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FORMER US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP ARRESTED

The 34 criminal charges are each about falsifying business records for the payoffs made before the 2016 election to porn actor Stormy Daniels and Playboy model Karen McDougal, both of whom asserted that they had affairs with him, and the doorman at his Trump Tower, who claimed to have known about an illegitimate child Trump fathered.

Arul Louis | New York

After he made history as the first former US President to be arrested, former President Donald Trump was hit with 34 serious criminal charges relating to hush money allegedly paid to three people.

Appearing in the New York State Supreme Court on Tuesday, he pleaded not guilty -- a denial of the charges and a declaration to fight them.

If he is convicted on all the 34 charges he could theoretically face 136 years in prison -- four years for each offence -- under the creative way Manhattan prosecutor Alvin Bragg framed the charges breaking out separate transactions into individual charges. Under New York's legal system, a grand jury -- a panel of citizens -- investigated the case in secret hearings and voted on Thursday that there was a prima facie case against him, enabling Manhattan prosecutor Alvin Bragg to file charges.

Trump is the leading candidate for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, and in a



poll aggregation, he is only two points behind US President Joe Biden.

The next hearing in the case is set for December when the campaigns get heated and the trial could impinge in the race for the presidency. The US Constitution does not bar an undertrial -- or even a convict -- from running for the President. Trump is under at least three other investigations, two by federal authorities on his role in the attack on the US Congress by his rioting supporters in January 2021 and his handling

of top secret documents, and a local investigation in Georgia State whether he tried to manipulate the 2020 presidential election result.

In a rambling speech to his supporters Tuesday night after returning home to Florida, he restated his versions that the case and the investigations were political persecutions and an "insult to the country". As he headed from his penthouse to the courthouse, he posted on his social media, "Seems so SURREAL -- WOW, they are going to ARREST ME. Can't believe this is happening in America." The scene of his arrest was indeed surreal as it was carried out under the watchful eyes of the Secret Service that is mandated to guard former Presidents. After being booked without being handcuffed or asked to pose for identification pictures but made to give his fingerprints, he was taken to the courtroom of Acting New York State Supreme Court Justice Juan Merchan. The judge admonished him against making incendiary statements. Merchan released him without bail and Trump left for a local airport from where he flew on his private Boeing 757 to his Mar-a-Lago home.

Texts on Gandhi, ban on RSS dropped from Class 12 NCERT books

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Gandhi's death had magical effect on communal situation in the country, "Gandhi's pursuit of Hindu-Muslim unity provoked Hindu extremists" and "Organisations like RSS were banned for some time" are among the texts missing from the class 12 political science textbook for the new academic session.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), however, claims that no curriculum trimming has taken place this year and the syllabus was rationalised in June, last year.

As part of its "syllabus rationalisation" exercise last year, the NCERT, citing "overlapping" and "irrelevant" as reasons, dropped certain portions from the course including lessons on Gujarat riots, Mughal courts, Emergency, Cold War, Naxalite movement, among others from its textbooks.

The rationalisation note had no mention of excerpts about Mahatma Gandhi.

"The entire rationalisation exercise was done last year, there is nothing new which has happened this year," NCERT Director Dinesh Saklani said. He, however, did



not comment on the missing excerpts which went unannounced at the time of rationalisation.

A note by NCERT on its website reads, "in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was felt imperative to reduce content load on students. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 also emphasises reducing the content load and providing opportunities for experiential learning with creative mindset. In this background, the NCERT had undertaken the exercise to rationalise the textbooks across all classes and all subjects."

"The present edition is a reformatted version after carrying out the changes. The present textbooks are rationalised textbooks. These were rationalised for the session 2022-23 and will continue in 2023-24," it adds. Among the reasons cited

behind the choice of dropped subjects during rationalisation are - content based on genres of literature in the textbooks and supplementary readers at different stages of school education; for reducing the curriculum load and exam stress in view of the prevailing condition of the pandemic; content.

Subjects easily accessible to students without much interventions from teachers and can be learned by children through self-learning or peer learning and content which is "irrelevant" in the present context were also dropped from the curriculum. An official from the education ministry, who did not wish to be identified, said the new curriculum framework as per the NEP is still being worked out and the new textbooks as per the updated curriculum will only be introduced from the 2024 academic session.

Azad is 'Ghulam', says Congress after former leader attacks Rahul

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Congress on Wednesday attacked former party leader Ghulam Nabi Azad for his comments against party leadership in his upcoming autobiography and in media statements.

Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera accused Azad of exchanging his loyalty in lieu of a "Lutyens' Bungalow", noting that it was the Congress which gave him all the posts to emerge as a big leader.

"The politician, who was supported by the Congress party, given almost all the top posts of the party, is speaking against that party... he broke the trust of the party and when he left the party last year, he said 'I am free now', but after listening to his comments, it feels that he is (still a) Ghulam," he added. Azad, in his statement praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his generosity and targeted Rahul Gandhi over the fate and the shrinking base of the



Congress. The Democratic Progressive Azad Party Chairman is set to release his memoirs "Azada: An Autobiography".

In the book, Azad, who was then the Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, has mentioned promptly the issue of abrogation of Article 370 and targeted his former Congress colleague Jairam Ramesh for not joining the protest in the Parliament. Meanwhile, in a scathing attack against the Congress and Rahul Gandhi, Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Wednesday said

that the party has no ideology left except the one of a traitor.

Accusing Rahul Gandhi and the Congress of hindering the proceedings of Parliament, Scindia stated that apologising does not make a person small, however instead of apologising, the party is turning a personal legal battle into a "legal battle of democracy". Criticising the senior Congress leader for being accompanied by several leaders to court, he claimed that it was an attempt to pressure and threaten the court.

BSF NABS PAKISTANI CITIZEN TRYING TO ENTER INDIA THROUGH GUJARAT

Ahmedabad: The Border Security Force (BSF) has apprehended a Pakistani citizen attempting to enter India through the Indo-Pakistan border in Gujarat's Banaskantha district, an official said on Wednesday.

The individual has been identified as Daya Ram, a resident of Nagarparkar in Pakistan.

An official of BSF Gujarat Frontier said that troopers observed the Pakistani national crossing the international border on Tuesday.

The BSF has been maintaining a high alert along the international border in Gujarat and Punjab, with increased patrolling and use of technology to detect and deter any attempts of infiltration from Pakistan.

According to a statement, in recent months, there have been several instances of drones being used to smuggle weapons and narcotics across the border.

Supreme Court cancels Centre's ban on MediaOne channel

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said critical views of the channel MediaOne on policies of the government cannot be termed "anti-establishment", as the press has a duty to speak truth to power, and also national security claims cannot be made out of thin air to ban telecast of the channel.

It stressed that a homogenised view on issues that range from socioeconomic polity to political ideologies would pose grave dangers to democracy.

The bench said: "It would be impractical and unwise for the courts to define the phrase national security; we also hold that national security claims cannot be made out of thin air. There must be material backing such an inference. The material on the file and the inference drawn from such material have no nexus. The non-disclosure of this information would not be in the interest of any facet of public interest, much less national security."

The Chief Justice, who authored the 134-page judgment on behalf of



the bench, said it is imperative for the state to prove through the submission of cogent material that non-disclosure is in the interest of national security and it is the court's duty to assess if there is sufficient material for forming such an opinion.

The top court said an independent press is vital for the robust functioning of a democratic republic and its role in a democratic society is crucial for it shines a light on the functioning of the state.

OPPOSITION'S CASE AGAINST "MISUSE OF AGENCIES" REJECTED

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday said that political leaders do not enjoy an immunity greater than an ordinary citizen of the state and they are also not entitled to a higher immunity, while refusing entertain a petition by 14 Opposition parties, led by the Congress, alleging misuse of CBI and ED against opposition leaders and seeking guidelines for the future.

The top court stressed that laying down general guidelines without having relation to facts of a case "will be a dangerous proposition".

The bench, told senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, representing the political parties, that political leaders do not enjoy an immunity greater than that of a citizen of the state.

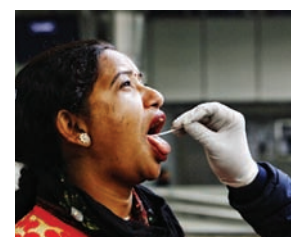
The bench told Singhvi that when political parties argue that there is a chilling effect on the Opposition due to the CBI and the ED cases against the leaders of the political parties, then the answer lies in the political space and not in courts. After detailed hearing in the matter, Singhvi withdrew the petition and the court dismissed the petition as withdrawn.

At 4,435, India sees highest one-day rise in Covid cases since September 2022

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India on Wednesday reported 4,435 new Covid-19 cases, the highest single-day jump since September 2022, according to the Union ministry of Health and Family Affairs. The number of active cases stands at 23,091, the data showed.

With the surge in the past 24 hours, the tally has climbed to 4,47,33,719. Also, 15 deaths reported during the same time span has pushed the toll to 5,30,916. As per the ministry data,



the national Covid recovery rate was pegged at 98.76 per cent. While one death each was reported from Delhi, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Karnataka, Puducherry and Rajasthan, four each were reconciled by Maharashtra and Kerala.

CAN HEAR THROUGH VIDEO CONFERENCING: SC

New Delhi: Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud on Wednesday, while considering the rapid increase in the number of Covid-19 cases in the country, said the apex court is willing to hear lawyers through video conferencing.

The bench, citing the recent media reports, said the court is willing to allow advocates to appear before the court through the hybrid mode. The Chief Justice said, "We can hear you through video conferencing mode also."

Agrifood systems employ 1.23 bn people globally: FAO

According to the FAO, an estimated 1.23 billion people worked in the world's agrifood systems in 2019, 857 million of them in direct agricultural production and the remainder in off-farm segments of agrifood systems, Xinhua news agency reported.

Asia has the largest share of the population employed in agrifood systems, 793 million, followed by Africa with nearly 290 million, it said.

An estimated 3.83 billion people lived in households linked to work in agrifood systems in 2019, accounting for nearly half the world's population, which was estimated at 7.7 billion then.

Rome | Agencies

Agrifood systems directly employ 1.23 billion workers globally, and nearly half of the world's population live in households linked to food production, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) said in a study.

The Rome-based agency said on Monday that the study is the "first systematic and documented global estimate of its kind".

Based on an array of sources gathered and collated by FAO, the researchers focused on entire agrifood systems rather than only on direct agricultural sectors, reflecting "the increasing importance of off-farm activities in



feeding the world's population". FAO's Ben Davis, lead author of the report, said this kind of data is essential to adequately confront the problem of global hunger. "Policy and practical agendas on the national and global level must and are addressing the challenges facing agrifood systems in an

integrated way," he added in a statement.

"To keep up, data must move beyond siloed notions, such as farm employment, and include the whole process from food production through processing and transport to the consumer -- everything that goes into what we eat," Davis said.

Bandi Sanjay hatched plan to leak question paper, says Telangana Police

Hyderabad | Agencies

Telangana BJP chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar hatched a plan with other accused to leak the 10th class question paper, police said on Wednesday.

Sanjay, who was arrested late on Tuesday, had several telephonic conversations and chats with B. Prashanth who shared the leaked paper on WhatsApp, Warangal Police Commissioner A.V. Ranganath said on Wednesday. Addressing a news conference, he said that while Prashanth shared the leaked paper on WhatsApp with many individuals including BJP leaders, they arrested Sanjay Kumar for several telephone calls and chatting with the accused a day before the question paper leak. Sanjay Kumar has been named as accused number one in the case. He has been booked under Indian Penal Code's (IPC) Sections 120B (criminal conspiracy), 420 (cheating),



and 505 (circulating any report or statement with an intent to cause alarm to the public).

Police have also invoked sections 4 (A), 6 of TS Public Examinations (Prevention of Malpractices) Act and 66-D of Information Technology Act. The sections are non-bailable and if convicted, the guilty may get a jail sentence of 3 to 7 years.

Four persons, including Sanjay, have been arrested in the case while five others are absconding. He said a minor student who took photo of the Hindi paper from an exam centre at Kamapur minutes after the exam began at 9.30 a.m. and sent to Prashanth, who then forwarded it to several BJP leaders and media persons.



RIGHT TO SAFE AND HEALTHY LIVING PART OF MATRIMONIAL HOME RIGHTS UNDER DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LAW: DELHI HC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi High Court has ruled that the right to residence in a matrimonial home under the law against domestic violence includes the right to safe and healthy living.

The decision came on a petition by a woman who alleged harassment by her husband and mother-in-law.

According to the woman's allegations, her husband and mother-in-law deliberately fed 10 street dogs in their shared home in order to harass and mentally torture her.

Justice Tushar Rao Gedela acknowledged that the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, encompasses the right to safe and healthy living as part of the right to reside in a matrimonial home.

In the order passed last month, she also noted that the lower court should have initially considered the equitable balance between the parties. The judge also directed the husband and mother-in-law to file their reply to the woman's plea within four



weeks, while listing the case for further hearing in May.

The petitioner's counsel stated that there was an acrimonious relationship between the petitioner and her husband and mother-in-law.

Earlier in the lower court, the woman argued that her fundamental

rights were being violated by her husband and mother-in-law, who were feeding 10 street dogs in their shared household.

The woman claimed that this was being done with the intention of causing her mental harassment and torture.

Counsel representing the woman had argued that this act violated her right to life and right to health, as it posed the risk of diseases and nuisance. The counsel also presented photographs of the dogs being kept in the house as evidence of the harassment.

Hanuman Jayanti: Calcutta HC directs Mamata govt to deploy central armed forces

Kolkata | Agencies

A division bench of the Calcutta High Court on Wednesday directed the West Bengal government to deploy central armed forces on the auspicious occasion of Hanuman Jayanti on April 6 to avoid repetition of violence witnessed during Ram Navami processions.

The violence had erupted in three districts on March 30 and continued till April 3 night.

The division bench of Calcutta High Court's acting Chief Justice T.S. Sivagnanam and Justice Hiranmoy Bhattacharya directed the state government to identify the sensitive pockets in the state and take the help of the central armed forces there.

At the same time, the division also directed the state police to conduct route marches in those pockets from Wednesday night only for the purpose of area domination. "From the nature of the problems that are being referred to, it is clear that the state police cannot single-handedly manage the affairs," Justice Sivagnanam observed.

The intelligence wing of the state police also faced criticism from the division bench for not having any prior information about the probable outbreak of violence over Ram Navami processions. The court also observed that no procession would be allowed in the area where Section 144 has been imposed amid the instances of violence in the recent past.



The division bench also suggested whether procession on occasion of Hanuman Jayanti can be done through areas that are guarded by raising of barricades as is done in case of Ganesh Chaturthi procession in Maharashtra.

On this matter, the state government counsel informed the court that although barricades for all processions in all corners of the state will not be possible, the same will be done in case of sensitive zones.

The state government counsel also informed the court that the police will take action against the organizers of the processions who will flout the restrictions imposed, especially diverting from the prescribed route of the procession. The organisers will also have to inform the police about the estimated gathering in the procession concerned and the organisers will also have to stick to the deadline given for the same.

Delhi court extends Sisodia's judicial custody, to hear bail plea on April 12

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi court on Wednesday extended the judicial custody of AAP leader and former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia till April 17 in connection with the excise policy case being probed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), and will hear his bail plea on April 12.

Appearing for Sisodia, Advocate Vivek Jain submitted that no offence of Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) is made out against him (Sisodia).

After hearing the arguments at length by Sisodia's counsel, Special CBI Judge M.K. Nagpal of the Rouse Avenue Court, listed his bail for April 12.

Representing the ED, Special Public Prosecutor (SPP) Zoheb Hussain sought time to make his submissions as they are gathering some fresh evidence related to hawala operators. "There is some crucial evidence that is still being unearthed," Hossain said.

A copy of the detailed order is awaited. On March 21, Sisodia moved a plea seeking bail plea in ED's case.

After the CBI arrested the AAP leader on



February 26, the ED also arrested him in the same case on March 9.

The probe agency had earlier claimed that within a span of one year, 14 phones have been destroyed and changed, and that Sisodia has been evasive from the start.

Farmers protest against Centre's policies at Delhi's Ramlila Maidan

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Farmers and labourers from all over the country staged a protest at Delhi's Ramlila Maidan on Wednesday against the Centre's policies.

The Mazdoor-Kisan Sangharsh Rally was jointly organised by All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), and All India Agriculture Workers Union (AIAWU).

Farmers and labourers along with Asha, Anganwadi and MGNREGA workers from different states had reached the national capital to join the protest.

AIKS said: "Our question is to the Central government that two crore people were promised jobs, but we want to ask the government where those jobs have gone. And how many people have been given jobs. Today there is also a big issue of daily wage labourers in the country."

The protesters are demanding relief from inflation, a legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price (MSP), a minimum wage for all workers at Rs 26,000 per month and pension of Rs 10,000 per month. Taking to Twitter, the CPI(M) said: "Ensure a minimum wage of Rs 26,000 per month and a pension of Rs 10,000 for all workers. Contracts will not work. Withdraw the Agneepath Scheme."

CITU also tweeted: "The forest and land rights of Adivasis are being taken away and are being given



to corporates. Farmers are not getting remunerative prices. While the demand for work under MGNREGA was continuously increasing, the government has further drastically reduced allocations for it to the tune of Rs 38,000 crore in the last two years."

The employees who came from West Bengal said in their demands that the dictatorial attacks on the government employees should be stopped. The ASHA workers from Assam and Punjab dis-

cussed the problems of their respective states.

The streets of Central Delhi in and around Ramlila Maidan were full of protesters carrying flags, banners and posters in their hands. In view of this rally, traffic on several routes was diverted by the Delhi Traffic Police. Also, a large number of paramilitary forces, Delhi Police personnel and traffic policemen were deployed around the Ramlila Maidan.

Odisha receives investment intent worth Rs 26K cr at business meet in Tokyo

Bhubaneswar | Agencies

The Odisha government has received investment intents of over Rs 26,000 crore during the Odisha Business Meet, 2023 held in Tokyo on Wednesday.

The government of Odisha in association with the Indian Embassy in Japan, the Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO), and the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), hosted the Tokyo meet, which was attended by over 200 delegates, representing various industries from across Japan.

The state has received the investment intents in the sectors like logistics, metal ancillary, steel, metal downstream, green hydrogen and green ammonia, green energy equipment manufacturing and IT/ITES, officials said.

Addressing the investors, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said: "Odisha is one of the fastest growing



economies in India and has consistently grown above the national average in the last decade and a half. We are fast emerging as a major industrial destination in India because of our natural resource advantage and strategic location."

Odisha's abundant natural

resources, skilled and productive human resources, progressive policies, and strong result-oriented governance provide a unique ecosystem, he said. Patnaik said: "Odisha is ranked among the top states in India in terms of attracting investments and has been accorded the achievers sta-

tus in the recently released ease of doing business ratings by the Centre."

Speaking about industrialisation in this era of technological innovations, the CM said: "As we enter a new era of industrialisation propelled by advancements in technology and a philosophy of sustainability, we require a collaborative effort between the governments, industries and people to ensure consistent growth."

The Chief Minister said Odisha, known for its rich culture and tradition, is transforming into a modern industrial hub.

Patnaik said his government is focused on providing the best-in-class facility to all investors coming to Odisha.

"We are also deeply committed to protecting our rich cultural history. The renovation and restoration of Buddhist Pilgrimage Sites have been a key agenda of my government. We are transforming sites like Dhauli, Udaygiri, Ratnagiri and Lalitgiri," he added.

Teachers' scam: Expelled youth Trinamool leader hints evidence planted at his residence

Kolkata | Agencies

Expelled youth Trinamool Congress leader Santanu Bandopadhyay, who was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) recently in connection with the multi-crore teachers recruitment scam in West Bengal, on Wednesday hinted in the court about evidence being planted at his residence leading to his arrest.

During the hearing on his bail plea at a special court of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), Bandopadhyay said that he was not that foolish as to preserve the list of 300 candidates on this count at his residence so that they can be used as evidence against him by the central agency sleuths.

He also dismissed charges against him by ED that he purchased and accumulated huge property from his ill-gotten scam proceeds. "I had enough. I used to own a mobile shop. So, such allegations are baseless," claimed Bandopadhyay in the court.

However, in his counter argument the ED's counsel Phiroze Edulji questioned how Bandopadhyay, as a lower-rung maintenance assistant with the state-run power distribution utility, could accumulate such huge wealth from a "paltry annual salary of Rs 6,00,000".



"How could he accumulate a property to the tune of Rs 20 crore from his paltry annual income of just around Rs 6,00,000? Where he is now was inevitable. I would request the court to have a look at the case diary and it will be clear where the matter is heading for. Kindly go through the names of influential persons mentioned in the case diary. I am unable to pronounce those names in the open court," Edulji said. Finally, after hearing both sides, the judge of the special court rejected Bandopadhyay's bail plea and sent him to judicial custody till April 19.

Delhi's LNJP hospital ready to deal with any emergency amid Covid spike

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi's Lok Nayak Jay Prakash (LNJP) Hospital is fully geared up to deal with any situation if the present Covid case spike turns into another major outbreak.

There are apprehensions of a new Covid wave and therefore, the government and the health sector is getting to ready to deal with any emergency situation.

The LNJP Hospital is one of the big hospitals where a special Covid Emergency unit has been set up.

On Wednesday, an IANS correspondent visiting the hospital to gauge the situation found that the hospital was equipped with 450 Covid beds, out of which only 10 were occupied and the rest were vacant. Apart from this, the hospital has 178 Covid ICU beds waiting in the case of any emergency.



There were adequate security arrangements, including private guards and paramilitary personnel, to maintain law and order inside the hospital premises.

A few family members who had come with their relatives were also satisfied with the hospital service.

Delhi had recorded 521 fresh Covid-19 cases on Tuesday, the highest single-day rise since August 27 last year, and 512 case on Monday.

Delhi Police recovers heroin valued at Rs 50cr; arrests 8

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi Police, in two separate operations, has arrested eight persons and busted two illegal labs involved in the preparation of heroin, an official said on Wednesday, adding heroin valued at Rs 50 crore was also recovered.

The arrested individuals have been identified as Roothullah Noori a.k.a Akbar, Siddiq Ansari, Guddu Ansari, Ajay Kumar, Zahid, Rahul, a 17-and-a-half-years-old juvenile and another person whose name has been withheld.

The operations were carried out by the Crime Branch of Delhi Police. The raids resulted in the recovery of a total of 8.56 kg heroin.

"A raid was conducted in Punjab's Jafarabad area and three men, an Afghan national, Roothullah, Siddiq and Guddu, were nabbed. During searches, around half a kg heroin was recovered from Roothullah, 1.40 gm from Siddiq and 750 gm from Guddu," Ravindra Singh Yadav, Special Commissioner of Police (Crime), said.

"They used to convert raw materials into fine quality heroin using various manufactur-



ing items and transported it to different locations in Delhi-NCR and Punjab as guided by the Afghan nationals who operate from Afghanistan," the Special CP said while addressing a press conference.

Further, during the investigation, various apparatus such as gas cylinders, filter paper, plain clothes, large vessels, a mixer grinder, and a weighing machine, and other articles used to extract fine quality heroin from the raw materials, were recovered.

"They used to receive raw materials from

one Ajay in Jafarabad. Later, Ajay, a resident of Badarpur in Delhi was apprehended and questioned," the officer said.

Ajay was working on the directions of Rehmatullah, who resides in Afghanistan, and received raw materials in hidden form in parcels sent by these people to his address.

"Two mobile phones were recovered from his possession, and various incriminating pictures were also found," the Special CP said.

The person who came to take delivery of heroin from Siddiq at Kailash Nagar was identified as Raju (not real name), a resident of Punjab.

"Later, Raju was also nabbed who disclosed that he was working on the directions of an Afghan national and received deliveries of heroin near Kailash Nagar in his car," the Special CP said.

Raju further delivered heroin to various people in Amritsar, Ludhiana, Chandigarh, among others.

In another operation, two men were arrested while a juvenile was apprehended and five kg of heroin was recovered from their possession. Acting on specific intelligence, a raid was carried out and one Mohd. Zahid, a notorious drug dealer, was nabbed.

MHA SANCTIONED SAFE CITY PROJECTS IN EIGHT CITIES: GOVT

New Delhi: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has sanctioned Safe City Projects under the Nirbhaya Fund Scheme in eight cities - Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow and Mumbai - as part of several initiatives for the safety of women by the government.

The state governments have entrusted the responsibility of implementation of their projects to the police department in consultation with the local bodies and State Line Departments.

Safe City Projects involve identification of hotspots for crime against women and deployment of various components including infrastructure, technology adoption and capacity building in the community through awareness programmes. "MHA has put in place a Safe City Implementation and Monitoring (SCIM) Portal to enable the State Implementing Agencies to upload the assets deployed under the project and other details relating to the progress of implementation," Minister of State for Home Affairs, Ajay Kumar Mishra said in a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday.



SUSPECT WHO SET PASSENGERS ABLAZE ON KERALA TRAIN TAKEN INTO CUSTODY FROM MAHA'S RATNAGIRI

Three days after a man set ablaze passengers on a moving train, a special team of the Kerala Police with the help of Maharashtra Police is reported to have taken him into custody, sources said on Wednesday.

Thiruvananthapuram/Mumbai | Agencies

The suspect, identified as Shahrugh Saif from Uttar Pradesh's Noida, was nabbed on Tuesday night from Ratnagiri in Maharashtra, according to Kerala Police.

Saif was taken into custody from Ratnagiri after he was getting treatment from a hospital for his burn injuries, which he is believed to have suffered while setting ablaze fellow passengers. He is also said to have suffered injuries while jumping out of the moving train.

While the details of the arrest have not been given so far, the police have unofficially confirmed the arrest of Saif.

Meanwhile the arrest was made by the Anti-Terror Squad of Maharashtra and a team of Kerala Police has also reached Ratnagiri.

Speaking to the media, Lathesh, a passenger on the train on Sunday who managed to escape the petrol attack, said seeing the picture of Saif now being flashed on the TV channels and seeing the physique of Saif at close quarters on the train, it appears this person itself is the one who did the



According to sources, when the train was about to cross the Korapuzha bridge between Kozhikode and Kannur stretch around 9.30 p.m. on Sunday night, a middle-aged man sprayed petrol on passengers and set them ablaze.

Nine passengers, who suffered burn injuries, are undergoing treatment at a Kozhikode hospital. On Monday afternoon the Kerala Police released the picture of Saif.

The police got the vital information by probing the social media accounts through a mobile phone, which was recovered from the side of the railway track, though the Sim Card tray was empty and the phone was last used on March 30.

Saif is said to be working as a labourer in Kozhikode.

Incidentally following the incident, various agencies, including the NIA, Railway Police and the different wings of the Kerala Police were on the prowl to nab the suspect who set his co-passengers on fire inside a moving Kannur-bound train on Sunday night.

On that day, seeing the man throwing petrol and lighting it up, three passengers who are believed to have jumped off the Alappuzha-Kannur Executive Express, were found dead on the track. A two-year-old girl and her aunt and another man were among the deceased.

Narayan Rane lashes out at Thackeray as 'maha-fadtus' for criticising Fadnavis

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Union MSME Minister Narayan Rane lambasted his bete-noire, Shiv Sena (UBT) President and ex-Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray for his comments against Bharatiya Janata Party's Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis, here on Wednesday.

Labelling Thackeray in several terms, Rane - mostly referring to him as 'Tu' - advised him to bide his time at home in 'Matoshri' as he had lost his CM's post which would never return.

"You (tu) are a 'maha-fadtus' (most useless), 'cranky', lair, inept, traitor, fraud, a blot, without knowledge of any topic, only surviving because of the 'Thackeray' surname... You did nothing as CM for two-and-half years... Who are you to criticise our Fadnavis," Rane thundered.

Raking up the death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput and his associate Disha Salian, Rane again questioned the alleged role of the Thackerays in the two cases.

Rane warned that if Thackeray dared to attack Fadnavis, then he would face the consequences at any public rally he would address in the future. "What does he know of the state, farmers, workers, state or nation... All his speeches are the same, full of abuses, due to the frustration of losing his CM's post... What is his locus-standi to criticise Fadnavis, Union Home Minister Amit Shah or Prime Minister Narendra Modi?" said an irate Rane.

He said that all of Thackeray's tall claims of sweeping the next Lok Sabha elections in the state will prove hollow and predicted that the



BJP will cross 400 seats in the country next year, as the economy is doing very well under Modi. "You see what Fadnavis did as CM in five years... What do you have to show for your 30 months as CM... Is your tenure working from home even comparable... How dare you call him a 'fadtus'," demanded Rane.

The Union Minister also took umbrage at the language used by the newspapers, "Saamana" Group and said he would move the courts against them to stop the publications. Referring to the Monday night incident of a Sena (UBT) activist, Roshani Shinde-Pawar, Rane claimed that she was not injured, nor pregnant and questioned her credentials to criticise personalities Modi, Shah, Fadnavis or Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

"Who is she, what is her standing to criticise such big people... If I was there, I would have warned her against doing this... But, Thackeray went there with his wife and son..." Rane said.

Maha farmers' party SSS to contest 6 Lok Sabha seats

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatana (SSS), a farmers' party, reiterated its plans to contest six seats in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, a top leader said on Wednesday.

SSS President Raju Shetti, a former MP from Hatkanangale, -- a NCP bastion -- said that the farmers' party will nominate candidates, who are likely to be farmer-leaders, in half-a-dozen seats in mofussil parts of Maharashtra, which has a total of 48 LS constituencies.

However, Shetti made it clear that the SSS will not ally with the ruling Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party or the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance of Congress-Nationalist Congress Party-Shiv Sena (UBT). "They are simply indulging in dramatics, doing nothing for the farmers... We shall have no truck with them. For the remaining 42 seats, we may consider supporting like-minded parties on a case-by-case basis, but nothing is finalised," said Shetti, a former MVA ally who quit the alliance last year.

Senior MVA leaders in Mumbai have



frowned at the SSS' move saying it would cut into the three-parties' votes in the crucial elections when every seat would count to dislodge the BJP from the Centre, but declined to elaborate on grounds that it is too early to comment. The 23-year-old SSS has a considerable following among the peasantry in western Maharashtra, and parts of Marathwada and Vidarbha.

The SSS was one of the major participants in the All India Kisan Sabha-led national agitation of farmers 2022-2021 protesting against the three contentious farm laws which were finally withdrawn.

Sanjay Raut to Devendra Fadnavis: 'Keep ED-CBI aside and face us'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut on Wednesday dared Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis to "keep aside ED-CBI" and face the Opposition, even as his colleague and MP Priyanka Chaturvedi met Union Home Minister Amit Shah to draw his attention to the attack on her party colleague in Thane.

In a tough rejoinder to Fadnavis, Raut said that because "they have the ED-CBI bodyguards behind them", they are talking so much against the Opposition parties.

Referring to Fadnavis' claim that he was not a 'fadtus' (useless) - as labelled by Sena (UBT) President and ex-CM Uddhav Thackeray - but a "kartoos" (cartridge), Raut took a swipe, saying it was more like a "wet kartoos".

Hitting back at Thackeray, Fadnavis had said on Tuesday that "I am not a



'fadtus' but a 'kartoos' and would not bend but enter," while the state BJP President Chandrashekhar Bawankule warned the ex-CM "to gag-up" or face the consequences of criticising the Deputy CM (Fadnavis).

In a related development, Sena (UBT) MP Chaturvedi called on Shah in New Delhi and informed him of the attack on her party colleague in Thane, the hometown of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, and how the

police was not lodging an FIR in the matter.

Raut said that Thackeray's comment ('fadtus') was very mild and shot back - "The Supreme Court has called your government 'impotent' recently." "Your becoming home minister is not a problem for us but a problem for the state... Women are being attacked, three women committed suicide in Mantralaya after you (Fadnavis) became home minister... What is the CM doing about it," demanded Raut.

Targetting Bawankule, Raut gave dark hints and asked why (Bawankule) was not given a poll ticket in 2019, who 'cut it' off and what he 'did' in the electricity department which the BJP chief handled in the previous regime.

The Sena (UBT) leader said that Fadnavis was "bowing" before Shinde now and termed him a "wet cartridge".

Withdraw health scheme extended for K'taka villages: Bommai to Maha govt

Bengaluru | Agencies

Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai warned Maharashtra government on Wednesday that if the insurance scheme for villages in Karnataka state is not withdrawn, a similar scheme will be extended for people in Maharashtra villages.

Bommai stated "Though the border dispute between the two states is in the Supreme Court, Maharashtra is trying to create confusion in the border region. The order to extend insurance scheme for villagers of Karnataka is an obstinate measure aiming to spoil the harmonious relationship between the two states."

"In the meeting headed by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Maharashtra CM Eknath Shinde and Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis had



agreed that they will not create confusion in the matter of border dispute.

Now, the announcement of Jyotirao Phule Health Scheme for people of 865 villages of Karnataka is a decision against the federal system. Maharashtra government should immediately take back the announcement and respect the direction of Union Home Minister Amit Shah," Bommai urged. The harmony between two states must be protected, he added.

If Maharashtra continues with its obstinacy, Karnataka government will announce certain schemes for Kannada people living in bordering regions of Maharashtra. It is a condemnable move by the Maharashtra government to take declaration letters from the people that they belong to Maharashtra on the pretext of giving health scheme, Bommai added.

MUMBAI AIRPORT TO CONDUCT PRE-MONSOON RUNWAY MAINTENANCE ON MAY 2

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As part of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport's (CSMIA) monsoon contingency plan, both runways -- RWY 09/27 and 14/32 will remain temporarily non-operational on May 2, for pre-monsoon maintenance and repair work.

The temporary closure will be from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and a NOTAM -- Notice to Airmen, has been issued in this regard.

All operations will resume as usual from May 2 post 5 p.m. The scheduled temporary runway closure is a year-



ly practice and a contingency plan, on the same, will help maintain operational continuity and ensure passengers' safety. As one of the world's busiest single runway air-

ports, CSMIA witnesses nearly 900 flight movements each day. The airport has a network of runways, taxiways and apron encompassing nearly 1,033 acres.

Interim stay on show-cause notice to Anil Ambani under black money act to continue: High Court

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bombay High Court today continued till further orders an interim stay on show-cause notice and penalty demand issued to industrialist Anil Ambani by the Income Tax department under the Black Money Act.

A division bench of Justices Gautam Patel and Neela Gokhale posted Anil Ambani's petition challenging the notice and penalty demand for hearing on April 28, and gave time to the IT department to file its reply.

The High Court (HC) had in September 2022 granted an interim stay to the show-cause notice pending hearing. In March this year, Ambani's lawyer Rafique



Dada informed the court that the department later also issued a penalty demand notice to his client.

The court then granted interim stay to the demand notice too. On Wednesday, when the petition came up for hearing, advocate Akhileshwar Sharma, appearing for the IT department, sought two weeks to file a "comprehensive affidavit" in response to the amended petition. "The peti-

tion has been amended adding some more IT officials as respondents and (the petitioner) has also annexed certain new documents. The department wants time to file a comprehensive affidavit," Akhileshwar Sharma said.

The court directed that the affidavit be filed by April 21.

"The petition shall be listed for hearing on April 28. The interim orders passed earlier -- stay on the show-cause notice and the penalty demand -- shall continue till further orders," the bench said. The IT department issued a notice to Anil Ambani on August 8, 2022, for allegedly evading Rs 420 crore in taxes on undisclosed funds of more than Rs 814 crore held in two Swiss bank accounts.

Apple reveals first glimpse of its grand India retail store in Mumbai

Team Absolute | Mumbai

After years of wait, Apple on Wednesday finally lifted the curtains off its much-awaited own branded retail store in India, as it ramps up plans to boost local manufacturing in a fillip to the Central government's 'Make in India' initiative.

Apple revealed the barricade of its first brick-and-mortar store in India at Jio World Drive Mall in Mumbai, officially marking the upcoming opening of Apple BKC.

Inspired by the iconic 'Kaali Peeli' taxi art unique to Mumbai, the Apple BKC creative includes colourful interpretations of the decals combined with many Apple products and services that will be available for our customers to discover. The creative for the store features a bright welcome to people passing by with the classic Apple greeting, "Hello Mumbai".

"To celebrate the opening of the new store, vis-



itors can download the new Apple BKC wallpaper and move to the sounds of Mumbai with a specially curated playlist on Apple Music," said the company. The company is all set to open the gates of the India retail store to the public this month.

Apple will also possibly launch a retail store in New Delhi at a later date.

The tech giant has set another all-time revenue record for the India market, along with quarterly

records in Brazil and India.

Apple CEO Tim Cook said recently that looking at the business in India, "we set a quarterly revenue record and grew very strong double digits year over year and so we feel very good about how we performed". "That's despite the headwinds that we talked about. India is a hugely exciting market for us and a major focus. We brought the online store there in 2020. We will soon bring Apple Retail there," Cook had announced in February.

He said that Apple actually did fairly well through Covid in India.

"That's the reason why we are investing there by bringing retail there, bringing the online store there and putting out a significant amount of energy there. I'm very bullish on India," the CEO added. Apple sold 2 million iPhones in India in the holiday quarter (Q4) of 2022, registering 18 per cent growth (quarter-on-quarter) for its flagship device.



EDITOR'S SPECS

AKHILESH CAUGHT IN OBC-UPPER CASTE CROSSFIRE

In his efforts to consolidate the OBC vote bank by supporting the controversy over Ramcharitmanas, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav is now having a tough time in keeping the upper castes on his side simultaneously. The growing divide within the party on the Ramcharitmanas issue was evident during Akhilesh's visit to Rae Bareilly earlier this week. Senior SP leader Manoj Pandey was conspicuous by his absence at a function held in a college run by SP leader Swami Prasad Maurya, who had raised objections to verses in Ramcharitmanas. Pandey was also not seen at an event where Akhilesh unveiled a statue of late Kanshi Ram -- an event that was organised by Swami Prasad Maurya. Instead, Pandey, with thousands of followers, gave a rousing reception to Akhilesh in Unchahar, on the outskirts of Rae Bareilly. Manoj Pandey was among the first SP leaders who had objected to Swami Prasad Maurya's remarks on the Ramcharitmanas. Manoj Pandey had described Ramcharitmanas as "unanimously accepted methodology to live an ideal life. There is no doubt that upper castes are upset over Maurya's campaign against Ramcharitmanas. It is upsetting that the party leadership is seen supporting this campaign. If this continues, upper caste leaders may have to look for other options for themselves," said an upper caste SP MLA.

Progressing British Muslims

Asad Mirza

Superficial concerns have been raised both within and outside the UK about the status of the Muslim population, though the census statistics convey something positive. UK's Office of National Statistics (ONS), last week released the latest Census data, which apparently shows that unemployment level amongst Muslims was as high as 1 in 20, for people aged between 16-64 years. As per the figures about 2.6 million Muslims live in areas where unemployment rates are high and which face housing shortage. Figures from the ONS also revealed that Muslims in England and Wales reported the highest unemployment rates among religious groups, at 6.7 percent. Only 26 percent of Christians live in areas with the highest unemployment levels, but for Muslim communities the figure stood at 68 percent. Figures also reveal that Sikhs (77.7 per cent) are most likely to own their own homes, while among Muslims, 45.6 per cent lived in households that owned their home. A quarter of Muslims live in socially rented housing - the highest for any religious group. As per figures, Muslims are more likely to live in overcrowded homes - their bedroom occupancy being the highest for any group, followed by Hindus and Sikhs. In contrast, those who identified themselves as having 'no religion', Christians and Jews live in the least crowded homes. According to the figures based on self-declaration, Hindus have the highest percentage of 'level 4 or above' qualification at 54.8 per cent, compared with 33.8 per cent for the overall population. However, just 31.6 per cent of Christians reported they have a similar level of education. Jews and Hindus have the highest proportion of 'managers, directors or senior officials' and 'professional occupations', whereas Buddhists and Muslims have the highest percentages of people working in elementary occupations. In response to the census findings in a press statement, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) has said that the inter-generational cycles of poverty impacting British Muslim communities can result in young people being forced to leave education in pursuit of work so they can help support their families. Those that are able to break into the job market, pursuing chosen careers, can face Islamophobic prejudice and discrimination in the workplace. It further asked for creating a level playing field, so that the



dynamism and sheer potential of young British Muslims could prove itself to be a strategic national asset. Indeed these are statistical figures and can be interpreted as per the desire of the reader. If we take a deeper analytical look, what exactly The Guardian has done, shows that the age trends amongst Muslims, as compared to other groups, may be a contributing factor to the statistics, with younger Muslims more likely to be studying than other youth in the general population. Of those who identified as Muslim in the census, the percentage of students in the group was almost twice the rate seen in the overall population. But the fact is that they were studying, so you can't describe them as unemployed, leading to despair. Also the unemployment rate is reported along with the areas having the highest unemployment rate, and since mostly Muslims inhabit these areas the unemployment rate is reported high, though the reality might be different. Further, the data has led to campaigners urging the government to focus on Muslim youth as part of its plan to "level up" Britain's economy. As more than two-thirds of Muslims live in local authorities that report the highest levels of unemployment. Instead, once the figures were released publicly it would have given an opportunity

to Muslim leaders and organisations to introspect about the status of Muslims in the UK and elsewhere, too. But as usual they tried to shift the blame to the government policies and access to facilities. But in this calculus they coolly try to ignore the role, which could be played by the community leaders, both religious and political. Instead of sensitising the Muslim population about its own duties and how to make best of the opportunities offered in UK, which perhaps offers an individual the most level playing field, they continued with their old tune. This is happening with Muslims not just in the UK, but elsewhere too. Instead of becoming part of the mainstream and striving to access educational and job opportunities based on merit and competition, they want to be spoon fed by the governments. If we take the case of the UK, then perhaps it is amongst the leading countries that provide a level playing field to its citizens. This is evident by the success of the Muslim community in any field whether be it business, finance or politics. We have a recent winner in Hamza Yousuf, the newly elected First Minister of Scotland and leader of the Scottish Nationalist Party. Similarly, we have London's Mayor Sadiq Khan, former Chancellor Sajid Javed, and former co-chair of the

Conservative Party Saeeda Warsi. A record number of Muslims were elected to the House of Commons in the UK's last parliamentary elections in 2017. Nineteen Muslim candidates, including 10 women won the elections. The mayors of London, Birmingham, Leeds, Blackburn, Sheffield, Oxford, Luton, Oldham, and Rochdale are Muslims. An estimated 443 Muslim councillors were elected in the local elections in held in 2022. Out of the 11 members in the House of Lords, there are 5 Baronesses and 6 Lords. This leads one to surmise that instead of bemoaning about the facilities extended by the governments, Muslims should get better organised at the community level, focussing more on educational gains leading to better employment and financial opportunities, and as is evident from the numbers shown above, they could perform much better politically if they turn out to be more educated but in addition we should try to ensure that once elected then they should work more towards community's progress in social, educational, financial and employment fields and contribute positively to its growth.

international

700 FIREFIGHTERS WORK TO DOUSE MASSIVE DHAKA WHOLESALE MARKET FIRE

Sumi Khan | Dhaka

About 700 firefighters continued working on Wednesday to completely douse a massive blaze that erupted at the Bangabazar in Dhaka -- the biggest wholesale market in Bangladesh -- 36 hours ago. Brigadier General Md Main Uddin, Director General (DG) of the Fire Brigade of Bangladesh, told correspondent that the firefighters were part of the 12 units that are currently pressed into service to douse the flames. The firefighters are working in the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh floors of the Anexo Tower that are warehouses. "We had declared this building vulnerable in 2019. After that I also gave them



notice about 10 times, so that they do not conduct business here. Still the traders conducted their business," he said. He said that to put out the fire in Bangabazar there was a lack of water. "To put out the fire, we had

to bring water from Shahidullah Hall with a pump. The Air Force also assisted in dousing the fire by bringing water from Hatirjheel by helicopter. We also brought water from Buriganga. Apart from the

three forces, WASA also assisted us in this work." The fire erupted at 6.10 a.m. on Tuesday. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Wednesday assured to provide the best support to the traders who suffered losses due to the blaze. "I have already said that I will help them as much as I can and will monitor what kind of damage has been done," she said at an event. Describing the fire as a very tragic incident, Hasina said the suffering and cries of so many trades ahead of Eid is too much to bear. The Prime Minister also lambasted those who attacked and vandalized the fire service headquarters, adding that they will be identified soon and action will be taken against them.

WORLD BANK PROJECTS MASSIVE DECLINE IN PAKISTAN'S GDP GROWTH



Islamabad: Projecting a massive decline in Pakistan's GDP growth to 0.4 per cent, the World Bank has warned that the non-completion of IMF programme, failure to secure financing from key bilateral partners and political instability may result in eruption of a major macroeconomic crisis. While the Asian Development Bank (ADB), in a separate report, projects a significantly lower GDP growth rate of 0.6 per cent, ballooning inflation of up to 27.5 per cent and an ongoing foreign exchange crisis in Pakistan, The News reported. According to the World Bank report, approximately four million people fell below the poverty line as poverty increased by one percentage point in Pakistan during the last year. The poverty measured at the lower middle-income poverty line is projected to increase to 37.2 per cent in FY23 against 36.2 per cent in FY22 pushing an additional 3.9 million people into poverty as compared to FY22, The News reported.

Guinness certifies world's deepest fish found by Japan-Australia team

London | Agencies

At a depth of more than 8 km underwater, a fish filmed by a team of researchers from Japan and Australia has been certified by the Guinness World Records as the deepest fish in the ocean to be observed. Scientists mainly from the Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology and the University of Western Australia on August 15, 2022, filmed the unknown snailfish species of the genus Pseudoliparis at a depth of 8,336 metres, near the bottom of the Izu-Ogasawara Trench off southern Japan in the western Pacific, reports Xinhua news agency. According to the Guinness World Records, the unprecedented depth -- more than double the vertical extent of Mount Fuji -- is approaching what is thought to be the biological bottom line for fish. Hiroshi Kitazato and co-researchers from the Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology received their Guinness certificate on Tuesday. According to the joint scientific expedition, the observation was made 158 metres deeper than the previous record of 8,178 metres in the Mariana Trench,



where living fish were confirmed in 2017. The Mariana snailfish was observed in the Mariana Trench on May 18, 2017. Kitazato stressed the significance of having filmed fish at such a depth and expressed hope of finding fish even deeper in the ocean. The chief scientist conducting this field study was UWA Professor Alan Jamieson, founding director of the Minderoo-UWA Deep-Sea Research Centre. Professor Jamieson is arguably the world's leading authority on hadal organisms -- those that live deeper than 19,685 ft -- and has made numerous record-setting discoveries over his career. These include the deepest squid (20,381 ft), the deepest octopus (22,825 ft), the deepest decapod (25,272 ft) and the deepest hydrozoan (33,015 ft).

Unexploded mines, explosives threaten over 4 mn in Iran

Tehran | Agencies

An Iranian official said that over 4 million people in the country's western and southern provinces are threatened by unexploded mines and explosives. There are 20 million unexploded mines and explosives left in Iran due to the eight-year war with Iraq from 1980 to 1988, Mohammad-Hossein Amir-Ahmadi, president of Iran's Mine Action Center, was quoted as saying on the occasion of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. The explosives are buried in an area of 42,000 square kilometres stretching across five provinces along the western and southwestern borders, where more than 3 million have been detected and cleared, reports Xinhua news



agency. Amir-Ahmadi said the buried mines and explosives in the country have so far killed over 8,000 civilians, and led to unemployment, migration from the affected regions and destruction of the environmental resources. It is estimated that there are 110 million land mines in the ground right now across more than 60 countries. An equal amount is in stockpiles wait-

ing to be planted or destroyed. According to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines network, more than 4,200 people, of whom 42 per cent are children, have been falling victim to landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) annually in many of the countries affected by war or in post-conflict situations around the world.

Israel launches airstrikes on Gaza in response to rocket firing

Jerusalem | Agencies

Israel on Wednesday carried out intensive airstrikes on military facilities in the Gaza Strip in response to rockets fired from the besieged Palestinian enclave. Security sources in Gaza said that the airstrikes targeted two military posts of the Hamas in the southwest and central Gaza Strip, reports Xinhua news agency. The posts suffered severe damage with no injuries reported. Earlier in the day, militants in the Gaza Strip fired nine rockets at Israel in response to clashes between Israeli police and Palestinian worshippers at the Al-Aqsa mosque in East Jerusalem and some other neighbourhoods in the Old City of Jerusalem. Four of the rockets were intercepted by its air defence system and another four landed in open areas. There were no reports of casualties on either side. The clashes erupted on Tuesday night after the Palestinians barricaded themselves in the



mosque after the evening Ramadan prayers, amid reports that Jewish extremists wanted to try to sacrifice a Passover goat at the site -- as Jews did in Biblical times before the Romans destroyed their temple there. Israeli police have said that 350 people were arrested in a pre-dawn raid on Wednesday after what they called "agitators" with fireworks, sticks and stones shut themselves inside, reports

the BBC. Meanwhile, Palestinians said stun grenades and rubber bullets were used to clear out the group and that 14 people were hurt. The Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, known to Jews as the most sacred site, is regarded by Muslims as their third holiest site. The holy site has been administered by the Jerusalem Islamic Waqf, a Jordanian body, since 1948. Under a 1967 agreement between Israel and Jordan, non-Muslim worshippers can visit the compound but are prohibited from praying there. In April 2022, the mosque compound witnessed violent clashes between Palestinian worshippers and Israeli police forces when Jews visited the holy site. This latest incident comes amid growing tensions between Israel and the Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem that have been going on since the beginning of this year. At least 89 Palestinians, including women and children, have been killed since January, while 15 Israelis were killed in a series of attacks in the same period of time, according to official figures.



DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATE AND WELFARE OF THE PEOPLE IS THE AIM OF MY LIFE: CHIEF MINISTER SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN

Ladli Bahna Yojana a social revolution, every eligible sister will get benefit of the scheme. Government will give an amount of Rs 15 for every KYC. PESA rules have given tribal brothers and sisters their rights. Foundation stone of micro-irrigation project laid, distribution of Rs 51 crore bonus to tendu leaf collectors

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that development of the state and welfare of the people is the aim of my life. To complete this, I need the cooperation of all of you. Social revolution is going on in the state to improve the lives of sisters and daughters. If my sisters are happy then my life is successful.

Chief Minister attended the Ladli Bahna Sammelan at Beohari in Shahdol district. He also distributed bonus worth Rs 51 crore to Tendupatta collectors. Sisters tied rakhi to their dear brother Shivraj, sang songs for him, read out congratulatory letters and expressed thanks. Chief Minister Chouhan laid the foundation stone of Bhanni Major Irrigation Project costing Rs 327 crore 51 lakh. He also released the book "Safal-Sabal Shahdol" of the district administration. Chouhan announced to make Beuhari a mini smart city, to open a college in Ban Sagar from this session, including ring road and bridge construction.

Chouhan said that Ladli Bahna Yojana is a social revolution. It will bring respect in the life of sisters and their self-confidence will increase. This plan has been made after a lot of thought. In this, 1000 rupees will be given every month in the account of sisters. Sisters in the age group of 23 to 60 years of



families whose annual income is less than 2.5 lakh, land less than 5 acres and do not have a four wheeler will get the benefit of this scheme. Forms will be filled by setting up camps in every ward and village for the scheme. The last date to fill the form is 30 April. If even after this the names are left out, they will also be added. Every eligible sister will get the benefit of the scheme.

Chouhan said that it is necessary to get the KYC of the sisters done in the scheme. For this, the government will give Rs 15 per KYC to those who do KYC. KYC can be done at Ration Shop, Common Service Center and MP Online. For this, if the sister has to go to another village, then the administration will also arrange a vehicle for her. Chief Minister clearly said that no sister should give a single rupee

to any person. If someone demands then directly complain on 181, that person will be sent to jail.

Chief Minister said that I have seen since childhood that complete justice was not done towards daughters. They did not get equal respect as sons in home, family and society. Then I had decided in my mind that I will fight continuously for the respect of daughters. I made the Ladli Laxmi Yojana as soon as I became the Chief Minister. After this, the works for the welfare of sisters and daughters went on with various schemes like Chief Minister Kanya Vivah / Nikah, Gaon Ki Beti and Pratibha Kiran.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that 50 percent reservation has been given to sisters in panchayats and urban bodies in the state. Due to this, they are getting empowered in the political field as well. 30 percent reservation is given to sisters in police recruitment. Moral control has been imposed on drugs in the state. The premises of liquor have been closed. Chief Minister Chouhan said that after the implementation of the PESA rule, the tribal brothers and sisters have got the rights of water, forest and land in the tribal areas. Now Tendupatta collectors can pluck tendu leaves themselves and sell them. Can operate stone and ballast quarries in their area. Minor disputes are settled by the village peace and dispute resolution committee.

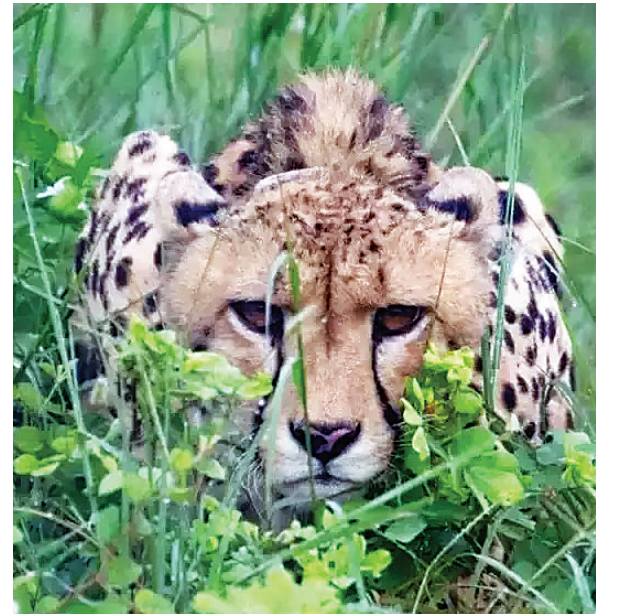
After Oban, Cheetah Asha flees Kuno National Park

Team Absolute | Bhopal

After male cheetah Oban, now female cheetah Asha has also come out of Kuno National Park. On Wednesday, his location was traced to the Virpur-Vijaypur area. In the last 2-3 days, Asha was seen many times in the buffer zone forest and its surrounding fields. Most of his time is passing around the river. Van Amla is keeping an eye on Oban as well as Asha. Security arrangements have been increased. Trained dogs have been deployed to protect cheetahs from poachers.

The distance between the two cheetahs that came out of Kuno is now about 40 km. Asha's location is in Dhaurat Sarkar forest, while Oban's location is in Pohri area forest of Shivpuri district. Asha is about 9 km away from Jhar Baroda village where Oban was seen for the first time. The employees of Kuno say that three days ago i.e. on Sunday, both the cheetahs came to each other in the forest of Dhaurat Sarkar. Then the distance between them was about 100 meters.

Cheetah Oban, who came out of Kuno National Park, hunted Chinkara on



Wednesday morning. Earlier, he had hunted a cow on Saturday night. According to the information, Oban had its last meal on intervening night of Saturday and Sunday when it hunted cow. Oban was hungry for three days. Hunting of Chinkara is a good news for the forest staff as it is their responsibility to take care of the Cheetah's health. The Forest Department traced last location of Cheetah near Sumed

Baichai village of Pohri area adjacent to Shivpuri forest. According to the forest department, the location of Cheetah Oban is near Sumed Baichai village of Pohri area adjacent to Shivpuri forest. Still he has not reached the reserve zone of the Kuno, on Wednesday he again reaches around the residential areas. Forest workers are tracing its location every moment with the radio collar attached to the leopard's neck.

Laxmibai Nagar railway station to be developed from Banganga side: Minister Ashwini Vaishnav

Team Absolute | Indore

Laxmibai Nagar railway station will be developed from Banganga side after conducting a survey, assured railway minister Ashwini Vaishnav on Wednesday. Member of Parliament Shankar Lalwani has taken a major initiative to improve the rail infrastructure of Indore for the convenience of the common citizens. In this regard, he met union railway minister Ashwini Vaishnav in Parliament and requested to develop Laxmibai Nagar railway station from Banganga area.

Lalwani informed Vaishnav that Indore is one of the fastest growing cities of India and the state government is currently planning to develop Indore and Park Road station. Along with this, a plan is also being drawn for the development of Laxmibai Nagar station. Lalwani said



that if platforms, basic facilities and access roads are made at Laxmibai Nagar station towards Banganga, then about 5 lakh people living in the area will not have to take a long journey of 5 kilometers to reach the station. This will reduce the unnecessary pressure of vehicles on the road. Also, the load on Laxmibai Nagar railway station will be

distributed on both the sides. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi and railway minister Ashwini Vaishnav have given many gifts to Indore. Today, he gave a letter to develop Laxmibai Nagar railway station from Banganga side. He has also given instruction to the officers to conduct a survey in this regard", he added.

Pandit Pradeep Mishra takes a jibe at Babas who writes chits, asks devotees to only trust god and not 'ordinary' man

Team Absolute | Ujjain

Taking a veiled jibe at Bageshwar Dham's Dharendra Shastri and Baba Pandokhar Sarkar, Sehore's Pandit Pradeep Mishra asked public to trust only God instead of any 'ordinary' man, during ongoing Shiv Mahapuram Katha at Murlipura in Ujjain. "Neither I write any prescription nor do I make predictions. Instead of trusting any ordinary man, we should trust God. This will make our life meaningful," Mishra said while addressing devotees.

On the Sai Baba controversy, he said that "there is no death of deities in Sanatan Dharma; it's enough to worship them."

Many devotees reached Ujjain on the first day of the Katha. On the media's question "You said about not prophesying during your story, was it about Bageshwar Dham?" Mishra replied, "We do not care about that. We know how much we worship lord Shiva. 'Kaladhipati' himself is there to write the fate of the world. We have to trust our God, and will not have to trust any ordinary man. If we trust God then our life will be meaningful", he said.

Around 5 lakh devotees reached Ujjain. Almost around 5 lakh devotees reach Ujjain daily to participate in the Shiv Mahapuram Katha. Before the start, 2 lakh people had already reached. New pandals have been



installed due to the scarcity of space. About 50 thousand people were on the way who were reaching the venue on foot on Wednesday during the Katha. Some people who did not get a place returned to their homes.

Arrangement of fan, coolers to avoid heat Three huge domes of 300 x 800 were made for organising the Katha. Shivalinga has been made by decorating the Mahakal temple on the main stage in the main dome in the centre. To beat the heat during a week-long event, fans and coolers are arranged in all three domes to avoid heat. A crowd of devotees started arriving at the venue two days before the Katha. The devotees who have come from outside are sleeping in the pandal. Devotees have reached Ujjain from different cities of Rajasthan, Bihar, UP, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Odisha and other states.

BAGESHWAR DHAM'S DHURENDRA SHASTRI APOLOGISES FOR HIS CONTROVERSIAL REMARK AGAINST SAI BABA

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Bageshwar Dham's Dharendra Shastri apologised for his recent controversial remark against Sai Baba on Wednesday. His statement that "Sai Baba can be a saint but he cannot be called God" had caused anger in public.

Dharendra Shastri said, "I will always have respect for saints and great men. I said a proverb which we were speaking in our context that if we put an umbrella behind and say that we are Shankaracharya, then how can this happen... What our Shankaracharya said, we have reiterated that Sai Baba can be a Saint and people have personal faith in him. If a person considers a Saint as God with personal faith, it is his personal faith, we have no objection to it.

If any word of ours has hurt someone then we are deeply saddened and sorry for the hurt caused". Notably, two days ago Dharendra Shastri had said that Shankaracharya has the biggest place in our religion. They have not given the place of gods to Sai Baba. While giving a controversial statement, Shastri said that no one can become a lion by wearing the skin of a jackal. His words hurt the sentiments of the devotees of Sai Baba and he was asked to apologise.



After Indore temple tragedy, MP govt orders state-wide survey of all stepwells and open borewells

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Days after the stepwell roof collapse at a temple in Indore claimed 36 lives, the Madhya Pradesh government has ordered a state-wide survey of all the covered stepwells and open borewells within 30 days, an official said. The district administrations have also been asked to completely fill such structures to prevent any untoward incident and loss of life, Madhya Pradesh's Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Rajesh Rajora said on Tuesday.

On March 30, a structure at the Beleshwar Mahadev Jhulelal Temple in Patel Nagar, which was built in a public garden by laying a slab to cover a "bawdi" or stepwell, collapsed, hurtling devotees several feet



below. Rajora said district administrations across the state are directed to conduct a survey of bawdis and wells covered with slabs and open borewells within 30 days.

Earlier, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had directed to conduct such surveys across the state to prevent any untoward incident.

Rajora said the district administrations have also been asked to remove the encroachment from bawdis and wells and realise the expense of its removal from the owners.

If the encroachment is not removed, penal action will be taken, he said. During the past one year, there have been a number of incidents of children falling into open borewells in the state.

Navodaya Vidyalaya principal booked for molesting counsellor in Mhow

A case has been filed against the principal of a Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya for allegedly molesting a former female counsellor, who belongs to a Scheduled Caste, of the school in Madhya Pradesh's Indore district, police said on Wednesday.

Team Absolute | Mhow

The case was registered on Tuesday following a complaint lodged by the 35-year-old woman, who worked as a contractual counsellor in the centrally-managed school, an official said. Manpur police station in-charge Amit Kumar said

the principal has been booked under relevant Indian Penal Code sections and provisions of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

In her complaint, the woman said she worked as a counsellor in the school from September 2021 to June 2022

and alleged the principal used to often call her inside his office and touch her inappropriately. When she resisted this move, he would threaten to terminate her contract, said the police, quoting the complaint. The police official said the matter was under investigation and the accused has not been arrested yet.

CM Chouhan plants Kadamba, Sarika Indica and Karanj saplings

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of Kadamba, Sarika Indica and Karanj in the garden located at Shyamla Hills. Along with Chief Minister Chouhan, Shubham Patel and child Atharv Sharma planted saplings on their birthday. Along with Chief Minister Chouhan, Manoj Jain Banga of Jain community and his colleagues, State President of Bharatiya Sen Samaj Madhya Pradesh Deepak Singh, representatives of the society and social workers planted saplings.



CM CHOUHAN DEDICATES HIRWAR MICRO IRRIGATION PROJECT

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that the welfare of farmers is the priority of the government. Several measures have been taken for the welfare of the farmers. To increase the area under irrigation in the state, many projects are being implemented and are under construction. Water is being delivered for irrigation to the farmers' fields at higher places by laying pipelines. The CM said that through the Hirwar Micro Irrigation Project of Shahdol district, irrigation facilities will be expanded in 7481 hectares of farmers' land in 37 villages, which will change the lives of the farmers and make their fields prosperous.

Chief Minister Chouhan was addressing today after dedicating an irrigation project costing Rs. 116 crore 78 lakh in village Baheria of



Shahdol district. He also virtually discussed with the beneficiary farmer Balram Yadav. The farmer said that irrigation facilities will bring prosperity in the lives of the farmers of this region. My two and a half acres land will also be irrigated. Expressing happiness, he thanked the Chief Minister. Chief Minister Chouhan said that many schemes are being run by the Central and State Governments in the interest of the farmers. Work is being done on a large scale to make water available to the farmers' fields. The area under irrigation is continuously increasing in the state. He said that the previous government had made farmers indebted by making false promises of crop loan waiver. Our government will pay the interest on the loans of all such farmers, so that they will be able to get the benefits of the schemes of the government.



Ryan Gosling, Margot Robbie promise an enjoyable journey into the world of Barbie

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Margot Robbie brings to life the famous figurine in the official trailer for Warner Bros' 'Barbie'. Oscar nominee Robbie leads a star-studded cast that includes a muscular Ryan Gosling as Barbie's boy toy, Ken. The two actors are not the only Barbie and Ken dolls in the film. Dua Lipa stars as mermaid Barbie, for instance, alongside many other actors as different iterations of the famous doll, reports Variety.



The first 'Barbie' trailer - featuring a nod to Stanley Kubrick's '2001: A Space Odyssey' - officially introduced the world to Robbie's Barbie, but it didn't reveal too much about the characters or storyline. Since then it has been revealed that Barbie and Ken have been placed in the real world and forced to wrestle with the difficulties of no longer being just dolls. As per Variety, Gerwig has enlisted an A-list ensemble to star alongside Robbie and Gosling, including Will Ferrell as the Mattel CEO, Connor Swindells, Nicola Coughlan, Emerald Fennell, Kate McKinnon, Michael Cera, America Ferrera, Kingsley Ben-Adir, Rhea Perlman, Sharon Rooney, Ana Cruz Kayne, Ritu Arya and Jamie Demetriou, as well as additional Barbie and Kens, including Emma Mackey, Issa Rae, Hari Nef, Alexandra Shipp, Simu Liu, Scott Evans and Ncuti Gatwa. Directed by Gerwig, 'Barbie' was co-written by the director and her husband, filmmaker Noah Baumbach. Gerwig indicated she was a little apprehensive and slightly terrified when taking on the highly-anticipated project, saying: "That feeling that I had was knowing that it would be really interesting terror. Usually that's where the best stuff is. I am terrified of that. Anything where you're like, 'This could be a career-ender,' then you're like, 'OK, I probably should do it.'"

I WOULD BE HONOURED TO WORK IN A BOLLYWOOD MOVIE: RICHARD MADDEN

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Richard Madden, who will be soon seen playing an elite spy in the upcoming streaming action-thriller series 'Citadel', said that he will be honoured to work in a Bollywood movie. The actor is in Mumbai for the Asia-Pacific leg of promotions of the series which also stars global star Priyanka Chopra. Speaking to the media at a press event in the city, Richard said: "India makes more movies than any other country in the world and has an incredible amount of talent. I would be honoured to work here." He also mentioned that he would like to essay a comic role if he works in a Bollywood movie as it's something that he hasn't tried his hands on. Talking more about his visit to India, the actor shared that although grappling with a tight timeline, he intended to pay a visit to the city's Sanjay Gandhi National Park, which is the only national park in the city limits globally, however a possible interaction with an unwanted friend - a leopard that often lurks in the eco-sensitive zone, deterred him from doing so.



NETFLIX REVEALS RELEASE DATE FOR CHRIS HEMSWORTH'S NEWEST FILM EXTRACTION 2

Los Angeles | Agencies

Netflix has announced that Chris Hemsworth's newest film Extraction 2 will be released on the streaming service on June 16. The news comes after reports the A-list star is taking a step back from acting following his worrying health diagnosis. The actor will be taking on fewer roles after discovering he has an increased risk of developing Alzheimer's. In November, the Thor star revealed that he is between eight and ten times more likely to develop the disease than the general population as he has two copies of the gene APOE4. Despite the scary news, the Home And Away alum threw himself into the Extraction sequel, in which he reprises the character of Tyler Rake. In the exciting new action movie, Chris doesn't hold back as he performs his own outrageous stunts. The trailer shows the actor getting in on all the action as he throws punches, shoots down a helicopter and even gets set on fire. After barely surviving the events of the first movie, Tyler Rake is back as the Australian black ops mercenary and is tasked with another deadly mission: rescuing the battered family of a ruthless Georgian gangster from the prison where they are being held. Chris stars alongside Golshifteh Farahani, who reprises her role from the first film, as well as Adam Bessa, Olga Kurylenko, Daniel Bernhardt and Tinatin Dalakishvili.



Hayden Panettiere admits she still has 'feelings' for ex Brian Hickerson

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hayden Panettiere has revealed she still has feelings for her on-off convicted felon boyfriend Brian Hickerson in a candid new interview. Over the course of their turbulent relationship Brian faced multiple domestic violence charges, and in 2021 he served time for injuring her. However, they have been spotted together on more than one occasion since November 2022, sending up a cloud of rumors about a possible reconciliation. While speaking with the New York Times, Hayden, 33, trod gingerly around the subject, saying they became friends again while pursuing their sobriety but insisting their relationship was 'contingent on him continuing on this road of recovery.' Brian was in her apartment during the interview, and although she repeatedly called him 'babe,' she did not directly answer the question of whether they were officially back together, saying simply: 'There are feelings there, yes.' She defended her decision to allow him to be part of her life again, maintaining: 'I did not do any of this lightly.' On the subject of the time he spent behind bars, Hayden said: 'He knows he deserved what happened to him.' Hayden took up with Brian in 2018, when she was in the depths of her struggles with drink and opioids and had recently split from Ukrainian boxing star Wladimir Klitschko, the father of her eight-year-old daughter Kaya. Brian was first charged with domestic violence against Hayden in 2019, and although she got a protective order in connection with that case the charges were dropped. Then on Valentine's Day 2020 Brian was arrested for domestic violence, with police saying he hit Hayden 'with a closed fist on the right side of her face,' TMZ reported. 'I am coming forward with the truth about what happened to me in the hope that my story will empower others in abusive relationships to get the help they need and deserve,' Hayden declared after his arrest. 'I am prepared to do my part to make sure this man never hurts anyone again.' Brian found himself facing down eight



charges and eventually pled no contest to two felony counts of injuring a spouse or girlfriend. He was sentenced to 45 days in county jail in April 2021 and served 13 days the following month, on top of which he had to pay a \$500 fine and is still on probation.

DUA LIPA SHARES BEHIND-THE-SCENES SNAPS FROM HER SHOOT

Los Angeles | Agencies

Dua Lipa looked incredible as she flashed a black bra through a sheer white shirt in a series of Instagram snaps from her lavish trip to Morocco, posted on Wednesday. The singer cut a stylish figure as she tucked her blouse into a pair of skinny black leather trousers. The beauty added inches to her frame in a pair of towering pointed toe heels and accessorised with a short chain necklace. Dua styled her long black locks poker straight from a centre parting as they cascaded down past her shoulders. She posed up a storm for behind-the-scenes snaps of her latest YSL beauty campaign. Keeping casual, Dua later swapped her sheer shirt for a white T-shirt as she pulled a number of funny faces in a short clip. The One Kiss singer changed again into a pink ribbed swimsuit which she teamed with a pair of blue low rise denim jeans and a black T-shirt. She pulled her long tresses up in a messy bun as she posed for a mirror selfie holding a book and donning a pair of chunky black sunglasses. She wrote: 'Spent a couple days out in Morocco with my yslbeauty family filming the new #LIBRE campaign!! Excited for you all to see this one. Dua also has another exciting project in the works as she is set to record the theme song for the hotly-anticipated Barbie movie. Greta Gerwig's live-action Barbie film will see Margot Robbie take on the role of the iconic doll while Ryan Gosling will star as her long-time love interest Ken. MailOnline revealed Dua will also be involved in the project as she will be releasing a hit that has been written especially for the movie. As well as writing the theme song for the star-studded epic, Dua will also star as a mermaid version of Barbie, with a first-look snap showing her in costume.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Monica Barbaro



IPL 2023

NATHAN ELLIS CLAIMS FOUR-FER AS PUNJAB KINGS BEAT RAJASTHAN ROYALS BY 5 RUNS IN FINAL OVER THRILLER

Guwahati | Agencies

After Shikhar Dhawan's 86-run knock, Nathan Ellis claimed a four-fer to take Punjab Kings to a thrilling five-run win over Rajasthan Royals in Match 8 of the 2023 Indian Premier League (IPL) here at Barsapara Cricket Stadium on Wednesday.

Shikhar Dhawan's unbeaten 86 along with Prabhsimran Singh's maiden fifty helped Punjab Kings (PBKS) set a 198-run target. In reply, after a slow start, the Royals threatened to steal the game but fell short by five runs in the chase.

RR started the chase with a strange batting line-up as Ravichandran Ashwin came in to open with Yashasvi Jaiswal as Buttler went off the field immediately after taking the catch in the last over.

Jaiswal started with an impressive six over square leg. In the next over, Arshdeep Singh struck to dismiss the in-form Jaiswal for 11 and Buttler came in to bat. Sam Curran almost got Buttler in the third over, who flicked a pull toward Harpreet Brar charging in



towards deep square leg but as he fell, the ball popped out of his grasp. Then, Buttler capitalised on the drop catch with an amazing boundary over mid-wicket.

In the next over, Arshdeep removed Ashwin to reduce the Royals to 26/2 within four overs. After a dot ball, Samson went for a six and completed 1000 runs for RR as a captain.

Samson and Buttler took RR bowlers to cleaners with their well-timed shots

before Nathan Ellis caught and bowled the big fish Buttler for 19. The royals were reeling 57/3 at the end of the Power-play. Buttler went on to drive straight but an inside edge come off the pads and the ball popped up off the pad. Ellis was quick on the follow-through as he ran forward, dived, and completed the catch. Ellis struck again in the 11th over to pile further misery on Royals as he trapped skipper Sanju Samson for 42, reducing RR to 91-4 and home favourite Rian Parag came into bat.

With 12 runs needed per over for a win, the onus was on the young duo, Devdutt Padikkal, and Parag, to take their side over the line.

Brief scores

Punjab Kings 197/4 in 20 overs (Shikhar Dhawan 86 not out, Prabhsimran Singh 60; Jason Holder 2-29) beat Rajasthan Royals 192/7 in 20 overs (Sanju Samson 42, Shimron Hetmyer 36; Nathan Ellis 4-30, Arshdeep Singh 2-47) by 5 runs

KKR assigned Jason Roy

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) on Wednesday signed England's Jason Roy for INR 2.8 crore for the remainder of IPL 2023.

Roy set his base price at INR 1.5 crore. His signing comes after two time champions have lost their key players due to various reasons.

Regular skipper Shreyas Iyer has been ruled out of the ongoing IPL season with a back surgery due in London and Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan has opted out. The 32-year old Roy has earlier played for four IPL teams -- KKR, Delhi Capitals, Gujarat Lions and Sunrisers Hyderabad. His last appearance in the league came in the 2021 season for Sunrisers, where he scored 150 runs in five games, including a half-



century. The English opener has played 64 T20Is for the country, scoring 1522 runs at a strike-rate of 137.61 with eight fifties.

SAI SUDHARSAN CONSTRUCTED THE INNINGS PERFECTLY: ANIL KUMBLE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former India spinner Anil Kumble hailed Sai Sudharsan's knock which led defending champions Gujarat Titans to their second straight win.

"He looked like a very organized player. Good against fast bowling, good against swing. He came into the first game as an impact player and certainly created an impact, he played a cameo.

It was 3-down and all the big stars were gone. Shubman Gill was gone, Saha got out, and his captain Hardik Pandya got out. Both the Tamil Nadu guys (Vijay Shankar and Sudharsan) got together and put together a partnership," said Kumble.

Gujarat has always created that aura about themselves 'we'll restrict you to



160 and get that'. With an impact player, it makes it even easier for them. Sai Sudharsan constructed the innings perfectly," he added.

Orleans Masters 2023

Tanya, Mithun, Priyanshu advance; Saina, Sameer, and Aakarshi ousted

Orleans (France) | Agencies

India's London Olympics bronze medalist Saina Nehwal suffered another setback in her return in her comeback trial as she went down to Neslihan Yigit of Turkey in the women's singles first round of Orleans Masters Badminton 2023 on Wednesday.

Saina, who has slumped to early defeats and missed some events in the last season, went down 16-21, 14-21 in the opening round of the main draw at the Palais Des Sports in Orleans.

It was a mixed day for India in the USD 240,000 prize money BWF World Tour Super 300 event as Tanya Hemant in women's singles and Mithun Manjunath in men's singles reached the second round, while Tasnim Mir, Aakarshi Kashyap (women's singles) and Sameer Verma lost in the first round while Priyanshu Rajawat lost to compatriot Kiran George 21-18, 21-13.

In women's singles, Tanya Hemant defeated Huet LeOnice of France 21-17, 21-18 in 40 minutes but Aakarshi Kashyap went down 8-21, 21-13, 8-21 in a first-round match while Tasnim Mir went down to Germany's Yvonne Li in three games 22-20, 13-21, 5-21 in a 44-minute clash. In men's singles, Mithun Manjunath moved into the second round get-



ting the better of Victor Svendsen of Denmark 24-22, 25-23 in a hard-fought encounter. In another match, India's Sameer Verma went down to Nhat Nguyen in three games, losing 21-19, 19-21, 17-21 in nearly one and a half hours.

Saina was India's best hope in the event but could not get her rhythm in the match as Neslihan Yigit took control from the start. The player from Turkey opened a 5-0 lead and then extended it to 11-4 in game one. Saina fought back to bring down the gap to 10-12. Scores went neck and neck before Neslihan went on to win the game 21-16.

In the second game too, the Turkish player went ahead 4-0 and though Saina reduced the margin to 4-6, Neslihan won the next six points to go up 10-4 as she maintained her upper hand till the end and won the game 21-14.

Copa del Rey

OSASUNA BOOK FINAL PLACE FOR THE SECOND TIME IN HISTORY

Bilbao (Spain) | Agencies

Osasuna booked a place in the Copa del Rey final after Pablo Ibanez's goal in the 115th minute gave them a 1-1 draw away to Athletic Bilbao and a 2-1 aggregate win.

Ibanez placed a volley into the corner of the net to put his side through after Osasuna were kept in the tie by a string of fine saves from keeper Sergio Herrera.

Herrera made five or six vital saves as Athletic attacked, but once again paid for their inability to find the net.

The home side started looking to get quickly back on level terms in the tie, with Gorka Guruzeta seeing his effort well smothered by Osasuna keeper Sergio Herrera in the seventh minute, a Xinhua report said.

The game was as intense as you would expect in the return leg of a semifinal between the local rivals and Athletic midfielder Mikel Vesga was the first player booked after a challenge from behind. Oihan Sancet, looking to cele-



brate his new contract with Athletic, got into good positions on the edge of the Osasuna area on a

couple of occasions, but nobody was able to get onto his pull backs. Nico Williams fired wide as

Athletic continued to press and Herrera did well to parry Oscar de Marcos' diving header after a good cross from the young winger. The save was to no avail, however, as Athletic leveled the tie from the resulting corner as Vesga got a flick and Inaki Williams scored from close range.

At the other end, Kike Garcia had a good chance to level for Osasuna, but Julen Agirrezabala blocked his shot and Yuri cleared as Ruben Garcia hurried himself at the loose ball.

Athletic had chances to win the game in the second half, but Nico Williams twice fired over when he should have at least hit the target, with his second miss coming after Herrera had done well to save from Raul Garcia.

Herrera also produced a block to deny Inigo Martinez at the far post as the game went into extra time. He then denied Vesga from a corner in extra time, allowing Ibanez his moment of glory as Osasuna returned to a cup final for the first time since 2005.

GERMAN CUP

FREIBURG PROGRESS INTO SEMIS AFTER 2-1 WIN OVER BAYERN

Berlin | Agencies

Lucas Holer's late handball penalty helped Freiburg to upset record champions Bayern Munich with a 2-1 comeback win in the quarterfinals. Freiburg staged a well-positioned defense from the outset and was able to keep the hosts at bay in the opening stages.

Despite not creating clear-cut opportunities, Bayern still opened the scoring with 20 minutes gone as Dayot Upamecano headed home a corner kick from Joshua Kimmich on Tuesday night. The visitors maintained their shape and restored parity only seven minutes later through Nicolas Hofer, who collected a clearance from Kingsley Coman before drilling the ball from 16 meters past Bayern goalkeeper Yann Sommer, a Xinhua report said. Bayern responded with furious attacks before halftime, but neither Leon Goretzka nor Thomas Muller was able to overcome Freiburg custodian Mark Flekken despite promising chances. After the restart, Bayern dominated



possession and pressed Freiburg onto the back foot but couldn't do any damage in the opening stages. Just when the spectators settled for the extra time, Hofer collected a loose ball at the edge

of the box and hit Jamal Musiala, who deflected the hammer with his elbow to cause a penalty. Holer stepped up and converted the penalty into the roof of the net in injury time.

Elsewhere, Eintracht Frankfurt advanced into the semifinals as well after easing 2-0 past Union Berlin courtesy of Randal Kolo Muani's first-half brace.

Men's ODI Player Rankings

Shubman rises to fourth, South Africa's Markram makes big gains

Team Absolute | Mumbai

India's Shubman Gill has moved up one spot to number four in the ICC Men's ODI Player Rankings due to the week's results and movements in the rankings.

Gill reached a career-best batting ranking of No 4 with 738 points, placing him behind Babar Azam (887) of Pakistan, Rassie van der Dussen (777) of South Africa and Imam-ul Haq (740) of Pakistan.

South Africa batter Aiden Markram has made significant gains in the ICC Men's ODI Player Rankings after hitting a career-best 175 against the Netherlands over the past week.

Markram gained 13 spots to reach 41st position in the



batting rankings and 16 places to 32nd in the all-rounders' list, another career-best feat in each as South Africa beat the Dutch 2-0 in their three-match series in Johannesburg. They edged closer to automatic qualification for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup in India later this year.

The Netherlands batters also made good progress, with Max O'Dowd (up to 75th from 78th), Vikramjit Singh (up to 109th from 119th) and Teja Nidamanuru

(up to 138th from 154th) the most notable mentions.

Other gains were made by New Zealand's Henry Nicholls, who climbed two spots to 69 in the batting rankings and his teammate Will Young, who leapt 60 spots to a personal best 143rd following their 2-0 series victory over Sri Lanka.

Matt Henry stood out for the Black Caps, jumping five slots to land on the fifth spot in the bowling rankings from number 10, while South Africa's Sisanda Magala announced himself with a 35-place leap to his own career-best number 165th after taking eight wickets in two matches, including a maiden five-wicket haul against the Netherlands.

Kim Cotton becomes first female on-field umpire in men's international cricket

Dunedin | Agencies

Kim Cotton of New Zealand made history on Wednesday, becoming the first female on-field umpire to stand in a men's international match between two ICC full-member countries.

Cotton officiated the second T20I between New Zealand and Sri Lanka at the University Oval in Dunedin on Wednesday.

The 45-year-old, who previously umpired in 16 women's ODIs and 44 T20Is, first marked her presence in men's cricket as a TV umpire during a tied T20I between India and New Zealand in 2020.

The New Zealander was one of the on-field umpires for both the 2022 Women's World Cup final (50-over) and the 2023 Women's T20 World Cup final in February.

Previously, Claire Polosak was the first female umpire in a men's international in 2019 when she stood in an ODI match



between Oman and Namibia, both associate nations.

Polosak had also become the first female match official in a men's Test match as the fourth umpire during a 2021-22 Border Gavaskar Trophy Test match between India and Australia in Sydney last year.

Chelsea, Liverpool draw a blank, while Brighton, Aston Villa and Leeds all win

London | Agencies

Chelsea's first game since Graham Potter's sacking on Sunday failed to see any magic solution to the club's problems as they drew 0-0 at home to Liverpool.

Interim coach Bruno Saltor saw his side miss several good chances, while Reece James and Kai Havertz both had goals disallowed in a result that leaves Liverpool eighth in the table and Chelsea 11th, with both struggling to qualify for Europe next season.

Brighton gave their chances of European football a big boost with a 2-0 win away to relegation threatened Bournemouth. Young striker Ewan



Ferguson put the visitors ahead after 27 minutes and after withstanding pressure from the home side, Julio Encio scored Brighton's second in injury time, a Xinhua report said.

Aston Villa made it three wins from three games to climb above Liverpool thanks to a 2-1 win away to managerless Leicester City. Leicester sacked Brendan Rodgers

on Sunday, but fell behind on 24 minutes when Ollie Watkins scored his eighth goal in 10 games and although Harvey Barnes equalized before halftime, Leicester were reduced to 10 men when Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall was sent off after seeing his second yellow card.

Leicester had been on top in the second half, but lost control of the game and Bertrand Traore won the game for Villa with a smart chip, shortly after getting into the game.

Leeds United climbed out of the bottom three with a 2-1 win at home to Nottingham Forest thanks to goals scored by Jack Harrison and Luis Sinisterra after Orel Mangala had given Forest an early lead.



Vaani Kapoor shares a glimpse from her 'martial arts training session'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Vaani Kapoor, took to her Instagram on Wednesday to share a few videos from her martial arts training session. The actress also hinted at a new endeavour and said that something new is coming for her fans.

In the video, Vaani can be seen training to land her kicks properly. Sharing a collective of three videos, the actress wrote in the caption: "Kickstarting something new.. Can I already get a black belt?"

Meanwhile, on the work front, the actress will be soon seen in the social-comedy film, titled 'Sarvagunn Sampanna', which she signed last year. She will be essaying the role of a woman in the film who fights for her integrity in society. The film is helmed by Shonali Rattan Deshmukh and started its production in August last year.

Vaani made her acting debut with the romantic comedy film 'Shuddh Desi Romance', which released in 2013 and also starred Parineeti Chopra and Sushant Singh Rajput. The actress was most recently seen in the period film 'Shamshera' which also starred Ranbir Kapoor in dual roles and Sanjay Dutt as the antagonist.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Jr NTR, who has been swaying the audience - both Indian and international - with 'RRR', has been signed for the spy action-thriller, 'War 2' - a sequel to the 2019 blockbuster.

Bollywood star Hrithik Roshan, who played the role of Kabir in 'War', will be seen taking on Jr NTR in a bloody battle that will be an adrenaline-pumping action extravaganza. Recently, it was also revealed that the event film is being directed by Ayan Mukerji, who has a history of delivering some of the biggest blockbusters in Bollywood including his last release 'Brahmastra'.

A veteran trade source confirmed on



JR NTR & HRITHIK ROSHAN TO BE SEEN TOGETHER IN AN 'ACTION THRILLER MOVIE'

condition of anonymity that Jr NTR will be locking horns with Hrithik in 'War 2'. "Their battle of wits and their fierce showdown will definitely be an action spectacle to remember on the big screen. 'War' is now a true-blue pan Indian film. This move by Aditya Chopra enables 'War 2' to have the

widest audience appeal for a Hindi film and it also widens the box office potential of the film. South India should come alive and connect at a more emotional level with the film because of the presence of their beloved superstar".

The source further mentioned Jr NTR is one of the most respected and followed icons from South India and is said to be extremely choosy about his films. "If he has given the film a nod, it means War 2 is eclipsing the first film in terms of plot as well as scale. Hrithik Roshan vs Jr NTR will be a fight to remember. Jr NTR's inclusion has made this proposition extremely delicious for audiences".

'War 2' will be produced under the banner of Aditya Chopra's Yash Raj Films.

Rasika Dugal to portray 'Irene Adler' in a series

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Rasika Dugal, who is known for her work in the crime series 'Mirzapur' and 'Delhi Crime', will be soon seen in the Indian adaptation of 'Sherlock Holmes' titled 'Shekhar Home'. The actress will portray the role of Irene Adler, the only woman to have ever outwitted Sherlock Holmes.

The series will be contextualised in an Indian setting and will be directed by filmmaker Srijit Mukherji. The Indian adaptation features Kay Kay Menon as Sherlock Holmes and Ranvir Shorey as Doctor John Watson. The show will also feature Usha Uthup as Mrs Hudson and Koushik Sen as Mycroft Holmes.

The show will have a Bengali touch to its name and personality, making it unique and appealing to audiences in India. The shooting for the show is set to begin soon in Kolkata. The talented cast and crew, along with the unique setting and storyline, make it a promising adaptation of the classic detective story.

Meanwhile, she will also be seen in the sports drama 'Spike', black comedy thriller - 'Lord Curzon Ki Haveli', the horror film 'Adhura', improv comedy 'Fairy Folk', 'Little Thomas', and of course her flagship shows 'Mirzapur' and 'Delhi Crime'.



I'M JUST OVER THE MOON TO BE PART OF A HOLLYWOOD MOVIE: ELNAAZ NOROUZI

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Iranian-German model and actress Elnaaz Norouzi shared her experience working with Scottish actor and film producer Gerard Butler in the international project 'Kandahar'. Gerard plays Tom Harris, a CIA operative stuck in Afghanistan during a mission. Elnaaz said: "Working with Gerard was magical not only as a producer, but also as co-star, he is just so much fun and super nice on top of it. 'Kandahar' is an experience I will never forget." Elnaaz is known for her work in Pakistani movie 'Maan Jao Naa', and Hindi film 'Hello Charlie'. She was also seen with Guru Randhawa in the music video 'Made In India' and seen in the web series 'Sacred Games'. The actress further shared her liking for Gerard's works which includes 'Tomorrow Never Dies', 'Tale of the Mummy', 'Timeline', among others and said: "I remember watching Gerard's movies and I used to have a crush on him as a teenager. I am also thankful to Ric sir for guiding us through the film so well. I am just over the moon to be part of a Hollywood Movie." 'Kandahar' has been directed by Ric Roman Waugh. This film also stars Navid Negahban, Ali Fazal, Bahador Foladi, Travis Fimmel. It will be released in the US on May 26. On the work front, other than 'Kandahar', Elnaaz will also be seen in 'Made In Heaven Season 2'.

'MY MOMENT OF EKLAVYA MEETING DRONACHARYA'

Abhishek Banerjee joins Amitabh Bacchan in the courtroom thriller film

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor-casting director Abhishek Banerjee known for his work in 'Mirzapur', 'Pitchers', 'Stree' and 'Paatal Lok', has joined the cast of courtroom thriller film 'Section 84'. The film stars veteran Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan in the lead role and is being helmed by Ribhu Dasgupta of 'Teen' fame.

Expressing his excitement on joining the film and working with Mr Bachchan, Abhishek said: "Section 84' is my moment of Eklavya meeting Dronacharya. When I knew nothing about acting, I only knew one name, AMITABH BACHCHAN. From a boy who's hypnotised by him to actually getting the opportunity to stand alongside him in one frame, life has truly completed a circle for me."

Recently, the makers also announced Diana Penty in one of the key roles.

He further mentioned: "This is what dreams are made of, as the Bachchan mania continues for me. This time I am a part of it! Thank you, thank you Ribhu sir, you have no idea how my younger self is filled with joy to experience the mania with you.



Dhvani Bhanushali's 'Vaaste' song reaches '1.5 billion YouTube views'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Singer Dhvani Bhanushali, who is known for her tracks like 'Vaaste', 'Ishare Tere' and 'Leja Re', has clocked 1.5 billion views for her song 'Vaaste' on YouTube.

Among the Indian songs that have crossed the 1 billion milestone are the devotional song 'Hanuman Chalisa' topping the list followed by regional songs like the Punjabi song 'Lehanga' and a Haryanvi song '52 Gaj Ka Daman' making Dhvani's song the fourth most viewed song nationwide.

This has made Dhvani the youngest Indian musician to achieve the milestone. 'Vaaste' has been composed by Tanishk Bagchi and written by Arafat Mehmood, with Nikhil D'Souza featuring as the co-singer, the music video is directed by Radhika Rao and Vinay Sapru.

Expressing her gratitude, Dhvani said: "Vaaste' is like that magical thing that happened in my life. I'll always be grateful to all the people who have watched it more than a billion times on YouTube. It was the team of Tanishk, Arafat, Nikhil, Radhika Ma'am, Vinay Sir and Siddharth that we could break so many records back then and even today. Most importantly it's all the love and support by the audiences; it only inspires me to work harder and create more magic. I want to thank everyone who was involved in making this beautiful song with me, our mark will live on forever."

