENT

Dewas: One 42-year-old woman from Dhule district of Maharashtra died in a road accident that took place near Khatamba village in Dewas district on Wednesday, late at night, police said. According to information, the deceased was identified as Sunandabai, wife of Ravindra, a native of Sindhkheda village in Dhule district, who was moving towards Kubereswar Dham in Sehore district. Devotees who were along with her informed that while going to Sehore, they decided to take a break and had dinner at a dhaba on the other side of a road near Khatamba village.

Meanwhile, a speeding Scorpio car hit her resulting death of Sunandabai on the spot while another woman Mangla, wife of Abhimal from the same village sustained minor injuries. It is being said that the family was going from Maharashtra to participate in the Rudraksha festival at Kubereswar Dham in Sehore. The police registered a case in the matter and began the search for the car.

pens. If death has to come, it will come so people shouldn't be afraid of death," he said.

Last year too, the programme was cancelled due to traffic jam at Indore-Bhopal Highway.

Chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan was also about to visit the programme but he cancelled after news of the mismanagement.

The superintendent of police (SP) and collector couldn't be contacted for their comment despite repeated attempts.

WOMAN DIED IN BAGESHWAR DHAM CAME FOR TREATMENT

Chhatarpur: A woman has died in Bageshwar Dham located at Panna Road of Pt. Dharendra Shastri. The woman suffering from kidney problem had come to apply with her husband on last Wednesday. Then she suddenly collapsed while standing in the queue in the pandal and died there.

According to information, this 33-year-old woman Neelu alias Neelam had come from Maharajpur in Firozabad district of Uttar Pradesh along with her husband Devendra Singh. Husband Devendra Singh told that his wife was ill for a long time. To get rid of this, she had reached Bageshwar Dham, where they had morning meal. After that, they stood in the queue for the application in the pandal. During this, she suddenly fainted. At present, the relatives have taken her dead body back to their home village in Uttar Pradesh.

Bullet Train: SC agrees to examine Godrej plea against HC's refusal on land acquisition

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday agreed to consider Godrej and Boyce Manufacturing Co Ltd's plea challenging the Bombay High Court judgment, which refused to entertain its petition against Maharashtra government's Rs 264 crore compensation for acquiring its land for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet train project. Counsel, representing the appellant company, mentioned the matter before a bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud for urgent hearing. The apex court agreed to consider the matter on February 24.

The Godrej Group had challenged the award and compensation of Rs 264 crore by the Deputy Collector on September 15, 2022, for acquiring 39,252 sq m (9.69 acres). The company said ini-



tially Rs 572 crore was offered and filed the writ petition, also challenging the provisions of the law.

However, the high court, in decision on February 9, described the bullet train project as "of national importance and public interest" and dismissed the petition.

It had said it did not find any illegality in the award or in the "decision taken by the appropriate government in granting extension to make an award by exercising powers under first proviso to Section 25 of the Fair Compensation Act."

'Team Jorge' meddling in Indian political system: Congress

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Congress Thursday alleged that "Team Jorge" has been used by the Modi government, which is meddling into the Indian political system, just like the Cambridge Analytica and Pegasus.

Addressing a press conference here, Congress leader Pawan Khera, said "Just like Pegasus and Cambridge Analytica - a group of hackers by the code name of 'Team Jorge' meddled in the Indian elections and political systems.

"Is there a link between the Fake News Portal Post Card News & 'Team Jorge' - A team of Israeli contractors who claim to have manipulated more than 30 elections around the world using hacking, sabotage and automated disinformation on social media?"

Khera raised questions over the hackers' team, and said, "Is BJP taking the help of Israeli Contract Hackers to meddle in the Indian political system by spreading massive disinformation on Digital Media?"

Tripura polls: Over 81% turnout, several incidents of violence reported

Agartala | Agencies

Over 81 per cent of the 28.14 lakh voters in Tripura exercised their franchise till 4 p.m. as the state went to the polls on Thursday amid heavy security, election officials said.

Voter turnout was 91.82 per cent and 89.38 per cent in 2013 and 2018 Assembly elections, respectively.

"Over one lakh voters are still in the queue at many polling stations across the state even after the voting officially ended at 4 p.m. The final voting percentage might cross 86 per cent," an election official said.

Many incidents of attacks on political workers, intimidation and obstruction of voters were



reported from different districts.

At least 60 opposition party workers were injured after the ruling party workers allegedly attacked them in Gomati, Sepahijala, South Tripura and West Tripura districts.

A senior police officer said that a constable was suspended in Gomati district for his alleged role in urging people to cast their votes in favour of the ruling BJP.

I-T 'SURVEY' AT BBC OFFICES CONTINUES FOR THIRD STRAIGHT DAY

New Delhi: The

Income Tax (I-T) department's 'survey' at BBC offices in Delhi and Mumbai continued for the third consecutive day amid reports that some of its employees in the national capital haven't gone home since the process started.

According to reports, the I-T department officials have gathered data related to financial aspects like taxation and the company's structure, till now.

There is no clarity on how long the "survey" operations are going to continue, sources aware of the developments, said. Several opposition parties led by Congress have deplored the development, calling it a "political vendetta". Information and broadcasting minister Anurag Thakur had earlier said that the I-T department conducts such surveys from time to time where irregularities are found. He added that once the survey is completed, all the details would be provided.



TRAI tells telecom operators to block pesky calls, SMSes from telemarketers

The telecom regulator told the mobile operators to remove confusions among recipients of message and prevent their misuse and no look-alike headers (headers which are similar by virtue of combination of small case or large case letters) are to be registered by access providers in names of different principal entities.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Alarmed at the rising pesky mobile calls and text messages by telemarketers, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on Thursday directed all telecom service providers to reverify registered headers and message templates on



distributed ledger technologies (DLT) platform and block all unverified headers and message templates within 30 and 60 days, respectively.

In a new directive, the telecom regulator said that the mobile operators need to ensure that temporary headers are deactivated immediately after the time duration for which such headers were created.

TRAI issued the new directions to

providers to stop misuse of headers and message templates and curb unauthorised promotions using telecom resources. It directed mobile operators to take action against erring telemarketers as per the provisions of the regulations and also initiate actions as per relevant legal laws.

All the telecom service providers have been directed to comply with the above directions within 30 days.

PAY, BENEFITS NO LONGER ONLY CRITICAL FACTORS IN DECIDING WHERE TO WORK

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Two thirds (66 per cent) of UK employees want to work for companies trying to have a positive impact on the world, but 68 per cent say that current efforts by business to tackle environmental and societal challenges do not go far enough.

Forty-five per cent of workers would consider resigning from their job if the values of the company did not align with their own. Indeed 35 per cent report having resigned from another position for this reason, while the same proportion would consider taking a pay cut to work for a company that shares their values.

The Barometer illustrates the link between companies' social and environmental actions and employees' job satisfaction. For instance, those who say their company has goals or targets on the environment are more likely to say they are motivated at work than those who do not think their company has goals or targets (73 per cent vs. 50 per cent in the UK).

Pay and benefits are no longer the only critical factors in deciding where to work, with a striking majority citing their employers' values (80 per cent) and commitment to the environment (76 per cent) and social equality (75 per cent) as key criteria, reveals a survey commissioned by Paul Polman.

The Net Positive Barometer, a survey of 2,000 British employees, on Thursday said 41 per cent are concerned about paying their bills, while 69 per cent are anxious about the future of the planet and society, and 64 per cent of employees say that the acceleration of global crises raises the bar of expectations for businesses.

This is especially the case for Gen Z workers, who already makeup 9.5 per cent of the UK population. Two thirds (66 per cent) would be less motivated if their company's values did not align with their own.

Paul Polman, responsible business advocate and co-author of "Net Positive", stated: "The Net Positive Barometer is a wakeup call. Times have changed and employees no longer want outdated corporate social responsibility initiatives and



a lack of action. Unsatisfied and unmotivated employees recognise the power is in the hands of the CEOs.

"They want to work for companies which work to tackle the world's greatest challenges, and they want to play their part. Or they'll leave."

Jean-Pascal Tricoire, CEO and Chairman of Schneider Electric, said: "Attracting and retaining talent is essential for a performing company. In times of global crises, employees expect their employers to step up, speak out, take

action on key environmental and societal issues. At Schneider Electric we work to align profit and purpose."

Sharan Burrow, Former General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation, added: "Companies must be courageous and transform their businesses together with their employees, rather than making more empty promises behind closed doors. Gen Z wants to join them on this journey and to be a part of the solution to tackle climate change, ensure rights are respected through their supply change and that inequality is effectively addressed.

"CEOs must embrace this partnership and they'll be rewarded with a more satisfied and motivated workforce."

Those CEOs that fail to act risk losing talent, weakening engagement and productivity, and undermining the success of their business in the years ahead. Those who step up will reap the rewards of motivated, innovative, and loyal employees who work together with senior leadership to accelerate the company's journey toward becoming a more responsible, more sustainable, and ultimately more profitable business.

Drugs, liquor, cash valued at Rs 147 cr seized in three poll-bound NE states



Agartala/Shillong | Agencies

The Election Commission has seized drugs, cash, and freebies worth over Rs 147 crore in Tripura, where Assembly elections were held on Thursday, and Nagaland and Meghalaya, which will go to the polls on February 27, officials said.

According to the officials the seized items included Rs 14 crore in cash, foreign liquor valued at over Rs 9 crore and drugs worth of Rs 85.76 crore.

The highest seizures were made in Meghalaya at over Rs 63 crore, followed by Tripura (Rs 44.67 crore) and Nagaland (Rs 39.19 crore).

The poll panel said that the seizures in the three states marked a significant increase -- over 20 times -- as compared to the Assembly elections in 2018. The Commission said that a special inter-agency team has been constituted to control illegal drugs. The team has destroyed ganja worth over Rs 14 crore being cultivated in Tripura.



Nikki Yadav murder case

ACCUSED TAKEN TO CRIME SCENE AT KASHMIRI GATE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The police team probing the Nikki Yadav murder case took the accused Sahil Gehlot to the crime scene in Kashmiri Gate where he had allegedly killed her, police sources on Thursday.

Sources said that the murder was allegedly committed near the Kashmiri Gate area and Gehlot then drove with the body all the way to his dhaba near village Mitraon - a distance of around 45 km - where he stuffed it in a refrigerator and proceeded coolly with his wedding on February 10.

Meanwhile, police teams are also scanning CCTV around the place and on the route to verify all this.

"The complete sequence is



being examined so that the exact place and time of Nikki's murder can be known. Police have also summoned Ashish, Gehlot's brother, in whose car he strangled Nikki with a data cable, for questioning," said the sources.

Sources also said that the police team will also take Gehlot to Nizamuddin and Anand Vihar railway stations, where he had taken Yadav in the car the day he killed her.

According to the official, on February 9 night, the accused Gehlot, a resident of Mitraon village, went to meet the woman at her Uttam Nagar residence where she lived with her younger sister.

"Gehlot stayed there for two-three hours and later both of them went to Nizamuddin railway station. But as they could not get tickets to Goa, they changed their plan to go to Himachal Pradesh and reached ISBT, Kashmir Gate," said the official.

"When the duo reached ISBT, an argument broke out between them. In between the fight, Gehlot kept receiving back-to-back calls from his family, which he says triggered him to his threshold point and he turned violent," said a source.

FAMILY DEMANDS SPEEDY TRIAL

Jhajjar (Haryana): The family members of Nikki Yadav, whose partner Sahil Gehlot had strangled her to death and stuffed her body inside a refrigerator on the day of his marriage to another woman, on Thursday demanded a fast-track court trial in the case.

Praveen Yadav, the uncle of Nikki, who was cremated at her village in Jhajjar on Wednesday evening, alleged that the police are "misleading" the family and the public. The case should be heard at a fast-track court and the culprit should be hanged. The police are trying to mislead us. Nikki was living at a hostel, she was not in a live-in relationship. The accused should be given capital punishment," he said.

Arms & ammunition recovered from slain terrorist near LoC in Kashmir's Kupawra

Srinagar | Agencies

Arms/ammunition were recovered on Thursday from the slain terrorist after an infiltration bid on the Line of Control (LoC) in Tangdhar sector of J&K's Kupwara district was foiled.

The Army said in a statement that arms and ammunition have been recovered from the terrorist slain during an attempted infiltration in the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday night.

"A thorough Joint Search Operation was launched along with J&K police in the morning resulting in recovery of one dead militant, one AK series rifle, one light automatic weapon, six magazines, two grenades and large quantities of war-like stores," said the Army.

"Indian Army eliminated an infiltration attempt in forward areas of Tangdhar sector on the night of 15/16 Feb 23,



thereby preventing efforts of Pakistan to destabilise peace and tranquility in Kashmir Valley and successfully maintaining higher moral ascendancy over the enemy along the LoC.

"Alert troops deployed in an anti-infiltration grid detected the movement of three militants across own side of the LoC while they were approaching the LoC Fence.

"On being challenged at close proximity to the post, an intense firefight ensued between the militants and

alert troops, resulting in successful elimination of one militant while grievously injuring the other.

"The injured militant managed to flee across, along with the third militant taking advantage of darkness.

"Continued infiltration bids along the LoC are an uncanny reminder of Pakistan's efforts to orchestrate militancy in Kashmir Valley and disrupt peace and harmony while putting on the facade of ceasefire understanding", the statement said.

Cattle scam: CBI traces 346 fake bank accounts used to divert crime proceeds

Kolkata | Agencies

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probing the multi-crore cattle smuggling scam in West Bengal has traced as many as 346 fake bank accounts opened in the name of third parties with a district cooperative bank in Birbhum for the purpose of diversion of the scam proceeds to different channels.

Sources said that during the course of investigation, it has also been revealed that these accounts were opened in the names of individuals coming from marginalised families in the districts whose identity proofs like Aadhaar card were collected assuring them of getting enrolled for different welfare



schemes of the state government.

The CBI officers personally went to the residences of these individuals in whose names these accounts were opened and all of them informed the central agency that they had no knowledge of the existence of such bank accounts in their names.

These 346 accounts were detected by the CBI in three phases in the last few months. The CBI detected

177 such accounts in the first phase, followed by 54 in the second phase and 115 accounts in the third phase.

The manager of the district cooperative bank where such accounts were held was also questioned by the CBI, who admitted that he was forced to allow opening of such accounts following instructions from the higher authorities.

Meanwhile, Trinamool Congress strongman and the party's Birbhum district President, Anubrata Mondal, will be presented before a special CBI court in Asansol on Friday, where the central agency's counsel is expected to present the details in this matter to the court.

Mondal is in custody as the prime accused in the cattle smuggling scam.

BJP SCARED OF OPPOSITION UNITY, SAYS TEJASHWI YADAV

Patna | Agencies

Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav on Thursday claimed that the BJP is afraid of opposition unity in the country.

Returning after meeting Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Tejashwi Yadav, asked to comment on Union Home Minister Amit Shah's statement that opposition parties cannot become united, said: "Amit Shah can say anything but he and his BJP are afraid of opposition unity. I have met Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and earlier met with Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren and discussed the current political issues of the country. We are continuously meeting with opposition leaders."

"I am going to Hyderabad for the inauguration of a new Secretariat building on Friday following the invitation of Telangana CM K Chandrashekhar Rao," he said.

Besides Tejashwi Yadav, JD-U



national President Lalan Singh will also go to Hyderabad for the inauguration. Sources have said that some more opposition leaders will be assembled there and they would try to give a message to BJP about the opposition unity.

Besides Tejashwi Yadav, his elder brother and Environment and Forest Minister Tej Pratap Yadav slammed BJP for alleging Jungle Raj.

"BJP is trying to defame the Mahagathbandhan government of Bihar and hence they are saying Jungle Raj. The leaders of BJP are involved in murders in the country," Tej Pratap said.

Reacting on controversial JD-U leader Upendra Kushwaha's statement that "Lalu Raj" will return when Tejashwi Yadav becomes Chief Minister of Bihar, he said: "We have Nitish and Lalu government in Bihar and it is giving jobs to unemployed youths."

BODIES OF WOMAN, PARAMOUR FOUND IN LAKE

Hyderabad: A married woman and her lover, who had eloped on Valentine's Day, were found dead in a pond in Medak district of Telangana on Thursday.

Bodies of Kalpana and Khaleel, both in their 20s, were retrieved from a lake near a Narsingi village. Two pairs of footwear and a motorbike were found near the lake.

The police with the help of local fishermen pulled out the bodies, after a search for two days. The bodies were sent for autopsy to the government hospital.

The couple had been missing from their homes in the village since February 14. Kalpana had married two months ago. They were in love for a couple of years but since they belonged to different religions, their families were against the marriage proposal. Two months ago, Kalpana's parents married her off to another man.

The woman, who had come to her parents' place a few days ago, eloped with Khaleel. On a complaint by the woman's parents, police had launched a search for the couple. Police suspect that they jumped into it to end their lives after leaving their footwear and motorbike near the lake.



Mehrauli demolitions: Delhi govt approves 'immediate aid' to families made homeless

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In the wake of the Delhi Development Authority's recent demolition drive in south Delhi that rendered many homeless, the Delhi government on Thursday approved a proposal to provide 'immediate aid and relief' to affected families.

Highlighting the severity of the situation, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has approved a proposal to provide affected families with tents, food, blankets, and other essential supplies. The file is now pending with LG V.K. Saxena for the approval.

Delhi Revenue Minister Kailash Gahlot had sent a proposal to Chief Minister seeking to address the con-



cerns of the affected families, who had lost their homes on Wednesday. In the proposal, he apprised the CM of the recent developments that had taken place in the matter so far. The DDA had initiated a large-scale demolition drive

in the Ladha Sarai village under the pretext of a disputed demarcation of the Mehrauli Archaeological Park. The move left hundreds of persons without shelter or basic amenities.

However, opposing the

move by the DDA, the Delhi government intervened to stop the demolition and ordered a fresh demarcation of the disputed area through orders of Revenue Minister Gahlot.

Meanwhile, LG Saxena on Tuesday directed the Delhi Development Authority to stall the ongoing demolition drive in these villages till further instructions.

"The decision came after a delegation of residents of these villages met the LG and sought relief from the demolition drive while citing the anomalies in the demarcation of land in these areas, that was carried out by the AAP Government in 2021", a statement from LG Secretariat had said.

Another leopard spotted in Ghaziabad court; bar association calls strike

Ghaziabad | Agencies

Another leopard on Thursday was spotted in the premises of a Ghaziabad court, barely 10 days after a big cat entered the same establishment and attacked three persons.

According to lawyers, the leopard, suspected to have entered the District Court premises on Wednesday, was seen on Thursday morning in a CCTV footage.

Expressing concern over the frequent spotting of big cats, the Ghaziabad Bar Association on Thursday called a strike.

"Due to safety concerns, all the advocates have observed the strike and closed their respective chambers," an

advocate said. "The news of leopard spotting triggered panic among the court staff," Nitin Yadav, Ghaziabad Bar Association Secretary, said.

"Later, a meeting was convened by the Bar Association, and it was decided to observe a strike today," he added.

On February 8, a leopard that entered the premises of three persons - a lawyer, a cobbler and a police constable, near the old building complex.

The cobbler had sustained serious injuries in the attack.

A 12-member team of the Forest Department along with the police personnel were engaged in a four-hour-long operation to capture the leopard.

CBI faces court's wrath for prolonged probe in teacher's recruitment scam

Kolkata | Agencies

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) sleuths probing the multi-crore teachers' recruitment scam in West Bengal on Thursday faced the wrath of a special CBI judge for the slow pace of investigation by the agency in the matter.

"Even the accused have some rights. The investigation agency cannot continue with the investigation for an indefinite period. What is going on is not right," the judge said at a hearing on bail application by former West Bengal education minister Partha Chatterjee and six others in the matter.

"You wrote in the charge sheet that you need to investigate others for their roles in the scam. But where are they? I have been hearing the matter for the last two months. I understand that this is a massive task. But have you recorded the statements of others?" the judge questioned the investigating officials.

Giving reasons for the delay, CBI's counsel said that counsel of the accused per-

sons is accusing of delay in the investigation process without looking at the other side of it. "When the investigation started, the charges were just of illegal recruitment against money. But as the course of investigation progressed it was revealed that the entire conspiracy, starting from how the recruitment process will be manipulated to what would be the next course of action, was pre-planned," the CBI counsel said.

He also pointed out that till date the investigation agency had been able to dig out how the optical mark recognition (OMR) sheets were tampered with to facilitate irregular recruitment. "In course of investigation, names of many important government functionaries and influential persons. All of them are parts of the bigger conspiracy. The agency's case diary speaks everything," the CBI counsel said.

Although the judge of the special court asked CBI to complete the investigation at the earliest, it refused to grant the bail plea for Chatterjee and others.

Online registration starts for Agniveer recruitment in J&K, Ladakh

Srinagar | Agencies

The Army on Thursday started online registration for recruitment under the Agniveer scheme in J&K and Ladakh which will continue till March 15.

"All eligible unmarried male candidates born between 01 Oct 2002 to 01 Apr 2006 (both dates inclusive) with requisite educational qualifications from UT of J&K belonging to Srinagar, Anantnag, Baramulla, Pulwama, Badgam, Kupwara, Shopian, Ganderbal, Bandipora and Kulgam districts and UT of Ladakh belonging to Leh and Kargil districts can apply for enrolment under categories of Agniveer General Duty, Agniveer Technical, Agniveer Clerk/Store Keeper Technical and Agniveer Tradesmen," the Army said in a statement.

The recruitment rally by Army Recruiting Office, Srinagar is tentatively scheduled to be conducted in June 2023 at Anantnag High Ground, South Kashmir, UT of J&K. "Candidates are advised to register online at website



www.joinindianarmy.nic.in at the earliest. Indian Army further amplified that this would be the first recruitment under the new procedure introduced with the written examination being scheduled before the physical and medical test," the Army

statement said. "Army Recruiting Office, Srinagar has advised that recruitment is a free service and selection is fair and purely based on merit. No money is required to be paid to anyone. Details can be obtained on Email ID - arosrina-

gar123@gmail.com and Landline Nos 0194-2311282 and 0194-2310164. Additional information has been made available as videos in Urdu and can be accessed by scanning the barcode in the notice published by ARO Srinagar."

WOMAN DRUG PEDDLER ARRESTED IN NORTH DELHI

New Delhi: A 27-year-old woman drug peddler was arrested in north Delhi with 540 grams of heroin, valued at more than Rs 2 crore in the international market, police said on Thursday. The accused, identified as Aarti, a resident of Majnu Ka Tilla, used to bring the stock of the contraband from UP's Bareilly.

According to Deputy Commissioner of Police, North, Sagar Singh Kalsi, inputs were received that one woman, who is involved in supplying contraband drugs, would come to Lancer Road near B.D. Estate, Timarpur, and a police team reached the spot and laid a trap. "Consequently, the dedicated efforts of the team bore fruits, when at about 5 p.m, they nabbed the woman," he said, adding that a plastic bag, containing the heroin, was recovered from her scooter.

On interrogation, Aarti disclosed that Bhanu had allured her and asked to make supply of contraband drugs in the area as per his direction. "So she fell in greed to earn easy money and started to take stock and supply the contraband heroin as desired by Bhanu. She was earning adequate profit by doing such illegal activities and also came to contact of another person namely Rahish of Uttar Pradesh and she started to buy the stock of contraband drugs from him by paying Rs 1,000 for one gram of heroin and further she used to supply the contraband drugs for Rs 1,500 per gram to earn easy profit," said the DCP. "Subsequently, raids were conducted at the possible hideouts of the alleged main suppliers of the contraband drugs namely Bhanu and Rahish, but both were found absconding," said the official, adding that further investigation of the case is in progress and efforts are being made to nab the main source of contraband drugs.



WITH EYE ON VINDHYA REGION, BJP GOVT COMES UP WITH AIRPORT PROJECT IN MP'S REWA IN POLL YEAR

Ahead of the Madhya Pradesh Assembly elections, the ruling BJP has come up with an airport project in the Vindhya region of the state.

Praveen Dwivedi | Bhopal

The foundation stone of the airport was laid by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia in Rewa district on Wednesday.

Though no specific deadline for project completion has been given, the officials associated with the project said that the airport, for operating 19-seater aircraft, will be ready by 2025.

Chorhta, the place where the proposed airport to be established, has an existing airfield, and the Airport Authority of India (AAI) will strengthen the existing runway along with the grading of the runway strip area. Also, the AAI will construct the terminal building with a peak hour capacity of 50 passengers, which will cost around Rs 300 crore.

Spread over 61.95-acre land, Rewa's existing airfield, at present, has a runway of 1400 metres with a small building of 150 sq metres and was owned by the state government. However, in December 2022, the state gov-



ernment handed it over to the AAI for the revival and construction of facilities.

The state government will provide additional land of 290 acres for making the proposed airport suitable for ATR-72 operations in future. "Out of 290 acres of land, 137 acres are required for VFR operations and 153 acres are required for IFR operations. The state cabinet has already approved the proposal to acquire 246 acres of private land and approved the compensation of Rs 206 crore towards payment to the

landowners," said Ramji Awasthi, a senior official of the AAI, who is currently serving as Director of Bhopal's Raja Bhoj Airport.

The state government is expected to soon approve the acquisition of the remaining land, he added.

The much-needed development, undoubtedly, will provide air services not only to the citizens of Rewa but also to over a dozen of districts of the Vindhya region such as Sidhi, Satna, Shadole, Umaria, Singrouli, Anupur and others. At present, people

of these districts travel between 250-300 km to nearby airports - either to Jabalpur or Prayagraj (Allahabad) for emergency purposes.

Besides the development vision, the ruling BJP also has a political vision behind the establishment of the first airport in the region.

In 2018 Assembly elections, the BJP had won 24 out of total 30 seats in the region. However, since then, the saffron party has been witnessing one after another defeat in this particular region. For instance, the ruling party lost bypoll in Raigaon (Satna) in November 2021, and then lost mayoral posts in Singrauli and Rewa.

Notably, the Congress had won Rewa mayoral seat after 30 years, and was striving hard to revive in the Vindhya region, which used to be its stronghold during the eras of Arjun Singh and Srinivasi Tiwari. Perhaps, the multiple poll defeats have made Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan shift his focus to the region, and therefore he came up with a major gift for the region ahead of assembly polls due by the end of 2023.

Twelve cheetahs to be translocated from S Africa to India on Feb 18

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Bhopal

Twelve cheetahs will be translocated from South Africa to India on February 18, Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate change, Bhupendra Yadav on Thursday.

The big cats will be translocated to Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh.

Bringing the cheetahs back to India will help in restoring the nation's natural heritage, the minister said.

The goal of the Cheetah introduction project in India is to establish viable cheetah metapopulation in India that allows the cheetah to perform its functional role as a top predator and provide space for the expansion of the cheetah within its historic range thereby contributing to its global conservation efforts, he added.

Minister Yadav also thanked the Defence Ministry and the Indian Air Force for extending full support for the translocation. Yadav also mentioned about the various initiatives taken up by the ministry in the areas of wildlife conservation, including Project Cheetah, LIFE concept and its sustainability, Green growth namely Green Credit, Mishti - for mangrove conservation and Gaj Utsav among others.

The last cheetahs in the Indian wilderness were recorded in 1947 where three cheetahs were shot in the Sal (Shorea robusta) forests of Koriya in Chhattisgarh. The main reasons for the decline of cheetah in India were large scale capture of animals from the wild for coursing, bounty and sport hunting, extensive habitat conversion along with



consequent decline in prey base and in 1952, they were declared as extinct.

The major objectives of the introduction project include to establish breeding cheetah populations in safe habitats across its historic range and manage them as a metapopulation and to use the cheetah as a charismatic flagship and umbrella species to garner resources for restoring open forest and savanna systems that will benefit biodiversity and ecosystem services from these ecosystems.

In this context, the Government of India initiated G2G consultative meetings with Republic of Namibia which culminated in the signing of MoU between the two countries on 20th July 2022 for cheetah conservation.

Following the signing of MoU, in a historic first wild to wild intercontinental translocation, eight cheetahs were transported from Namibia to India on September 17, 2022 and were released into the quarantine bomas by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. As per the Action Plan for Cheetah Introduction in India, annually 10-12 cheetahs are

required to be imported from African countries for the next 5 years at least. In this context, the Government of India initiated bilateral negotiations with Republic of South Africa since 2021 for cooperation in the field of Cheetah conservation. The negotiations were successfully concluded with the signing of MoU with the Republic of South Africa in January 2023.

Under the provisions of the MoU, a first batch of 12 cheetahs (7 males, 5 females) will be translocated from South Africa to India on February 18. The translocation of 12 cheetahs from South Africa to Gwalior and onwards to Kuno National Park through Helicopters is being done by the Indian Air Force. A delegation of cheetah experts, veterinarians and senior officials will be accompanying the cheetahs during the transcontinental translocation exercise.

Officials said that post arrival in India, all 12 cheetahs will be housed in specially created enclosures at Kuno National Park for completing the mandatory quarantine period and the animals will be intensively monitored.

Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia's shot injures BJP worker

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A BJP worker got injured in a shot made by Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia in an impromptu cricket outing in Madhya Pradesh's Rewa district on Wednesday.

The incident occurred when the Union Minister, while inaugurating the newly-developed cricket stadium developed by the Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association (MPCA), tried his hand at batting.

As per information,



Scindia, surrounded by several BJP leaders and workers and officials, played a shot, and a party worker, identified as Vikas Mishra, tried to catch the ball, but missed

and it hit on his forehead. Mishra was rushed to a nearby hospital in an official vehicle.

Scindia also reached the hospital to enquire about Mishra's condition. In a video that surfaced on social media, Scindia was seen talking to doctors and consoling the injured party worker.

Before inaugurating the new stadium, Scindia, along with Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, laid the foundation stone of an airport in Rewa.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan asks state ministers to cancel plans, stay in Bhopal on Sunday

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has asked all his ministers to cancel their plans, including those related to the ongoing Vikas Yatra to showcase the developmental work in the poll-bound state, and remain in Bhopal on Sunday.

An official in the chief minister's office said the ministers have been called to celebrate the second anniversary of Chouhan's "plant a sapling daily" campaign to save the environment.

"A Cabinet meeting will also be held in Bhopal...Vikas Yatra which started on February 5 and will continue till February 25 [will also be reviewed]. A dinner will also be organised at the chief minister's house," said a second official.



A minister, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said they have been asked to spend 10 days during the Vikas Yatra in their constituencies to address grievances and lay the foundation stones of development works. "But suddenly, we have been asked to come to Bhopal."

Videos showing people opposing the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders and questioning poor development and implementation of schemes have gone viral on social media during the yatra.

Chouhan separately met Mohan Bhagwat, the chief of BJP's ideological mentor Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, on Wednesday in Nagpur. His office did not share the details of the meeting.

In Khargone, patients face hardship as doctors skip duty in district hospital

Team Absolute | Kharagone

Hundreds of patients admitted to Khargone's district hospital faced hardship after more than 300 doctors decided to skip duty for two hours in protest of "interference" in work and promotions. Both government and private practitioners came together and decided unanimously to join their colleagues across the state.

Notably, nearly 16,000 doctors in the state went on strike for two hours on Thursday morning from 10 am to 12 noon to protest what they called "bureaucratic interference in their work and promotions," threatening to go on strike indefinitely if their demands are not met.

As part of the state-wide agitation, doctors did not provide medical serv-



ices to patients at the district hospital on Thursday. As a result, many patients who sought treatment at

OPDs had to return without treatment, while others waited for doctors to return.

Indeed, the doctors have been protesting their demands since Wednesday. Patients could not be treated in the hospital in this situation.

Dr Ratnesh Mahajan stated that the doctors' demand from the government is that the time scale pay scale be strictly implemented, the old pension scheme is implemented, doctors be appointed to higher posts in the department, there be no political interference in transfers, the Sarthak app compulsion is lifted, contract doctors be regularised, and new appointments be made through PSC. During the protest, the doctors also chanted slogans. Meanwhile, the administration and the department are using Ayush doctors as an alternative arrangement.

Masked man throws 2 bombs at university

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A masked man threw two crude bombs on a government university campus in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur. The incident was captured on CCTV camera.

The footage shows the man walking inside the gate of Rani Durgawati State Government University and throwing the two bombs, one after another, within seconds.

The masked man then ran towards a waiting motorcycle before the two men sped away.

The explosions happened outside the university canteen. No one was injured in the attack, the police said.

Two unexploded crude bombs were recovered from the area, the police said. They suspect the attacker threw the bombs at an empty area outside the university canteen to prove their intent about a serious attack next



time. The Congress's student wing National Students' Union of India, or NSUI, alleged the target of the attacks was their leader Adnan Ansari. The NSUI said Ansari's continuous protest against the university management may have led to the attack. The incident raises questions on campus security arrangements.

The police said they are investigating the matter.

Focus is on tribal communities, Mission Hospital building built over land worth Rs 40 crores razed

Madhya Pradesh has the highest number of tribals in India but is yet to have a chief minister from these communities, said Chandrashekhar Azad, president of the Azad Samaj Party, in a rally, putting the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in a spot of worry.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

That is one reason the BJP government in the state is pinning hopes on the PESA (Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act. The Act aims to ensure self-governance via traditional gram sabhas in scheduled areas dominated by tribal communities.

Madhya Pradesh recently made rules to implement the Act.

The state government is organising district and block-level training workshops related to PESA rules. The coordinators who are being trained will work as facilitators and help tribal communities to know and access their rights.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said: "I am happy that you have made up your mind to become PESA co-coordinator. Now

no one will be able to grab the land of tribal brothers and sisters by deceit. People coming from outside will have to inform the Gram Sabha. If the tribal class has the right on forest produce, then their economic empowerment will also happen."

PESA is not just an Act, it is a campaign to change the lives of tribal communities, Chouhan said. Special gram sabhas are being held for implementing the PESA Act. The state government is trying to connect the rights and society. According to the 2011 census 21.5 per cent of the state's population are Scheduled Tribe (ST) while 15.6 per cent are Scheduled Caste (SC). As many as 47 of the state's seats are reserved for STs. In 2018, the BJP won just 16 of them. Of the 35 seats reserved for the SCs, the BJP won 17.

Team Absolute | Ratlam

Ratlam administration team on Thursday demolished a building of Mission Hospital built over 16,000 square metres of land in the Mission Compound. During the action, heavy police forces were also deployed since the building was in the middle of the city. This land is said to be worth more than Rs 40 crore.

Previously, in October of last year, the administration attempted to demolish the closed hospital building, but the people of the Christian community protested by expressing their authority over the property.

A team of administration led by sub-divisional magistrate (urban) Sanjeev Pandey and SDM (rural) Trilochan Jain, and others rushed to the site early on Thursday at 6 am. Three Poclain machines and other heavy machines were pressed into



duty along with a large force of labourers.

Initially, people were surprised to see a large force of heavy machines and labourers at the compound.

As soon as they knew about the drive, they came out and shifted the children admitted to the hospital to

other places. During the drive, it was found that apart from the closed Christian hospital, there are some residential buildings as well. The administration says that this government land is registered on Khasra No 87 and it was encroached upon years ago, which is why this action

was taken. It was told that years ago a case related to the death of a newborn child came to light in the hospital built here, after which there was opposition to this hospital and gradually it came to the verge of closure and later was closed.

In October 2022, the administration decided to take action, but at that time the people of the Christian community staged a protest and claimed their ownership of the land. They even approached the court, due to which the action could not be carried out.

Meanwhile, the court rejected their appeal, after which administrative action was taken and the entire structure was razed.

While removing the construction, there was a dispute between the Mission Compound Committee and the Christian community, but the police intervened in the matter.



EDITOR'S SPECS

MLA'S LETTER TO SUSPEND
TENDERS OF RS 18K CR HAUNTS
K'TAKA BJP AHEAD OF POLLS

A letter by BJP MLA Gulihatti Shekar for suspending tenders related to the Upper Bhadra project worth Rs 18,000 crore is proving to be a big setback for the BJP government in poll-bound Karnataka. The opposition is targeting the BJP just when the ruling party is planning to contest the Assembly elections with a clean image. At a time when Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah are making repeated visits to state and pledging to again form a BJP government in the state, the letter by Shekar, the BJP MLA from Hosadurga, alleging corruption and lack of transparency in the tenders has given the opposition parties a chance to corner the ruling party. When asked about the letter, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai brushed it aside as a casual development. Shekar has been asked to give specific details to get the matter inquired, Bommai maintained. Shekar in his letter sent to the water resources department last week had demanded to cancel the tenders worth Rs 18,000 crore claiming that there was no transparency in issuing the tenders. He maintained that the tenders were floated hurriedly and the board had not ensured transparency while issuing them. BJP leaders are hailing the release of Rs 5,300 crore for the Upper Bhadra project to woo the voters. However, the questions raised by Shekar is proving to be an embarrassment for the ruling party ahead of this year's Assembly polls.

OTT HAS PIRACY TO CONTEND WITH

Vinod Mirani

One knows that OTT platforms pose a challenge to the exhibition trade. So much so that more films are failing than ever before! And some of them do find their viewers when these films hit the OTT platforms; usually after 30 to 45 days, depending on how they perform at the box-office. A thief is always two steps ahead of the cops. That is the reality of life and that we learnt long back. Though this is not in any way a happy news for films, the fact is that even OTT platforms, which are said to have lost their initial sheen and the subscriptions show a decline, face competition now. From the same old pirates!

This piracy menace has been troubling the film business ever since the video format came about. Earlier, new film releases were transferred to the video format by various means. It could be a camera print shot taken by a person watching a movie in a theatre, or created when the final theatrical release print is in transition from a processing lab to a cinema.

Mumbai has been the hub of the film industry and all the film processing laboratories are based in the city. The city limits extend to far-off suburbs such as Thane and Kalyan on one side and Virar on the other. Film prints were carried by couriers to the cinemas in these parts for next day's screenings. It was during this movement that a film print could be hijacked for a few hours, converted to a video format on Telecine, and voila, a video print of the best quality was ready to hit the market.

It was not surprising that whenever a new film was released in cinemas on a Friday, it was also available in a network of video libraries and illegal video theatres to be watched hassle-free. Not to forget the cable networks, which provided video content at home, also started showing a new film the same day. They beamed the new release at your home while others were watching it at a cinema.

That was how the piracy of films originated. Karachi and Singapore were the two major hubs for pirated Indian films. Now, with the digital format, piracy has not only become easier but also guarantees high-quality results. Now, piracy has also penetrated code-protected film release discs and the OTT format. No sooner is a film made available on an OTT platform, it is pirated.

To repeat the old idiom, a thief is always two steps ahead of the law. And now, even the US is no stranger to piracy. According to a report, on the piracy circuit, 'Spider-Man: No Way Home' has been the best-rated film, followed by 'The Batman'.

What about India and our films, mainly the ones in Hindi, which have a wider market sans language barriers. They are similar victims of piracy. But do we care?

Once his film has been released, the producer hardly cares. Also, the laws and their implementation in India are poor. Films may enjoy a limited following on the piracy circuit unless they are available on OTT platforms. There are today portals where anybody can post content. They only act as providers because they on their own do



not post anything and, hence, shirk responsibility. Films apart, the most pirated content happens to be our film music. There are portals that make unlimited songs from Indian films available and there are no clear ownership rights defined in this case. Songs are uploaded by individuals who do not necessarily hold the rights to them.

Thanks to OTT platforms, people have easy access to films. But what about old films and film songs that are made available on digital media? Who, if anyone at all, gets the royalties?

IN SEARCH OF A SCRIPT? ASK CHATGPT

The hot topic all over, be it in the news media or social media, is ChatGPT, the artificial intelligence (AI) bot launched by a San Francisco startup, Open AI, backed by Microsoft, among others.

ChatGPT has caught the fancy of old and young alike. Many other developers are working on AI, but Microsoft has stolen a march with ChatGPT. Not to be left behind, Google launched its own AI version, Bard. It seems the Bard was launched in a hurry and during its very initial trial, it exposed major glitches, coming up with wrong information. The hurry has cost Google a \$100-billion market dent, according to the media reports.

ChatGPT is free but not easy to access as yet. There seems to be a huge traffic -- probably, more people than expected want

to log in because of initial curiosity. A user can delegate a lot of his work to ChatGPT. You want to write an email or an article, or edit a piece, just leave it to ChatGPT! What is in it for the filmmakers? A lot as I see it. It can suggest a theme to a writer in a certain genre, it can even develop a story for you. It can edit your story, prune it down to a third as we were asked to do in college and we found it very challenging. It has material on just about every topic under the sun. Last week, a first-year computer engineering student I know, was asked to write a short Rap song on kinematics. ChatGPT did it for him and he also won a prize for that!

For filmmakers, who pay crores to a star but don't believe in compensating a writer enough, will find this handy. If you can think up a theme for your film, ChatGPT will do the rest for you. Or, you can ask for suggestions in a certain genre. GPT knows about all the films ever made and will churn out a script for you.

The problem with ChatGPT is that its data knows only about what already exists and the story or script it will turn out for you will only be a rehash of past films. But when did our filmmaker ever care if the script was a copy, inspired or lifted?

international

WHO SAYS MPOX STILL INT'L
PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

Geneva | Agencies

The World Health Organization (WHO) said that a widespread outbreak of the mpox (monkeypox) remained a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).



The WHO officially declared in July 2022 that the mpox outbreak outside of the traditional endemic areas in Africa had already turned into a PHEIC, the highest level of alert that the global health authority could issue, Xinhua news agency reported.

In a statement on Wednesday, the WHO said its experts acknowledged the progress in the global response to the mpox outbreak and a further decline in the number of reported cases during the last few months. However, a few countries continued to see a sustained incidence of cases, while other regions were likely to have under-reporting of confirmed cases. The WHO committee of experts and WHO Secretary-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus have therefore

both maintained that mpox remains an international public health emergency. The latest statistics from the WHO have shown that the current global risk of the mpox outbreak is assessed as moderate, while being reduced from moderate to low in the Region of South-East Asia. It also remains low in the Western Pacific Region.

Meanwhile, the WHO said its preparedness and response plan against the mpox outbreak, which was launched in July 2022 to help guide coordinated public health action, would come to an end in June 2023.

Two WHO regions, Europe and the Americas, which reported 95 percent of diagnosed cases, have maintained stable in case numbers during recent weeks.

As of February 3, 43 countries and territories had not detected any new cases in the past three months, the WHO European Region reported. The Region of the Americas has also reported a stable number of cases in the last six weeks, with 200 to 250 cases per week.

EARTHQUAKE OF
MAGNITUDE 6 HITS
PHILIPPINES

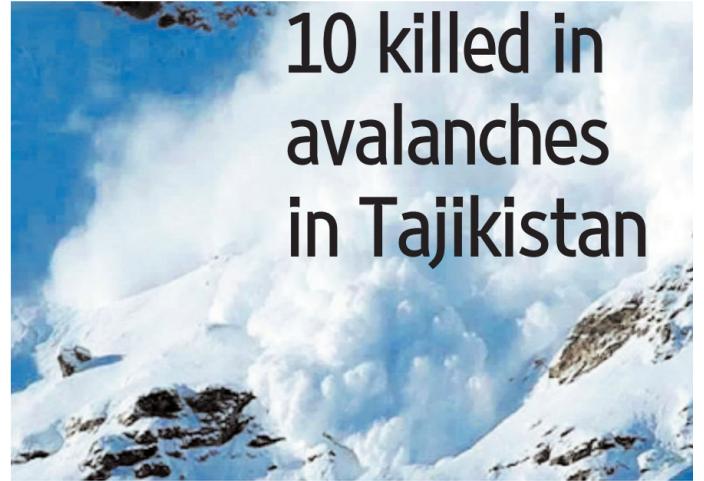
Manila | Agencies

An earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 6 rocked the Philippines on Thursday morning, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said.

The institute said the quake, which occurred at 2:10 a.m. local time, hit at a depth of 10 km, about 11 km southwest of Batuan town in Masbate province on the main island of Luzon, Xinhua news agency reported. The quake was also felt in several areas in Luzon and central Philippines, including Legazpi City in Albay province, Sorsogon, Northern Samar, Negros Occidental, and Southern Leyte, the institute said. There are no reports of damage or casualties.

The US Geological Survey put the earthquake's magnitude at 6.1 and a depth of 20 km.

The Philippines has frequent seismic activity due to its location along the Pacific "Ring of Fire".



Dushanbe | Agencies

10 killed in
avalanches
in Tajikistan

Ten people were killed in avalanches in Tajikistan, according to the Committee for Emergency Situations and Civil Defense.

Eight people died and 22 residential houses were destroyed after heavy snow hit Khorog, the capital city of Tajikistan's eastern Gorno-Badakhshan Region on Wednesday. The avalanche also caused blackouts in the region,

Xinhua news agency reported. Another two were killed in an avalanche near Dushanbe, the nation's capital, which also left many cars buried on a highway. Local meteorological department has warned that the avalanche threat will last until February 19.

Tajikistan, with mountainous regions accounting for 93 per cent of its territories, is prone to natural disasters like avalanches and mountain torrents.

TEENAGER
RESCUED FROM
DEBRIS 248
HOURS AFTER
TURKEY QUAKE

Ankara | Agencies

A 17-year-old girl was rescued from the rubble, 248 hours after the devastating quake jolted Turkey on February 6, the media reported.

Aleyna Olmez was saved from the debris of the collapsed Atabey apartment building in the Kayabasi neighbourhood of Kahramanmaraş, Anadolu news agency reported.

She was rushed to hospital.

The death toll in the devastating twin earthquake that rocked Turkey has reached 36,187.

Russian army has lost up to half of its battle tanks

London | Agencies

Russia's army is estimated to have lost nearly 40 per cent of its prewar fleet of tanks after the almost year-long of fighting in Ukraine, according to a count by the specialist think-tank, the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), according to a media report.

That rises to as much as 50 per cent for some of the key tanks used in combat, forcing Russia to reach into its still sizeable cold war-era stocks, The Guardian reported.

Ukraine's tank numbers are estimated to have increased because of the number it has captured and supplies of Soviet-era tanks from its western allies. John Chipman, the think-tank's chair, said the war had been "a political and military failure for Russia" highlighting shortcomings in leadership and deficiencies in its munitions,



despite Kremlin modernisation efforts, The Guardian reported.

"Russia's actions over the past year have raised questions not only over the competence of its military and senior military leadership, but also over command cohesion," he said, launching the IISS's annual Military Balance audit of the world's armed forces,

The Guardian reported. The think-tank's figures are based largely on open source images from drones, satellites and on the battlefield, running from the beginning of the war to the end of November, although the conflict means numbers can only be estimated.

Its headline count is that

Russia's number of tanks in its army have reduced by 38 per cent from 2,927 to 1,800, while there have been particularly heavy losses of its workhorse T-72B3, an upgrade first delivered to its army in 2013.

Heavy losses on the battlefield have meant that Russia had lost "around 50 per cent of its pre invasion fleet" of the tank and a related variant, Chipman said, and slow industrial production was "forcing Moscow to rely on its older stored weapons as attrition replacements".

Russian overoptimism meant that it suffered heavy tank losses at the beginning of the war, particularly in the abortive attack on Kiev, where large numbers of tanks and armoured vehicles moving in a convoy were destroyed on roads north of the capital. Many others were captured or towed off by tractors as the assault failed, The Guardian reported.

JAPAN CULLS NEARLY 15 MN
BIRDS AMID RAMPANT AVIAN FLU

Tokyo | Agencies

Nearly 15 million birds have been culled in Japan, a record high for a single season, amid an unprecedented spread of bird flu across the country, the farm ministry said Thursday.

Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries said the number of culled birds now stands at 14.78 million, about 50 per cent more than the record 9.87 million logged during the 2020-2021 season, Xinhua News Agency reported.

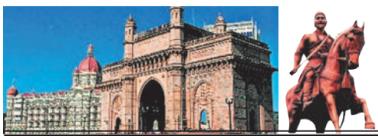
The figure hiked as the disease hit large chicken farms, including one in Misawa City, Aomori Prefecture, where about 1.39 million birds were culled in December. Ministry data showed that 76 bird flu outbreaks have been con-



firmed at poultry farms and elsewhere in 25 prefectures since the first cases were reported in October last year in Okayama Prefecture and Hokkaido.

The ministry warned that risks are increasing throughout the country, noting that this season the avian flu is spreading in six prefectures that had never seen outbreaks before, such as Yamagata and Okinawa.

Japan's bird flu season usually runs from autumn and winter to spring next year.



IN A FIRST, SHIVAJI'S BIRTHDAY TO BE CELEBRATED IN AGRA FORT

Team Absolute | Mumbai

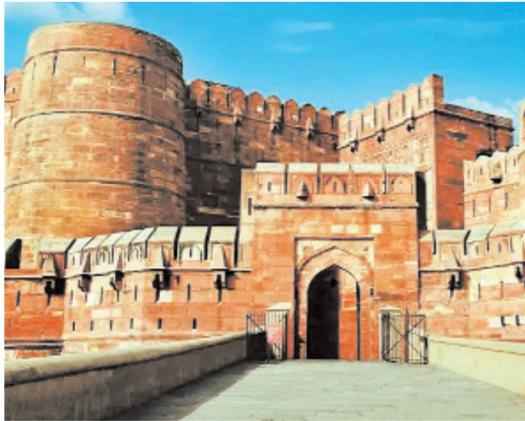
For the first time the 393rd birth anniversary of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj shall be celebrated at the 'Diwan-E-Aam' of the Agra Fort.

The development came after years of efforts by the Maharashtra government and several social organisations after which the Uttar Pradesh Government has permitted the Shiv Jayanti celebrations in the Agra Fort.

Many social groups had urged the government to celebrate the event in a grand manner at the 'Diwan-E-Aam' in the Agra Fort but the appeal was rejected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which looks after the heritage monument.

Later, they moved the Delhi High Court, which directed the ASI to allow the celebrations if the Maharashtra Government is involved as a co-organiser.

Accordingly, Chief Minister



Eknath Shinde, Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis wrote to the ASI and other authorities that the state government will associate with the event along with some social groups.

In September 2020, UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had decided to rename the existing Mughal Museum in the fort as 'Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Museum'.

Agra Fort has a special significance in the history of the Mughal and the Maratha empires which were at loggerheads for long.

It was in the summer of 1666 that the Maratha King Shivaji was invited by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb to attend his 50th birthday celebrations at the royal court in Agra.

Shivaji, along with his son Prince Sambhaji, reached Agra for the birthday on May 12, 1666, and in an act of deceit, the duo was held captive by Emperor Aurangzeb's troops.

Along with his band of loyal soldiers, Shivaji and Sambhaji remained captive for around three months before making their daring escape in boxes of sweets on August 17, 1666.

That famous getaway became the stuff of legends and folklore that remains fresh even today while the valorous Maratha leader was crowned as Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in 1674, in Raigad.

NCP MP Amol Kolhe to boycott Shivaji Jayanti state function

Team Absolute | Pune

Actor and Nationalist Congress Party MP Dr. Amol Kolhe on Thursday announced that he will boycott the Maharashtra government's official function marking the 393rd birth anniversary of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj to be held at Shivneri Fort in Pune, on February 19.

"For many years, despite its historic significance, there has been no permanent saffron flag installed at Shivneri Fort. I have been making repeated requests and even raised the issue in the Parliament but nothing has moved," said Kolhe, who represents Shirur constituency in the Lok Sabha.

Noted for portraying the role of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Chhatrapati Sambhaji in several tele-serials and films, Kolhe hails from Junnar in Pune and the Shivneri Fort falls in his



Parliamentary constituency.

The government's function is scheduled at the historic Shivneri Fort in Pune district, which is the birthplace of Shivaji who was born there on February 19, 1630.

However, Kolhe said that he would visit the Shivneri Fort that morning independently to celebrate the day and offer tributes at the memorial of the Maratha warrior king in the fort, comprising the statues of Rajmata Jijabai and a young Bal Shivaji.

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy CM Devendra Fadnis, ministers and other dignitaries, including possibly Union Home Minister Amit Shah, are expected to attend the special Shivaji Jayanti function on Sunday at the Shivneri Fort.

Ranked as an 'invincible' hill-fort, the triangular-shaped Shivneri Fort has a temple dedicated to Goddess Shivai Devi, after whom the infant Shivaji was named, and is the place where he spent several years of his childhood.

The fort is spread over 1.6 sq. km, has seven strong gates, mud-walls surround the structure, along with a prayer hall, a tomb, a mosque, an execution area, a freshwater pond fed by two springs which flow throughout the year.

In 2021, the imposing Shivneri Fort was included in the tentative list of the Unesco World Heritage Sites.

Shah to meet Kashmir Police martyrs' daughters on Maha visit

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will interact with 50 daughters of martyred Kashmir Police and security personnel during his upcoming three-day visit to Maharashtra starting from Friday, official sources said here on Thursday.



RSS headquarters in Reshim Bagh, pay his respects

at the holy site of Deekshabhoomi, the samadhis of K.B. Hedgewar and M.S. Golwalkar, and attend the golden jubilee celebrations of the Lokmat Group.

In the afternoon, Shah, who is also the Union Minister for Cooperation, will fly down to Pune to participate in a co-operatives sector event organised by the Sakal Group, interact with 50 daughters of martyred Kashmir police and security officials on behalf of NGO Sarhad, pray at the Omkareshwar Temple and release the Marathi translation of a book on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

On Sunday, Shah will attend a programme to mark the 393rd birth anniversary of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, and then depart for Kolhapur for a darshan of the famed Mahalaxmi Temple, garland the statue of Chhatrapati Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj and after completing several other engagements, leave for New Delhi the same evening, the sources said.

3 held at Mumbai airport with 11.94 kg heroin valued at Rs 84cr

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) on Wednesday said that it has arrested three persons including a woman and seized 11.94 kg heroin valued at Rs 84 crore from them.

An official said the heroin was meant to be smuggled to several metropolitan cities.

"On the basis of inputs, the DRI officials intercepted one Indian-national woman passenger who arrived from Harare to Mumbai via Nairobi on February 14. Her bag was searched which resulted in the recovery and



seizure of 11.94 kg of creamish coloured granules. The substance was ingeniously concealed inside the trolley bags and in file folders," the DRI said in a statement.

The woman, suspected to be a drug peddler, told the DRI officials that the drugs were handed over to her in Harare and the same were supposed to be delivered to two individuals in Mumbai.

The DRI then formed a team to nab the two intended recipients of the drugs. The official said that on the basis of a tip off, they finally nabbed the two aides of the woman from outside the Mumbai airport.

The passenger along with two other recipients have been arrested under the provisions of the NDPS Act.

Local train wheel catches fire, triggers panic

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The wheel of a running local train caught fire near Asangaon station in Maharashtra's Thane district on Thursday morning, with officials saying it happened due to "brake binding" and no passenger was injured. A video of the incident, which took place about 70 km away from Mumbai, went viral on social media wherein a passenger was seen jumping out of the train which had stopped. Railway sources said as it was the morning peak hour, the train was crowded. After noticing the burning wheel, passengers jumped out of the coach as soon as the train stopped, they said. A Central Railway (CR) spokesperson said the incident occurred at 8.55 am at Asangaon station, located 70 km from Mumbai, when



the local train was heading to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (in south Mumbai) from Kasara in Thane.

The official said no passenger was injured in the incident which took place due to "brake binding", in which the brakes get jammed with wheels and friction between the two leads to smoke or even fire some times. The local train was detained at Asangaon station home signal from 8.55 am to 9.07 am due to "brake binding", the spokesperson said.

The railway staff concerned attended to it and the rake was later running normally, the official said, adding a detailed investigation will be conducted after the rake goes to car shed. The Central Railway operates nearly 1,800 suburban services daily on its four corridors, including the main line connecting areas of Thane and Raigad districts with Mumbai. Around 40 lakh passengers travel on Central Railway suburban locals every day

Guard kills woman, dumps body in bushes over marriage demand

A 40-year-old security guard with a housing complex in Navi Mumbai allegedly killed a married woman, with whom he was in a relationship, and dumped the body in bushes, police said on Thursday.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

A 40-year-old security guard with a housing complex in Navi Mumbai allegedly killed a married woman, with whom he was in a relationship, and dumped the body in bushes, police said on Thursday.

The accused, Rajkumar Baburam Pal, was arrested on Tuesday, they said, adding he wanted to get rid of the woman following her constant demand that he marry her.

On February 12, the body of an unidentified woman, in the age group of 35 to 40 years, was found in bushes near a housing society in Koparkhairme area of Navi Mumbai town in Thane district, senior police inspector Vishwanath Kolekar

said. The woman had been strangled to death with the 'odhni' (a long piece of cloth worn around neck) and the body dumped in bushes to destroy evidence, he said.

The Koparkhairme police sent the body for post-mortem and registered a case under Indian Penal Code Sections 302 (murder) and 201 (causing disappearance of evidence of an offence) against unidentified person.

Later, the Navi Mumbai police sent a message about finding the body to all police stations in

Maharashtra and came to know that a case of a missing woman was registered at Trombay police station in neighbouring Mumbai, the official said.

The description of the body found in Navi Mumbai and the missing woman matched following which the police stepped up their probe, he said.

The police enquired with the missing woman's family members. Her husband told the police that she worked as a cleaner in Mankhurd area of Mumbai and had been missing, the official said.

The police later found the victim's mobile phone and also came to know that security guard Pal was in love with her.

After Pal was arrested, he told the police during interrogation that the woman had been repeatedly asking him to marry her, the official said.

Fed up with the constant demand, the security guard decided to get rid of her. He called her to a spot near the housing complex where he worked and allegedly strangled her to death, the police said.

The accused then dumped the body in bushes near the housing society, the official said, adding that further probe was on into the case.

5-day-old infant operated on to correct rare skull defect in Mumbai hospital

Team Absolute | Mumbai

An infant boy, born with a rare skull defect, was successfully operated on - when five days old - to repair his skull and scalp at a Mumbai hospital, doctors said on Thursday. The child was born Afreen Khan and Sanaulla Khan, hailing from Tamil Nadu, in a private nursing home in Andheri east last December, but their joy was short-lived as the infant was found to suffer from 'aplasia cutis congenita', where the baby's scalp skin and skull bones were not fully developed in the central area of the head, leaving the underlying areas of the brain and its covering visible. To correct this, he had to undergo a challenging scalp rotation and advancement flaps when he was barely 100-hours old.



oped, and the protective layers of the skull covering the brain are not formed," Dr Satbhai said.

He said that depending on the severity and associated morbidities, the reported case fatality rate of the condition is 20-50 per cent.

"In this child, the skin, soft tissue, and bones over the vertex of the skull were absent, the dura mater covering the brain was exposed and the problem was identified immediately after birth. There is a high chance of infection or meningitis developing in such a situation. Also, the large blood vessels in the brain can get infected, or ruptured, leading to bleeding and

complications. We operated on the child for four hours on the 5th day of his life," said Dr. Satbhai.

For this, the medical team elevated 2 large flaps from the remaining scalp of the child's head, carried out scalp rotation and advancement flap surgery to transpose and rotate the flaps across the midline to cover the entire skin defect and protect the dura mater and underlying brain.

The flaps survived and healed well, resulting in complete coverage of the scalp skin defect, the child was strictly monitored, given meticulous post-operative ICU care and was finally discharged after 14 days, with the wounds healing well.

"Surgery in infants is always challenging, as the tissues are thin and delicate. We take pride in delivering successful treatment outcomes in paediatric patients with rare conditions, using advanced medical technologies to provide precise diagnoses and effective treatment," Wadia Hospitals CEO Dr. Minnie Bodhanwala said.

For the overjoyed parents, they recalled how their happiness after child birth turned to horror on seeing the exposed brain of their infant.

"However, the medical team at Wadia Hospital correctly detected the rare condition and treated our baby without delay. We are extremely happy and thank them for successfully treating our son," said Afreen Khan, caring for her son who has emerged from a nightmarish situation.

VIDEO OF DEEPIKA PADUKONE FLYING IN ECONOMY CLASS GOES VIRAL



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Watching the luxury of business class, Bollywood star Deepika Padukone was seen flying in the economy section in a flight.

A fan posted her video on their social media account, where Deepika, who was followed by her body guard, is seen walking towards the front, as directed by one of the crew members. In the video, she is seen keeping a low profile and walked without talking to any of the co-

passengers.

In the video posted by a fan club of Deepika on Twitter, she is seen wearing a fiery orange and blue jacket paired with a cap along with sunglasses.

On the work front, Deepika was recently seen in 'Pathaan' starring Shah Rukh Khan and John Abraham.

The film 'Pathaan' has become the fifth highest grossing Indian film after beating Salman Khan's 'Bajranghi Bhaijaan' (2015) and Aamir Khan's 'Secret Superstar' (2017).



ANA DE ARMAS SAYS SOCIAL MEDIA REMOVES 'MYSTERY' SURROUNDING MOVIE STARS

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Ana de Armas portrayed Marilyn Monroe in 'Blonde', the Andrew Dominik-directed biographical film, and has revealed that she sees some similarities between herself and the Hollywood icon.

She explained, "There was a lot there that I could relate to. If you put Marilyn Monroe the movie star aside, she's just an actress trying to navigate life and this system, which is so hard to navigate for anybody. On top of that, you add this point of view of Andrew's, which was to see that through her trauma."

"I truly thought it was going to do justice to a more dimensional human being, because I wouldn't want to be remembered just for one thing. I am more than just an actress on the cover of a magazine."

She believes that modern-day movie stars don't compare to people like Marilyn. The actress explained that social media has removed the sense of 'mystery' that used to surround Hollywood stars.

Ana, who has also portrayed a Bond girl in 'No Time to Die', told Vanity Fair magazine's Hollywood issue, "I feel like the new generations don't have that concept, because of social media. There is so much information out there and oversharing. The concept of a movie star is someone untouchable you only see onscreen. That mystery is gone. For the most part, we've done that to ourselves - nobody's keeping anything from anyone anymore."

What's more, the actress revealed that she's become 'more protective' of herself since starring in 'Blonde'.

She said, "The sad part for me - and the most challenging - is to see not only what happened in the '40s and '50s and '60s but to see patterns continue to happen."

"It's definitely made me more protective of myself and set boundaries and know my limits for how much I'm willing to give - and how much I want to keep to myself. But at the same time, it clearly is a place where incredible opportunities happen. I'm very grateful to be working in the industry."



Penn Badgley believes Blake Lively 'saved' him from self-destruction

Los Angeles | Agencies

Penn Badgley credits ex Blake Lively for saving him from self-destruction. The actor, who starred alongside Blake in the TV drama 'Gossip Girl' between 2007 and 2012, admitted that their relationship helped him to avoid a "dark undercurrent" that was developing in his life.

Penn, who dated Blake between 2007 and 2010, explained, "To be honest, I never struggled with substance. Blake didn't drink, and I think our relationship in some ways saved me from forcing myself to go down that road." Despite this, Penn

admits to paying a heavy price for fame and success. The actor recalled feeling "quite unhappy" during his 20s.

He told, "Like anybody who experiences some degree of fame and wealth, I was presented with the universal truth that not only does it make your life better or easier, it actually can greatly complicate things, and make you quite unhappy."

Penn can still vividly remember feeling isolated and having a lack of trust in other people.

The actor said, "I was never anything that I would define as suicidal at all, but I was certainly in a despair. It had to do with 'Do I matter? Do I matter? Does anything matter?' These questions do inform how we feel. The answer that I came upon was 'Yes.' I think we all have to come to that. I don't

know how you could come to 'No' and be happy, so we all have to come to that 'Yes' somehow. Probably repeatedly."

Penn also lost his passion for TV acting during his time in 'Gossip Girl'.

The actor, who played Dan Humphrey on the show, recalled, "I didn't want to be in television. I was biding time a lot with Dan - I was not invested. And I'm not saying it's a good thing! I'm saying it's just what it was."



A live-action adaptation of 'How to Train Your Dragon' is soaring to theatres in 2025



Los Angeles | Agencies

'How to Train Your Dragon' live-action adaptation coming to theatres in 2025. Dean DeBlois, who wrote and directed the animated trilogy 2010's 'How to Train Your Dragon', 2014's 'How to Train Your Dragon 2' and 2019's 'How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World' - is returning to write and direct the newest entry in the franchise.

It's slated to release on March 14, 2025.

The Oscar-nominated 'How to Train Your Dragon' takes place in the mythical Viking village of Berk and follows the adventures of a misfit teen named Hiccup who befriends an injured dragon he calls Toothless.

The fantasy series, backed by Universal and

DreamWorks and based on the books by Cressida Cowell, has generated more than \$1.6 billion worldwide.

Their journeys have taken them beyond the big screen, spawning three TV series - 'DreamWorks Dragons', 'Rescue Riders' and 'The Nine Realms' - as well as theme park rides and the live show, 'How to Train Your Dragon on Ice'.

Prior to his work on the original 'How to Train Your Dragon' trilogy, DeBlois worked with Chris Sanders on Disney's 'Lilo & Stitch' after first serving as co-heads of story on 1998's 'Mulan'.

In addition to writing and directing, DeBlois will also serve as producer.

Marc Platt, a best picture nomi-

nee for 'La La Land', 'Bridge of Spies' and 'Trial Of The Chicago 7', will also produce the film for his Universal-based company Marc Platt Productions alongside Adam Siegel, president of Marc Platt Productions.

Platt is currently in production on Universal's film adaptation of 'Wicked', directed by Jon M. Chu and starring Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo.

Universal's VP of production development Lexi Barta will oversee the film on behalf of the studio.

Rihanna, A\$AP Rocky changed son's name several times

Los Angeles | Agencies

Diamonds' hitmaker Rihanna, who recently stunned the audience with her Super Bowl performance, was confused over her baby's name. The singer has revealed that she and her partner A\$AP Rocky changed their son's name several times before settling on a moniker.

After welcoming her first child with the rapper in May 2022, Rihanna has remained tight-lipped about their son's name. In a new interview with 'British Vogue', she has reflected on being mum as well as juggling her parent life with preparing for the ultimate pop music comeback and has explained that she changed her son's name numerous times before finding the perfect one. Speaking of motherhood in the candid interview, Rihanna said, "It changed a lot but you're just at the same constant. You're of service. Literally that is it. You are joyful when you get the time to shower. You know."

She further mentioned, "I remember in the beginning I used to roll his bassinet into the bathroom and be showering and like wiping the fog off the glass just to peep at him. Those were always my favourite, his little wake-up face, seeing his face change, seeing his colour come in, just all of these changes."



Rebel Wilson claims her 'Pitch Perfect' contract prevented her from losing weight

Los Angeles | Agencies

Rebel Wilson claims 'Pitch Perfect' contract stopped her from losing weight. The actress played Fat Amy in the hit film franchise between 2012 and 2017, and Rebel claims that her contract stopped her from shedding weight.

She explained, "I couldn't lose a massive amount of weight, because I was in the contracts for that movie. I think it's not more than 10 pounds (you can lose) and not gain more than 10 pounds. You have to kind of stay at the weight that's in your contract."

Rebel embarked on a so-called year of health in 2020, as she made a determined effort to lose weight. However, the Hollywood star had been thinking about adopting a healthier lifestyle for years.

Rebel, who ultimately managed to lose 60 pounds, told the 'Call Her Daddy'

podcast: "I was stereotyped in playing that fat, funny friend. I love doing those roles, I love those characters, but then I did want to do more things. But then I felt like being the bigger girl, you're just more pigeonholed."

Meanwhile, Rebel recently revealed that she's set to launch a dating app. The actress, who is in a relationship with Ramona Agruma, is launching a new dating app named Fluid and Rebel explained how it relates to her own love life.

The movie star, who has a three-month-old baby called Royce, who was born via a surrogate, said, "This is the first dating app where you don't have to actually define yourself or tick a box to say 'I'm straight, I'm gay, I'm bisexual,' and you don't have to describe what you are looking for."

Rebel is one of the app's founders and she's proud of its inclusive approach. She shared, "What's really cool is, it's open to everyone. You might just be interested in checking out a wider dating pool like I was."

It covers a lot of the LGBTQIA spectrum, but I think even if you're straight you could use the app and have an amazing time."



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Olivia Rodrigo



IND v AUS Test Series

INDIA AIM FOR VICTORY TO MAKE PUJARA'S 100TH TEST MEMORABLE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

After a big win by an innings and 132 runs in Nagpur, India will be aiming for another victory when top-order batter Cheteshwar Pujara marks his 100th Test appearance in the second Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series at the Arun Jaitley Stadium.

India's top order has been in misfiring mode, barring skipper Rohit Sharma, who was magnificent in his 120, which was a combination of attack and defence in equal measure. K.L.Rahul has to get big runs, especially with an in-form Shubman Gill waiting in the wings.

Pujara would like to bring his classical style of batsmanship into play to make his milestone match memorable, while Virat Kohli will be itching to treat the home crowd to an amazing display of strokeplay, provided he manages to get the better of spinners, who have been his Achilles heel for long.



The return of Shreyas Iyer, if he manages to carry the load of a five-day Test match, should boost India's batting on a dry-looking pitch which is expected to be a slow turner. If Iyer, one of India's better players of spin and has an average of 56.72

from seven Tests, comes in, then Suryakumar Yadav will have to make way.

Comeback man Ravindra Jadeja, along with Ravichandran Ashwin, Mohammed Shami and Axar Patel, brought out a counter-attack which

gave India the substantial lead and victory in Nagpur.

With the ball, the spin trio of Ashwin, Jadeja and Axar were top class while Shami and Mohammed Siraj were no less, taking out the openers in quick succession at the start of the innings.

Marnus Labuschagne and Steve Smith will again hold the key with the bat for the visitors. The right-handed duo had led a brief resurrection act in Nagpur before it all went downhill for Australia in the first innings. In the second innings, Australia just crumbled like a pack of cards to 91 all out.

With Australia skipper Pat Cummins saying that there is talk of playing three spinners, then it's a toss-up between left-arm spinners Ashton Agar and Matthew Kuhnemann. But that only happens when Cameron Green is fit enough to take the field on Friday along with left-arm pacer Mitchell Starc.

La Liga

Easy win at home to Elche takes Real Madrid to within 8 points of Barca

Madrid (Spain) | Agencies

Real Madrid moved back to within eight points of FC Barcelona at the top of La Liga after a comfortable 4-0 win at home to Elche.

The result of the game, which was postponed from the weekend due to Real Madrid's World Club Cup games, was never really in doubt from the moment Marco Asensio scored an excellent individual goal in the eighth minute.

The striker, in the side for the suspended Vinicius Jr, beat two defenders and placed the ball in the corner of the net.

Elche has won just one game all season and they were under the cosh for all the first half. Karim Benzema doubled Madrid's lead from the penalty spot in the 31st minute after Enzo Roco's clear handball.

It was 3-0 before halftime after Benzema netted his second penalty of the night in



injury time.

Rodrigo was caught as he weaved into the Elche penalty area and Benzema sent his spot kick into the corner of the net to finish the game.

It wasn't until the 80th minute that Luka Modric scored his side's fourth goal, controlling a pass from Rodrigo before firing into the top corner of the goal.

ENG vs NZ 1st Test

Brook, Duckett, Anderson help England take control against New Zealand

Mount Maunganui (NZ) | Agencies

England grabbed the initiative on the first day of the first Test thanks to breezy knocks by Harry Brook and Ben Duckett backed up by three quick wickets by their pacers at the Bay Oval.

Brook struck 89 off 81 balls while Ben Duckett hammered 84 from 68 deliveries as England scored at a fast clip to declare their innings at 325/9 in 58.2 overs.

Following that, Jimmy Anderson claimed two wickets while Ollie Robinson claimed one as the hosts slumped to 37/3 in 18 overs and were facing the prospect of conceding first innings lead.

England, as is their tactics in this Bazball era, went about scoring at a fast pace. But they also lost wickets at regular intervals as they declared their innings at 325/9 after New Zealand skipper Tim Southee won the toss and elected to field first. Duckett and Ollie Pope (42 off 63 balls) rescued the visitors from the difficult situation as they took England to 117 before Duckett departed. Duckett, who struck 14 boundaries during his 68-ball stay and was threatening to score a hundred before lunch, fell short as played a shot too many and mistimed a shot to Bracewell off Blair Tackner. Wagner turned out to be New



Zealand's best bowler on the day as he ended with 4-82 in 16.2 overs. Harry Brook maintained England's fast rate of scoring as he struck 89 off 81 deliveries as the Bazball tactics continued to prove successful for the visitors. Skipper Ben Stokes (19 off 28) but Ben Foakes (38 off 56) added 99 runs for the sixth wicket to grab the initiative back as England raced to 325 off 58.2 overs before declaring their innings.

Brief scores

England 325/9 decl. in 58.2 overs (Harry Brook 89, Ben Duckett 84, Ollie Pope 42; Neil Wagner 4-82, Tim Southee 2-71) v New Zealand 37/3 in 18 overs (Devon Conway 18 not out; Jimmy Anderson 2-11, Ollie Robinson 1-10).

Berlin (Germany) | Agencies

Karim Adeyemi's sole goal helped Borussia Dortmund edge Chelsea 1-0 on home soil in the first leg of the Champions League's Round of 16.

Dortmund took the reins from the kick-off but still had to wait until the half-hour mark to create the first presentable chance, as Sebastian Haller hit the side netting from a tight angle.

Chelsea sparked to life and nearly opened the scoring two minutes later when Joao Felix pulled wide from 12 meters.

The Portuguese remained in the thick of things and should have opened the scoring before the break, but for all that Joao Felix rattled only the woodwork with his lob from inside the box following a counterattack. The Blues came out with their guns blazing after the restart as Reece James' free kick forced



Dortmund goalkeeper Gregor Kobel into action in the 55th minute. The opener was scored at the other end of the pitch though as Adeyemi collected a clearance in Dortmund's territory. The youngster shrugged off Enzo Fernandez before rounding Chelsea custodian Kepa

Arrizabalaga to tap home the 1-0.

Chelsea responded with attacks but Emre Can scratched a hammer from Kalidou Koulibaly off the goal-line in the 78th minute before Kobel defused another effort from Joao Felix six minutes later.

Champions League

ADEYEMI'S LONE GOAL HELPS DORTMUND BEAT CHELSEA

BENFICA EASE TO FIRST-LEG VICTORY IN ROUND OF 16

Bruges (Belgium) |

Joao Mario converted a penalty and David Neres made a cool finish which earned Benfica a comfortable win at Club Brugge in the first leg match in the Round of 16 stage of the Champions League.

Roger Schmidt's Benfica took a major step towards the Champions League quarterfinals following a 2-0 victory as they will take a two-goal advantage back to Lisbon.

Club Brugge started well, looking nothing like the team that has struggled in recent weeks. However, Benfica took control before the break and dominated after taking the lead, with the visitors looking at the stronger team.

The home side began the brighter and nearly took the lead with barely five minutes on the clock thanks to Tajon Buchanan's burst of pace down the left. However, visiting keeper Odisseas Vlachodimos was alert to the danger once the winger had cut into the area. The visitors continued in the same vein after the restart and when Goncalo Ramos was sent tumbling by Jack Hendry's outstretched leg, Joao Mario somehow squeezed the resultant penalty into the net via a combination of Simon Mignolet and the woodwork.



Women's T20 World Cup

Muneeba's maiden century guides Pakistan to win over Ireland

Cape Town (South Africa) | Agencies

Muneeba Ali's century powered Pakistan to a 70-run victory over Ireland for their first win of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2023.

The wicketkeeper-batter became the first Pakistani woman to hit a hundred in a T20 international to propel her side to 165 for five in 20 overs.

In reply, Ireland stuttered as Nashra Sundhu picked up four wickets for 18 from her four overs as Orla Prendergast and Eimear Richardson's contributions were not enough to stop the European team from slumping to its second defeat.

Opener Muneeba led the charge for Pakistan, scoring 33 of the 44 runs she and Javeria Khan put on for the first wicket before Javeria was run out by Mary Waldron.

Captain Bismah Maroof added only four runs to the 68 not out she made against India as Arlene



Kelly's fingertips just clung on to a low catch to reduce Pakistan to 55 for two.

The wicket brought out Nida Dar, who unusually played the patient role next to Muneeba, who brought up her half-century from 40 balls by surviving the first of two drops by Louise Little.

Nida was not to be outdone, dancing down the wicket to smash Cara Murray for six, but she could

only watch as Muneeba raced past her best score of 75 to become Pakistan's highest scorer in T20Is.

With eight balls of the innings remaining, Muneeba brought up her maiden T20I hundred, the sixth scored in ICC Women's T20 World Cups.

In an eventful over, the hundred partnerships followed a ball later, before Muneeba departed for 102 from 67 off Leah Paul's final delivery, and was welcomed back to the dugout with a standing ovation and a hug from a beaming Bismah.

Brief scores

Pakistan 165/5 in 20 overs (Muneeba Ali 102, Nida Dar 33; Arlene Kelly 2-27, Laura Delany 1-20) beat Ireland 95 all out in 16.3 overs (Orla Prendergast 31, Eimear Richardson 28; Nashra Sundhu 4-18, Nida Dar 2-5) by 70 runs.

West Indies announce Powell, Hope as T20I and ODI captains

St. Johns (Antigua) | Agencies

Cricket West Indies (CWI) has announced Shai Hope and Rovman Powell as the new captains of the West Indies ODI and T20I captains respectively.

The wicketkeeper-batter Hope and batting all-rounder Powell will take over from Nicholas Pooran, who stepped down from the positions last November following the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in Australia.

Both men had served as vice-captains under Pooran, and their first assignments



will be the upcoming tour of South Africa in March where the West Indies face the Proteas in three ODIs and as many as T20Is from March 16 to 28, following

two matches in the ICC World Test Championship.

Hope became vice-captain for a second time in June 2022 and played his 100th ODI for the West Indies against India in July last year. He has played 104 ODIs and was recently selected in the ICC ODI Team of the Year for 2022.

Meanwhile, Powell was the captain of Jamaica Tallawahs which won the Caribbean Premier League last year. He also led the Jamaica Scorpions to the CG United Super50 Cup title in November. Powell has also led the West Indies in three ODIs and one T20I.

ATP Tour

Alcaraz makes winning return in Argentina, Norrie too reaches last eight

Buenos Aires | Agencies

Playing his first ATP Tour match in more than three months, World No. 2 Carlos Alcaraz made a winning return to competition at the Argentina Open. Beating Laslo Djere in a Round of 16 match.

The first former World No. 1 to compete in Buenos Aires since Gustavo Kuerten in 2004, the Spaniard lived up to lofty expectations with a powerful performance at the ATP 250.

Returning from recent abdominal and hamstring injuries, Alcaraz earned a 6-2, 4-6, 6-2 victory in two hours against Laslo Djere. He was at his best early and late as he moved through the gears, treating the expectant crowd



to the full range of magic that helped him claim the 2022 year-end No. 1 in the Pepperstone ATP Rankings.

"It's a great feeling to win again. It's been a long time for me with no competition, with no matches, just recov-

ering. Finally, I got my first win of 2023," Alcaraz said.

Meanwhile, in another Round of 16 matches, second-seed Cameron Norrie recovered from a set down to beat local favourite Facundo Diaz Acosta.

Qatar Open

Swiatek stuns Collins in QF; receives walkover to the semifinal

Doha | Agencies

World No.1 tennis player Iga Swiatek, who made a triumphant return to competition at the Qatar Open with a 6-0, 6-1 win over No.42 Danielle Collins of the USA, has paved her way into the semifinals after her quarterfinal opponent Belinda Bencic withdrew from the tournament due to fatigue.

Swiatek was set to face Bencic in Thursday's quarterfinals, but the Abu Dhabi champion withdrew from the tournament after notching a physical, hard-fought victory over Victoria Azarenka.

The Pole will now face either No.4 seed Coco Gauff or Veronika Kudermetova in the semifinals on



Friday. Last season, Swiatek kicked off her 37-match win streak in Doha, where she captured her first WTA 1000

hard-court title.

Playing her first match since the Australian Open, the reigning champion showed no signs of rust against Collins, as she built a 3-0 lead after just 10 minutes and pocketed the opening set in just 21 minutes.

With the American struggling to find her range, Swiatek lost just four points in the opening set. Collins was unable to hit a winner in the opening set while misfiring on 13 unforced errors.

Collins levelled up in the second set, snapping Swiatek's nine-game run to get on the board at 3-1. But Swiatek refused to let her own level drop, as she steadily marched toward the finish line to seal the win after 53 minutes.



'DOING THIS FOR AN INITIATIVE IS REALLY FULFILLING'

Rakul Preet to walk the ramp with Jacky Bhagnani for Lakshmi Manchu

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Tollywood actress Rakul Preet Singh is all excited to walk down the ramp with beau Jacky Bhagnani at Lakshmi Manchu's charity fashion show for her NGO, Teach for Change. The actress will glide down the runway as the showstopper, outfitted by ace designer Varun Chakkilam.

Speaking about her participation at the show, Rakul Preet said: "Lakshmi is like family to me and doing this for an initiative which is so close to her is really fulfilling. This is going to be the 8th edition of Teach for

Change's annual charity fashion show and I have seen it grow over the years." Lakshmi added: "Rakul is always my first choice for showstopper. Varun was very excited when I onboarded her. Apart from the fact that she is my friend, philosopher and guide, Rakul is a thoroughbred professional with years of experience on the ramp."

When asked about Rakul's show-stopping ensemble, Lakshmi did not give away much except that they are still torn between two looks, both of which she is in love with.

Rakul said: "I think my go-to fashion mantra is to really not follow trends, but wear what's comfortable and style it to make it look more edgy. I love experimenting with my looks; I have been into a lot of warmer tones and colour blocks of late."

'Everything was under wraps'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Yash Raj Films' head honcho Aditya Chopra told actress Anushka Sharma to not tell her parents about her debut film 'Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi' starring Shah Rukh Khan.

In the docu-series 'The Romantics', actress Anushka reveals how Aditya Chopra wanted to keep her debut under wraps, to an extent that he told Anushka to not even tell her parents about Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi.

Anushka reveals laughing, "Everything was under wraps. Nobody knew about it and Adi didn't want anybody to know that I was the lead actor. Adi literally said to me, 'you can't tell anybody. You cannot even tell your parent'. I said, 'Huh?' From Aamir Khan to Salman Khan, from Shah Rukh Khan to Ranbir Kapoor, from Amitabh Bachchan to Ranveer Singh, from Rani Mukerji to Hrithik Roshan, from Katrina Kaif to Anushka Sharma, the mega-stars and icons of Hindi cinema have come together and spoken about Yash Chopra and YRF's contribution to Indian cinema in 'The Romantics'.

'The Romantics' has been directed by Oscar and Emmy-nominated filmmaker Smriti Mundhra, who returns to Netflix after the phenomenal success of 'Indian Matchmaking' and the 'Never Have I Ever' franchise.

Anushka reveals how Aditya Chopra wanted to keep her debut under wraps



I want to be a part of projects that my family can sit and watch: Pia Bajpiee

SIKANDAR'S ROLE IN A WEB-SERIES IS INSPIRED BY A REAL KAMATHIPURA CRIMINAL

Team Absolute | Mumbai

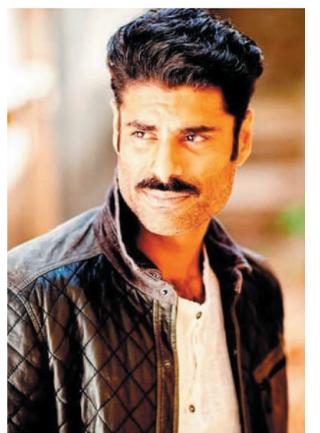
Actor Sikandar Kher will be seen playing a negative character in the upcoming web-series 'Chidiya Udd'. His character is inspired by a real life criminal from Kamathipura.

'Chidiya Udd', which will be out on MX Player, is about human trafficking which is set in Kamathipura. The sources say there has been a lot of detailed discussion on this real life person. A source said: "Kamathipura is infamous for tough bouncers, who are known for being rough." "Sikandar's character is sort of

inspired by someone who lives there and has a criminal background.

There has been a lot of discussion about the real person, like his mannerisms, the way he talks or the way he thinks. Since the inspiration for the character is a real person, the team is not naming him."

The web series also stars 'Slumdog Millionaire' actor Madhur Mittal, along with Ravi Kothari, Gopal K Singh, and Dheeraj Dev, in pivotal roles in the series. The new series will be produced by Harman Baweja and Vicky Bahri and directed by Marathi director Ravi Jadhav.



Aakruti Bagla | Mumbai

Pia Bajpiee, who has been a part of many Bollywood and South films, recently featured in Lost which stars Yami Gautam in the lead role. The movie is directed by Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury and it will premiere on a leading OTT platform from 16 February.

Ahead of the release, the actress caught up with Absolute India News for an exclusive interview.

On her excitement ahead of release, the film has been screened at some prestigious accessions and received positive response.

Talking about the same, Pia said, the trailer and the promos which are out till now, are receiving rave response. I am really excited and looking forward to read all the reviews."

In recent times, debate about difference between South and Bollywood industries is at its peak. Elucidating her thoughts on whether she finds the lines merging now, Bajpiee asserts, "Honestly, no lines appear to be blending. If this were the case, I would be a famous person by now. If a film wins an Oscar or gets recognition globally, only then it is tagged as an Indian film, otherwise, it's merely a South movie."

Talking about how she reflects on her journey, Pia shared, "I have really been lucky

and seen good days down South. They say "one good Friday makes you a star. I have witnessed this. In Bollywood, Lost is my third project and I am satisfied by the way it is going."

On how she chooses projects, "There are a lot of web shows today that have unnecessary obscenity and I choose to stay away from it. I can't even abuse unnecessarily. I want to be a part of projects that my family can sit and watch", shared Pia.

She further concluded that, "While choosing projects, earlier I prioritised my role. But now I look forward to work with known people so that the project gets proper release and people know about it."

LOST: YAMI GAUTAM SHINES IN A LOOSELY WRITTEN TALE



FILM REVIEW

SHACHI CHATURVEDI

Direction: Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury

Cast: Yami Gautam, Pankaj Kapur, Rahul

Khanna, Pia Bajpiee

Rating- 2.5/5

SYNOPSIS

Lost is based on actual events and tells the story of a young lady criminal reporter working on a story about the mysterious disappearance of a young theatre activist. The multi-layered tale is meant to reflect the concept of lost principles and integrity.

REVIEW

The film opens in the present and depicts a bomb explosion before taking you 7 months back in time to establish the idea. Set in Kolkata and inspired by actual events, Lost tells the story of Vidhi Sahani (Yami Gautam), a young crime reporter who is married to Jeet (Neil Bhoopalam) but lives with her nanu (Pankaj Kapur). She is looking into a case when a young theatre activist, Ishaan Bharti (Tushar Pandey), goes missing. Soon after, Vidhi finds the connection of a girl Ankita Chauhan (Pia Bajpiee), who was in a relationship with Ishaan and is now fighting for an MLA seat under the umbrella of a well-known political leader Ranjan Varman (Rahul Khanna).

The film opens on an exciting note and has a really captivating narrative, but the climax disappoints. The undercooked end leaves many questions unanswered.

Concerning Yami's performance in the film, she portrays Vidhi, and via this role, she demonstrates that she has the ability to give justice to anything and everything. The way she portrays a journalist's pain, anxiety, and



curiosity impresses me the most.

Rahul Khanna makes an excellent dashing politician. Not only does he have a great screen presence, but his grasp of character makes you want to see more of him.

Pia, one of the main characters, is a talented young lady. Despite the fact that this film does not allow her to express herself in her own way, she succeeds.

Bhoopalam is entirely lost in the story and contributes nothing that advances the plot. Tushar Pandey is the major character for whom the story is created; however he has almost no screen presence, which is a major letdown.

All of the other characters in the picture do their parts well, but the writing of the screenplay, which could have been crisper, misses the mark.

The plot contains far too many untied threads that are tough to avoid. There were several shocking incidents, but the lack of adequate executions made them seem regular. For instance, Yami's character has a video conference with the Naxal chief, and it is so straightforward that you don't experience the dread at all.

In terms of technicalities, I believe that the script needs a crisper climax first, followed by a significant re-execution with correct tension put in. Moving on to the background score and music, the film offers a solid background track to enhance the tension despite the lack of numerous songs.

CONCLUSION

It is a onetime watch that may disappoint you slightly.

INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Nikita Dutta