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Series against New Zealand is a brilliant opportunity, says...



Maoist violence revisits in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada



Team Absolute | Dantewada (Chhattisgarh)

Three men drawn from Chhattisgarh Police's District Reserve Guard (DRG) and a civilian were martyred on Wednesday in a forested patch of Dantewada district as Maoists blew up a vehicle using an Improvised Explosive Device (IED).

The incident created widespread anger in Chhattisgarh and locals in picturesque Bastar region, which includes Dantewada, sought revenge but Maoists slipped into the forested hilly parts after killing DRG personnel at Arampur police station area.

The bloodshed in Dantewada on Wednesday took place after a prolonged period of peace and there was a wider belief in the state that Chhattisgarh government has finally contained Maoist violence.

The paramilitary forces have launched a

major operation immediately, along with local police, to track down the armed Maoists who carried out the deadly attack.

The tragic incident has been strongly condemned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi who said in a tweet that sacrifices of martyred jawans will always be remembered.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that he was anguished by the cowardly attack on Chhattisgarh Police and assured all help to state government. He spoke to Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel too.

Baghel has put off his scheduled Karnataka trip to campaign for party in May 10 Assembly polls and he would be visiting to Dantewada on Thursday to assess the security situation on ground.

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and party leader Rahul Gandhi have strongly condemned the Dantewada attack.

Wrestlers mess: DCW demands FIR against cops probing allegations

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) has penned a missive to the Special Commissioner of Police (Women Safety), urging the police officer to look into lodging a First Information Report against police personnel who neglected to file an FIR on sexual harassment allegations involving female wrestlers.

The DCW has recommended Delhi Police to register an FIR against police officials under section 166A (c) (public servant disobeying direction under law) of the Indian Penal Code.

In a statement on Wednesday, the DCW stated that it had received a complaint regarding sexual harassment of women wrestlers by Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, president of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI).

The complainant has informed the DCW that several women wrestlers, including a minor, have alleged that the WFI president had indulged in the crime of sexual harassment against them.

"The complainant had also intimated the Commission about the threat being received by the survivors and their families after lodging the police complaint. The representation received by the Commission was also



forwarded to the Delhi Police. However, no action was taken by them," it said.

The Commission has observed that Delhi Police has failed to register an FIR in the case till date, despite passage of over five days.

"Delhi Police has failed to register an FIR in the current matter despite serious allegations of sexual harassment by the complainants (who include a minor). Delhi Police is duty-bound as per law to urgently register an FIR in the matter and ensure the safety of the survivors," said DCW chief, Swati Maliwal.

"In failing to do so, Delhi Police will appear to be deliberately and intentionally thwarting justice and compromising the safety of the survivors. An FIR should be registered in the matter immediately and strict action should be taken against accused persons including Delhi Police officials and other officers," she added.

Dumbbells, neck plank & stretching: Protesting wrestlers turn Jantar Mantar into training centre

New Delhi: Top Indian wrestlers Bajrang Punia, Sakshi Malik, Vinesh Phogat and other young grapplers have turned Jantar Mantar into their training centre, amid protest against WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh.



On Day 4 of the protest, the grapplers were seen doing wrestling exercises. Vinesh was training with Sangita Phogat, whereas Sakshi was helped by her husband Satyawart Kadian, the Arjuna awardee wrestler. Meanwhile, a physio was assisting Bajrang on the mat, before the Olympic bronze medallist did some stretching. They all looked tired but their passion for sport was evident despite sleepless nights.

"We will not go from here till we get justice. And we are ready to face the punishment if we are wrong. Wrestling is everything for us and we want to keep ourselves fit both mentally and physically. We will keep practicing here," Bajrang said.

Earlier, on Wednesday, Delhi Police informed the Supreme Court that some preliminary inquiry may be needed to be conducted before an FIR can be registered into a complaint by wrestlers alleging sexual harassment by Brij Bhushan.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta submitted before a bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud that some preliminary inquiry may be needed but if this court orders, then FIR can be registered. Mehta said that the authorities think that some inquiry should be there. The Chief Justice replied that the court would also not want to do something unless there is some material. The bench asked Mehta to furnish the material on Friday and pointed out that the matter involves a minor.

'Unintended ramifications on other statutes': Centre urges SC to leave same-sex marriages to Parliament

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Central government on Wednesday urged the Supreme Court to consider leaving questions raised in the pleas seeking legal sanction for same sex marriages to the Parliament, while stressing that there are several ramifications not only on society but unintended ramifications on other statutes as well.

On the fifth day of hearing, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, submitted before a five-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud that the court is dealing with a "very complex subject", which has a "profound social impact".

Mehta said the right to marry cannot mean compelling the state to create a new definition of marriage and urged the top court that

instead of taking it any further, the matter should be left to the Parliament. He contended that all religions treat marriage as a social institution, which confers legal status and they are pre-dating statutes and it is not a value judgment.

"This court can't use different lenses for different categories of persons under the same law. It will be impossible for this court to reconcile the situations," he said, contending that in LGBTQIA+, it isn't explained what '+' means and there are at least 72 shades and categories of people in '+'. Mehta said if this court were to give recognition to undefined categories and the judgment will affect 160 laws, how will this scenario be regulated.

He said the real question is who would take a call on what constitutes marriage



and between whom and the issue should be left to the Parliament, considering the complexity of the issue and also the social ramifications involved in the subject.

"There are several ramifications not only on society but unintended ramifications on other statutes as well" and there are many legal provisions spanning different statutes which cannot be reconciled if the prayers, made in the petitions, are allowed,

bringing within it not only transgenders but various other communities and the question is whether the right to marry can be prayed for as a judicial order?

Mehta cited judgment to point out that courts should exercise restraint in matters of legislative policies. The bench if he is relying on Dobbs (US judgment against abortions), "we are far beyond it and fortunately so".

The Chief Justice said Dobbs said a woman has no bodily autonomy and this theory has been debunked long back in our country and added that fortunately, we've gone far ahead of many western countries in several issues.

The arguments in the matter will continue on Thursday. The apex court is hearing a batch of petitions seeking legal sanction for same-sex marriages.

Excise policy scam a deep-rooted conspiracy, CBI tells Delhi HC



New Delhi | Agencies

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) told the Delhi High Court on Wednesday that the excise policy scam it is probing is a "deep-rooted conspiracy" and that it is not as simple as depicted.

As Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma heard submissions in the bail plea filed by AAP leader and former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, Additional Solicitor General SV. Raju, appearing for the CBI, said: "Yesterday (April 25), we filed the charge sheet in the case. Cognizance is yet to be taken." Special Public Prosecutor (SPP) D. P. Singh also appeared for the CBI.

Raju said: "The main players being the accused (Manish Sisodia), Vijay Nair who was closely related to the Aam Aadmi Party and was in fact occupying a Ministers Bungalow, one Kailash Gehlot's, side by side to the CM (Arvind Kejriwal). Nair was the communica-

tion in charge of AAP, and had access to party meetings. "Our case is that at the behest of the 'South Group', the 5 per cent interest was increased to 12 per cent, right after a meeting that happened with the members of the South group."

While the "South group" was residing in the Oberoi Hotel in the national capital from March 14 to 17, 2021, they had prepared a note and taken the printout from Sisodia's computer, according to the ASG.

He added that Sisodia is capable of pressurising persons and the day the CBI arrested him, he destroyed his phone.

After hearing the matter at length, Justice Sharma said: "At the stage of bail, we cannot go into much details. Please show me evidence on which you (CBI) are relying in the present case."

Accordingly, the court adjourned the matter and scheduled it for next hearing on April 27.

Gujarat HC judge recuses from hearing Rahul Gandhi's plea

AHMEDABAD | Agencies

Gujarat High Court judge Justice Gita Gopi recused herself on Wednesday from hearing a plea filed by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. The appeal sought a stay on his conviction by a magistrate court in a criminal defamation case against him.

Gandhi's appeal was mentioned before single judge Justice Gopi, who responded with "not before me" and advised the advocate to approach the acting Chief Justice of the High Court, who can assign another bench for hearing the appeal. Earlier, a sessions court in Surat had dismissed Gandhi's plea seeking suspension of his conviction by the magistrate



court on April 20. In a detailed order, the sessions court held that Gandhi's disqualification would not amount to an irreversible loss to him and refused to grant interim relief.

Mourners line roads as Badal's coffin makes final journey; cremation on Thursday

CHANDIGARH | Agencies

Thousands of people lined the route to catch a glimpse of five-time Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal's coffin that began its journey on Wednesday from Chandigarh to his ancestral village of Badal in Muktsar district. He will be cremated there with state honours on Thursday.

A flower-decked ambulance carrying the coffin was driven by Bikram Majithia with Sukhbir Badal, son of the senior Badal, as co-driver. Other family members, including Sukhbir's estranged cousin Manpreet Badal who is now in the BJP, were sitting beside the coffin.

Badal, the country's oldest politician -- next only to BJP veteran L.K. Advani -- passed away on Tuesday at the age of 95 after a brief illness at a private hospital near here.

After the 'kirtan and ardas' in the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) headquarters in Chandigarh, the mortal remains of Badal were placed in a specially decorated ambulance



amidst slogans of 'Panth to Punjab Da Rakha, S Parkash Singh Badal Amar Rahe' or 'Long Live Badal'.

Crowds of Akali workers and sympathizers from all walks of life, some tearful, joined the procession to take the mortal remains for cremation to Badal village.

Laybys and access roads along the

entire 250-km route were temporarily closed. Mourners were waiting in designated areas along the route to pay their last respects to their leader and throw flowers at the convoy as it passed or slowed down for some time.

"Kade kade Rabb Paida Karda, Badal Jihe Insaan" (Sometimes God

creates an immortal leader like Badal) -- the line rent the air as hundreds thronged the bedecked ambulance carrying the mortal remains of the Akali patriarch to catch a last glimpse of their beloved leader.

In each town and village the cavalcade drove through, it was met with mourners and respect. People stood mostly in silence, some threw petals, while others pointed their phone cameras at the passing vehicles.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reached Chandigarh to pay his last respects to the patriarch, who passed away at a private hospital in Mohali near here.

Modi had, on Tuesday, described the demise of Badal as a "personal loss" and said he was a colossal figure of Indian politics who contributed greatly to the nation.

The cremation will take place at 1 p.m. on Thursday.

A sea of people, comprising political leaders cutting across party lines and dignitaries, are expected to attend the cremation.



BJP RAKES UP HINDU WORD ORIGIN ROW AHEAD OF K'TAKA POLLS

Belagavi(Karnataka) | Agencies

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Wednesday raked up the Hindu word origin row in the district ahead of the May 10 Assembly polls.

Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) Secretary Satish Jarkiholi had stirred a controversy by stating that Hindu word has Persian origin and it means "slave" and "dirty".

While addressing a rally at Yamakanamaradi constituency represented by Jarikiholi, the CM said he (Jarikiholi) is playing with the feelings of the people. "We have to get votes on the developmental works that have been carried out. It is not correct to play with people's emotions," he said. "All the people have respect for their culture and heritage. That should not be challenged and hurt. This time, Yamakanamaradi seat will see a change and the BJP candidate Basavaraj Hundri should win with a margin of 25,000 votes," he main-



tained. In November 2022, Satish Jarkiholi stoked a controversy at national level by stating that the word "Hindu" is

not Indian. He further stated the word is "Persian". While addressing a gathering at a function at Nippani town by Manava

Bandhutva Vedike, he had questioned what is the connection between India and Persia? Hindu is not an Indian word at all. That is Persian. "How the word 'Hindu' went on to become ours needs to be debated," Satish Jarkiholi stated.

"From where the word Hindu arrived? Is this our's? The word is Persian belonging to Iran, Iraq and Kazakhstan. When things are like this, how can it become Indian? Look up in WhatsApp, Wikipedia, the word has arrived from Persia, it is not yours (addressing gathering)," he maintained. Why is the word glorified? Why is it being glorified? This is not your word. If you know the meaning of this word you will be ashamed. It is dirty. I am not telling this, a swamiji is telling it and this is on a website. The word from a different religion, region is being imposed on us forcefully, it should be debated, Satish Jarkiholi demanded. After the controversy took a serious turn and BJP organised state-wide protests, Satish Jarkiholi had apologised for his statements.

Celebrations planned in Gujarat for PM's 100th 'Mann Ki Baat'

Ahmedabad | Agencies

The 100th episode of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's monthly radio programme 'Mann Ki Baat' is set to air on April 30.

In anticipation of the milestone, the Gujarat unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has planned special events across 19 venues in the state, for which preparations have already begun. These events will focus on the topics and individuals highlighted by Modi in the previous 99 episodes.

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel will honour notable individuals and organisations as part of the celebrations. Celebratory events with reference to the 100th episode of 'Mann Ki



Baat' also took place in Ahmedabad on Tuesday evening. A lecture was organised by the state BJP commemorating Lokmanya Tilak

and the establishment of the statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. More such events and lectures will take place in the coming days.

Cabinet approves setting up of 157 new nursing colleges

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved setting up of 157 new nursing colleges in co-location with the existing medical colleges, established since 2014.

This will add approximately 15,700 nursing graduates every year, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya told media persons after the cabinet meeting.

It will further ensure quality, affordable, and equitable nursing education in India, particularly in underserved districts and states, he added.

The total financial implication of the project will be Rs 1,570 crore.

The Central government will give Rs 10 crore for setting up of these colleges, while the states can invest the remaining amount, which will depend as per the project report to be prepared for each college, Mandaviya said.

Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh are among the major states, which will get 20-odd nursing colleges under the initiative, he added.



The initiative aims to address the geographical and rural-urban imbalances in the healthcare sector, which have led to the skewed availability of nursing professionals and impacted healthcare services in underserved areas, the minister said. The establishment of these nursing colleges will provide a significant boost to the availability of qualified human resources in healthcare. Co-location of these nursing colleges with existing medical colleges will allow optimal utilisation of the existing infrastructure, skill labs, clinical facilities, and faculty.

Vivekananda Reddy not murdered over property, says Sharmila

Hyderabad | Agencies

YSR Telangana Party (YSRTP) leader Y.S. Sharmila said on Wednesday that her uncle Y.S. Vivekananda Reddy was not murdered for his property as he had already bequeathed his entire property to his daughter Suneetha. Sharmila told reporters here that Vivekananda Reddy's property was in the name of his daughter for a long time.

Her remarks assumed significance in view of the allegations by some of the accused in the case and the alleged second wife of Vivekananda Reddy that he was killed as he wanted to give his property to his son from the second wife.

Sharmila, sister of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, also said that if Suneetha's husband Rajasekhara Reddy wanted property he would have killed Suneetha and not Vivekananda Reddy as all the assets were already in her name.

She also found fault with the allegations being



made against the slain former minister and former MP. "Vivekananda Reddy was a people's man. People of Pulivendula and Kadapa district know him. He lived a simple life," she said.

She said it was unfortunate that some media houses were indulging in character assassination by airing baseless stories about his personal life. "Nobody has a right to speak about the personal life

of my uncle," she said.

Vivekananda Reddy, brother of former chief minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, was murdered in his house in Pulivendula on March 15, 2019, few weeks before the elections.

The CBI, which is probing the case, recently arrested Vivekananda Reddy's cousin Y.S. Bhaskar Reddy and grilled the latter's son and Kadapa MP Y.S. Avinash Reddy. The agency suspects that they hatched a conspiracy to kill Vivekananda Reddy as he was not in favour of YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) fielding Avinash Reddy as the candidate from Kadapa Lok Sabha seat. Vivekananda Reddy reportedly wanted Jagan Mohan Reddy to field the latter's sister Sharmila or mother Y.S. Vijayamma as the party candidate. Avinash Reddy, who has approached the Telangana High Court for anticipatory bail, alleged that the CBI was trying to implicate them in the case. He claimed that the CBI ignored key facts in the case, including that Vivekananda Reddy's family members were unhappy with him for marrying another woman.

Top Delhi school receives bomb threat on email, found to be hoax

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi Public School (DPS), Mathura Road received a bomb threat via email on Wednesday morning, leading to the students being evacuated and a thorough search of the premises being conducted but nothing suspicious was found, a senior police official said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police, Southeast, Rajesh Deo said around 7.50 a.m., the school Principal called the SHO, Hazrat Nizamuddin police station and told that they have received a mail on their school's official mail that a bomb has been planted in the school and will be detonated at 9 a.m.

A police control room call was



also received regarding the bomb threat. "Acting on the information, several police teams rushed to the spot. Apart from this, the Bomb Disposal Squad, the Dog Squad and a Special Cell team also reached the spot," said the DCP.

The DDMA, SDM, Defence Colony, CATS ambulance, fire-fighters, and SWAT were also called to the spot.

The DCP said that three teams

of police were formed as per layout of the school and an intensive manual and technical search was started in the school which has three buildings - pre-primary, junior, and senior wings.

Subsequently, the process to evacuate students was also started.

"The building premises and open area were thoroughly checked by the bomb disposal team and dog squad along with manual search," the DCP said.

The parents, after getting the news, had also gathered at the school gate in large numbers to take home their children.

"Accordingly they were facilitated and channelised to receive their wards without causing any panic and crowding," Deo said.

ILLEGAL ARMS FACTORY BUSTED IN ALIGARH, 5 ARRESTED

Gurugram: Haryana Police have arrested five persons, three from Gurugram and two from Aligarh in Uttar Pradesh, who were allegedly involved in manufacturing, selling and buying illegal weapons, the police said on Wednesday.

A police team recovered three country-made pistols, one live cartridge, one Scooty and materials used in making illegal weapons from their possession.

The accused have been identified as Mohit Bansal, Uday, Mukesh Kumar alias Nikita, Ravi Kumar alias Dada, and Narender Sharma.

Mohit, Uday and Mukesh were arrested from Gurugram, while Ravi, who supplied the illegal weapons to the trio, was arrested from Aligarh on Mohit's disclosure.

Ravi's disclosure led the police to Narender, the gun manufacturing kingpin, who was running an illegal arms factory at his house in Aligarh.

Barapulla Nala bridge to remain shut for 20 days starting April 28

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi Traffic Police said on Wednesday that due to some repair work, the carriageway of the bridge on the Barapulla Nala going towards Nizamuddin railway station will remain closed for 20 days starting April 28.

The traffic police advised the commuters to take the alternate routes from April 28 onwards.

In the advisory, the traffic police said that the commuters coming from the Neela Gumbad side to reach Nizamuddin railway station via Nikku Chowk/Rajdoot red light can take the opposite carriageway from the left turn near the hotel Preet Palace



towards Nizamuddin Railway station.

However, the commuters coming from the Nizamuddin Railway station side to reach Neela Gumbad will have to take a right turn from the red light near Nizamuddin police post to reach Mathura Road T-point. "Then turn right on the

service road towards Neela Gumbad and then take the main carriageway of Mathura Road towards Neela Gumbad from the red light point," it said. The traffic police also advised the commuters to follow the directions of the traffic personnel posted in the area to avoid inconvenience.

6-YR-OLD GIRL SEXUALLY ASSAULTED BY SCHOOL CAB DRIVER FOR 1 YEAR

New Delhi: A six-year-old girl was sexually assaulted by the cab driver for the last one year during her commute from school to home in Southeast Delhi, an official said on Wednesday.

The official said that an FIR under section 376 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code and section 6 of POCSO Act was registered at Shaheen Bagh police station and the accused identified as Mohd Azhar (30), a resident of Jaitpur, has been arrested.

According to police, the victim's mother gave a complaint in which she stated that a cab is engaged for ferrying her daughter to her school Lady Irwin Senior Secondary School Defence Colony. "Her daughter informed her that the driver of the cab Azhar has been touching her private parts inappropriately while ferrying her from school for the last about one year," said Rajesh Deo, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southeast).

Maharashtra tops Jal Shakti Ministry's national water bodies census

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In cheerful news at the height of summer, the Jal Shakti Ministry's first national water body count has found a total of 97,062 water bodies in Maharashtra, the highest in the country, as per the official report released on Wednesday.

The census, conducted in 2018-2019 counted more than 2.24 million water reservoirs across India, of which 2.35 million (97.1 per cent) were in rural areas and 69,485 (2.9 per cent) in urban centres.

They comprise 59.5 per cent (14,42,993) ponds, tanks 15.7 per cent (381,805), other water bodies 12.1 per cent (292,280), conservation schemes/seepage lakes/dams 9.3 per cent (226,217), ponds 0.9 per cent (22,361), and other types of water storage systems 2.5 per cent (58,884).

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Devendra Fadnis welcomed the Jal Shakti Ministry's survey report as a success of various schemes implemented here that augur well for the peoples' water needs in the state.

Of the state's total 97,062 reservoirs, 99.3 per cent (96,343) are in rural areas and the remaining 0.7 per cent (719) fall in urban areas and a majority are water



conservation schemes. From the total reservoirs in the state, 99.7 per cent (96,767) are of public ownership type and the rest 0.3 per cent (295) are privately owned. Maharashtra's 98.9 per cent (96,033) reservoirs are "currently in use" while the remaining 1.1 per cent (1,029) reservoirs are "currently not in use" and the water from the first category reservoirs is used for groundwater recharge.

Aurangabad, Jalna and Nashik figure among the top five districts in India that utilise the water of the reservoirs in various ways. Maharashtra has 574 natural and 96,488 man-made reservoirs, the latter costing between Rs 5-10 lakh. From the natural water bodies, 98.4

per cent (565) come in rural areas and the remaining 1.6 per cent (9) are in urban areas.

Out of the 96,488 man-made reservoirs, 99.3 per cent (95,778) reservoirs are in rural areas while the remaining 0.7 per cent (710) come in urban areas.

The basic cost of construction of most man-made reservoirs is between Rs 5 to 10 lakh.

In Maharashtra, 60.7 per cent (58,887) are covered under District/State Irrigation Schemes, 90.8 per cent (53,449) are of the type of water conservation schemes/seepage ponds/dams while the remaining 9.2 per cent (5,438) comprise tanks, ponds, reservoirs etc.

Of the "in use" reservoirs, 82.5 per cent (79,238) serve one city/town, 17.1 per cent (16,406) quench the water needs of 2-5 cities/towns and the remaining 0.4 per cent (389) benefit more than 5 cities/towns.

Considering the storage capacity, 94.8 per cent (92,026) reservoirs in Maharashtra have a storage capacity in the range of up to 100 cubic meters while 4 per cent (3,885) have a capacity of 100-1,000 cubic meters.

The survey revealed that only 0.26 per cent (251) water bodies are encroached in the state - which is the lowest in India.

NARROW ESCAPE FOR STUDENTS RETURNING HOME IN BIHAR'S SAMASTIPUR



Patna: A total of 25 school students had a narrow escape after their bus caught fire in Bihar's Samastipur district on Wednesday morning, officials said.

The incident took place as students were returning home after their school ended at 10.45 am. When the bus belonging to a private school reached the Ballochak fuel station in Dalshing Sarai block, smoke came out from the rear side.

The driver of the bus immediately stopped the bus on the road and de-boarded the students immediately. Minutes after the students got off, flames erupted and the vehicle was soon engulfed in a ball of fire.

"The students were saved due to the alertness of the driver. He stopped the bus at the right time and deboarded the students. We tried to douse the flame but failed as the intensity high. The local fire brigade and police were informed about the incident," said an eyewitness.



SANCHI TO BECOME INDIA'S FIRST SOLAR CITY

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Sanchi, a world heritage site located in the Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh, is all set to become India's first solar city.

Reviewing the ongoing work, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, said: "The use of solar energy is being continuously promoted in the state. Many solar power projects are operational across the state."

Chouhan said: "The completion of various works to transform Sanchi into a solar city was almost complete and by next month Sanchi, would be known as the country's first solar city." He said this would be a special accomplishment and achievement of Madhya Pradesh. The Chief Minister



said the state has made great progress in the energy sector and has become self-sufficient in power generation

and supply. "The achievements of Madhya Pradesh in the renewable energy sec-

tor have attracted the attention of the country. The solar city Sanchi would give MP a new identity in this field," he said. Chouhan gave instructions to the officials of the health department to upgrade government hospitals, conduct regular meetings of health committees, and ensure continuous review to reduce the maternal and newborn mortality rate. The Chief Minister also instructed the Tribal Affairs, Scheduled Caste Welfare and Backward Classes Welfare Department to monitor the payment of scholarship amount to the students and necessary facilities in the hostels and instructions were also given to open new Anganwadi centers to complete the work of applications by eligible women under Mukhyamantri Ladli Bahna Yojana.

Amid confusion, schoolchildren 'mistakenly' invited to meet PM during MP visit

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Proposals for a semi-high speed Vande Bharat train by BJP leaders and unverified information on social media, had apparently left the district administration a confused lot during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Rewa in Madhya Pradesh on April 24.

A buzz was created that Prime Minister Modi will flag off a new Vande Bharat train between Rewa to Indore on April 24. Notably, PM Modi had visited to Rewa and had launched various projects including railway projects. Before PM's visit to Rewa, social media and some section of local media had reported that a new Vande Bharat train would be launched between Rewa to Indore. What was more surprising was that various school administrations of two districts - Rewa and Satna - had issued letters to parents to send their children to participate in the launch of Vande Bharat train. We learnt that at least 30 schools from both districts (Rewa and Satna) had issued such letters to the parents of school children regarding the same. "This is to inform you that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate Vande Bharat train from Rewa to Indore. West Central Railway has



invited to travel from Rewa to Satna along with one staff member and to interact with PM Modi. Thirty schools have been selected to send their children for this event," a letter issued by Sacred Heart Convent School in Rewa to the presidents of school children read. The school management had also requested the parents to fill a form (form was also sent by schools along with the letters) mentioning that they should send their children, as per their own consent.

However, it turned out that there was no such proposal from West Central Railway department. At least two proposal letters in the name of two BJP leaders - MP BJP president V. D. Sharma and Indore Lok Sabha MP Shankar Lalwani circulated in social media suggested that both these leaders had made a proposal to run Vande Bharat train between Rewa and Indore.

Woman shot dead on busy street by two bike-borne criminals in Dhar

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A woman was shot dead by two unidentified bike-borne criminals on a busy street in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district on Wednesday.

The accused escaped after killing the woman. The incident occurred around 11 a.m. when the victim, who is a resident of Basant Vihar locality, along with her friend arrived at a temple. As per the information, the victim was parking her scooter when two bike-borne criminals approached her and shot her in the head.

The victim's shocked friend ran away screaming in panic. Before anyone could react, the criminals escaped from the spot. The incident resulted in panic among the people who witnessed the crime.

Dhar district Superintendent of Police Manoj Kumar Singh along with other senior cops reached the spot. The body was taken to hospital for post-mortem. The family of the victim also reached the hospital.

Police said a murder case has been registered against the two unidentified persons



and a hunt to nab them has been launched.

"Things are unclear as of now. Search for criminals has been launched on the basis of statements received from the people who witnessed the incident from very close. Investigation is under way and things would become clear soon," said a senior police official.

Amid Bihar Row Over Ex-MP's Release, A U-Turn In BJP-Ruled Madhya Pradesh

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Criminal cases against a BJP leader in Madhya Pradesh have been scrapped after a nod from the state home department last week. The change in the stance of the law ministry comes amid the political furore in Bihar over the release of Anand Mohan Singh, convicted for killing Gopalganj District Magistrate G Krishniah in 1994. The state government's move to tweak rules that enabled his release has been severely criticised by the BJP.

Former MLA Raghuraj Singh Kansana was accused in a string of cases. In 2012, he was charged with serious offences such as dacoity, attempted murder and kidnapping in Morena.

In 2018, Kansana was elected as an MLA for the Congress. Shortly after, the Kamal Nath government attempted to have the cases against him dismissed, but the law department refused, claiming that the charges were too serious to be dropped.

In 2019, CBI carried out searches at the Kansana's residence in Morena in connection with a bank



fraud case in which his nephew is an accused.

Rebelling against the Congress with Jyotiraditya Scindia in 2020, Kansana joined the BJP. He even contested a by-election, but lost. Even so, he got the status of cabinet minister as the BJP made him chairman, Backward Classes and the Minorities

Welfare Department.

Last week, the Additional Chief Secretary for the Home department forwarded a proposal to the Home Minister which said, "Case is submitted for proper order for consideration of departmental consent for withdrawal". The next day, on April 19, the minister decided to drop the criminal prosecution against Raghuraj Singh Kansana. NDTV is in possession of all the documents.

Asked about this, Home Minister Narottam Mishra said, "When a report comes from the legal department of the district or local administration then such cases are withdrawn". KK Mishra, a spokesperson for the Congress, claimed the note written by the Home Minister who is in charge of controlling crime is sufficient to expose the law-and-order situation.

"If such statements are made about serious types of crimes for political reasons in the future, even the dream of establishing the rule of law will become challenging. The law should be followed strictly and there should be no political interference," he said.

India is the future of the world and the future of India are youths: Governor Patel

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel has said that India is the future of the world. The future of India are youths. Till the year 2070, India will remain the young country of the world. India will account for 21 percent of the world's labour force by 2047. He has said that the size and quantity of the needs and demands for housing, infrastructure, food, education, water, health, recreation and social security in the India of the future will be immense. He called upon the youths to come forward with their skills and entrepreneurship to take advantage of the new opportunities being created in the service and production sectors.

Governor Patel was addressing the inaugural session of AISECT National



Seminar at Kushabhau Thakre International Convention Centre today. The two-day seminar has been organised to discuss the topic Social Entrepreneurship and Skill Development for Atmanirbhar Bharat. Governor Mangubhai Patel said that today under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the

government is providing unprecedented opportunities for skill and entrepreneurship development to the youths, both in terms of size and scale. The government is encouraging rapid commercialization through capital investment from around the world, bringing in best innovation practices and committed policy interventions.

New opportunities have been created for startups in the knowledge-based digital economy, innovation in futuristic technology, logistics, defence space sector in the country. The Green Hydrogen Mission has received Rs. 20 thousand crore. Defence exports have increased 6 times in the last years. The agriculture budget has also reached Rs. 1 lakh 25 thousand crore. A new programme has been launched to promote research and innovation in the field of pharmaceuticals through Centres of Excellence. The government is opening 30 Skill India International Centres, three Artificial Intelligence Centres of Excellence and 100 labs for 5G application development in the country for skill training under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana.

Man Accused Of Raping Minor Girl Stripped, Paraded In Indore

Team Absolute | Indore

A 19-year-old man, accused of kidnapping and raping a minor girl, was stripped and paraded with a garland of shoes by a group of people in Madhya Pradesh's Indore city, a police official said on Wednesday.

A video of the two-day-old incident that took place in the Bhuri Tekri area of the city has surfaced on social media. Jagdish Prasad Jamre, in-charge of the Kanadiya police station, confirmed the authenticity of the video.

He said the young man was arrested on Wednesday for allegedly kidnapping and raping the 13-year-old girl.

A medical examination



confirmed sexual assault on the victim, said Jamre. Before the accused was arrested, a group of people known to the girl stripped and paraded him after putting a garland of

shoes around his neck. The police official said a separate case has been registered against people seen stripping the accused and assaulting him in the video.

ALONG WITH CM CHOUHAN YOUNG TALENTS PLANTED SAPPLINGS



Bhopal: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of Kadamba, Karanj and Jamun in the garden located at Shyamla Hills. Along with the Chief Minister, young talents like Vikram Awardee for outstanding performance in sports Satyendra Lohia, Pramod Dhaneli and State Youth Award winner Dr. Sakshi Bhardwaj planted saplings. Satyendra Lohia apprised the Chief Minister about the "Divyangjan Empowerment Khelo Yatra" that started from April 14, the birth anniversary of Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar.

Along with Chief Minister Chouhan, on the birthday of two-year-old boy Apoorva Singh, his parents Arjun Singh and Pooja Singh also planted saplings. On the birthday of girl child Anvi Sharma, her mother Shilpi Sharma and grandmother Uma Sharma planted saplings.

CBN continues anti-drug operations in Neemuch

Team Absolute | Neemuch

In continuance of anti-drug operations, officers of Central Bureau of Narcotics (CBN), Neemuch acting on a specific intelligence conducted a search at a suspected house in Dulakheda village of Neemuch district and recovered four kilograms opium and 154.9 kilograms poppy straw. After completion of legal formalities, the recovered Opium and Poppy Straw have been seized and one person has been arrested under relevant provisions of NDPS Act, 1985.

In another operation officers of CBN



Delhi made seizure of 1,02,42,652 (one crore two lakh forty two thousand six hundred fifty two) tablets and capsules of Psychotropic Drugs including 44,55,600 (forty four lakh fifty five thousand six

hundred) tablets of Alprazolam and 57,87,052 (fifty seven lakh eighty seven thousand fifty two) capsules of Tramadol.

In follow up operation, CBN Delhi made the biggest seizure till date by CBN. During course of investigation, it came to notice that a huge consignment of NDPS Drugs is to be diverted into illicit market. Accordingly, surveillance on the said consignment was kept and the Preventive team of CBN, New Delhi and Drug Department, Gujarat raided and seized the banned drug from the premises of the transporter in Ahmedabad. Further investigation is under progress.

CBI arrests 2 Food Corporation of India employees for taking bribe

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Central Bureau of Investigation on Wednesday arrested a Technical Assistant (Grade I) and Technical Assistant (Grade III), both working in Food Corporation of India, Bhopal, for accepting bribe of Rs 40,000.

A case was registered on complaint against Technical Assistant (Grade I) Abhishek Pare, Technical Assistant (Grade III) Gaurishankar Meena. It was alleged that the accused had demanded

bribe of Rs 1 lakh per month from the complainant, a warehouses owner, for keeping stock of grains for longer time at his warehouses. It was further alleged that the accused agreed to reduce demand on the request of complainant and settled the deal for Rs 40,000. The CBI laid a trap and apprehended both the accused while accepting the bribe from the complainant. Searches at the residential and office premises of both accused are being conducted. Both the accused will be produced before Special Judge (CBI) in Bhopal on Thursday.

3 SISTERS FOUND DEAD IN WELL IN DHAR, MOTHER MISSING

Dhar: In a shocking incident, the bodies of three sisters, aged between 6 and 2 years, were found floating in a well in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district, the police said. The incident took place in Shyampura Thakur village under Sardarpur police station limits in the district on Tuesday evening. Local villagers spotted the bodies and fished them out of the well and later informed the police.

The villagers also claimed that their mother was also in the well but her body was not found yet. Sardarpur police station in-charge Pradeep Khanna said, "We received a call from the Sarpanch of the village on Tuesday evening that the girls along with their mother drowned in a well in Shyampura village of the district. Acting on the information, we rushed to the spot." The villagers already recovered the bodies of the three sisters from the well. "The woman is still missing. A team of divers were pressed into the search, but there is no clue of the woman yet," he added. According to reports, the father of these children Jeevan Bamniya (32), a resident of Khileedi village went out of the village to meet one of his relatives on Tuesday around 12 noon.

He returned home around 3 pm and found his wife and three daughters missing. He waited for some time, and when he did not receive any information about them, he along with other family members started searching for them in and around the village.

After some time, the villagers told him that the woman was seen plucking mangoes outside the village. The family members reached there, and one of them noticed the bodies of three sisters floating in the well. The bodies were fished out. The deceased sisters were identified as Amrita (6), Jyoti (4) and Preeti (2). While their mother, Ranjana, is still missing, the police said.



EDITOR'S SPECS

UP's first tabletop airport at Chitrakoot nearing completion

The first tabletop airport of Uttar Pradesh in the Vindhya hill range of Chitrakoot will be operational in the coming months, giving a big boost to tourism and pilgrimage especially in this temple town and the entire Bundelkhand region. The 'Tabletop Airport' is an airport located and built on top of a plateau or hilly surface, with one or both ends of the runway overlooking a drop. According to a government spokesman, "currently, the work on approach roads is going on at the airport construction site and it will take some months to finish that work." Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has been giving special impetus on the development of Bundelkhand region, may inaugurate the Rs 146.5-crore airport project once it is ready. Chitrakoot holds great importance among Hindu pilgrims. Legend has it that Chitrakoot was the place where Lord Rama, his wife Sita and his brother Lakshmana stayed for 11-and-a-half years of their 14-year exile, making it a revered site among pilgrims. The Chitrakoot airport will be managed by the Airport Authority of India as part of an agreement with the UP government. After getting a licence from the DGCA, 20-seater aircraft will start flying from Chitrakoot under the Union government's UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik) scheme, which is a regional airport development programme of the Centre and is meant to upgrade regional air connectivity of towns and cities. The Chitrakoot airport will boost air connectivity with other areas of UP and also increase the flow of tourists and pilgrims from other places in the country.

FIVE MONTHS AFTER ROAD CLOSURE, CHHOTI MAHANADI BRIDGE REPAIR YET TO BEGIN

SUJIT SINGH BAISH

When Chhoti Mahanadi bridge was open for traffic, tourists from Khajuraho could easily reach Bandhavgarh National Park through Barhi Nagar. Those travelling to popular destinations such as Maihar, Amarkantak, Chitrakoot, Prayagraj and Varanasi also took the bridge located on State Highway 11 on the Barhi-Maihar Road. With the bridge closed for repairs since November 26 last year, tourists are forced to put up with a bumpy ride that involves a 75-km detour! Five months have passed, but the work is yet to begin. Not aware of the bridge's condition, many still come here only to leave disappointed. Built under the Bansagar Project in 2005 at a cost of Rs 15 crore, the 900 m bridge slowly began to sink, with a central pillar going down by around two ft. In 2018, when cracks were spotted during an inspection, the state government invited tenders for repairs and spent Rs 7.5 crore on it. Last October, heavy vehicles were barred entry after cracks were spotted in the areas adjacent to where repairs were done earlier and on the lower part of the bridge. The very next month, Katni district Collector Avi Prasad banned the entry of all types of four-wheelers by issuing an order under the Disaster Management Act. Soon, the bridge was barricaded on both ends with commuting possible only on two-wheelers or on foot. "Many of the vehicles that took this route transported tourists. All the hotels here did good business when the bridge was operational. All of us are dealing with a 75 per cent reduction in business now," said Barhi-based hotel owner Ajay Verma. Business worth Rs 20,000 per day was an easy affair for Verma when the bridge was functional. As it has come down to around Rs 8,000, he had to reduce the number of staff from 12 to five. Even paying those five workers on time has become difficult now. Other businesses in the area have also seen 50 to 75 per cent reduction in sales. Textile trader Anand Saraf said his monthly income has fallen from Rs 3 lakh to less than Rs 50,000. He had to send off both his employees due to the drop in sales. "People from more than 30 villages on the



other side of the Mahanadi used to come here for shopping. All the textile traders are suffering. If the situation remains the same, running the household will become difficult," Saraf added. Farmers from these villages also depend on the market in Barhi for fertilisers, seeds and other agricultural resources. But the bridge closure has forced them to go to Katni market, Maihar or Satna, all located at a greater distance. Right now, the farmers are in a precarious state, having harvested their crops but clueless about how or where to sell the produce. Farmers have requested the local administration to make alternative arrangements, to which they responded by launching the process to procure closer to home. "I reside in Barhi, but my farm is on the other side of the Mahanadi bridge, in Iitora village. Every day, I have to cross the bridge to manage my farm. What took only a few

minutes earlier has turned into a cumbersome task now. There are thousands of people like me who are very upset due to the loss of connectivity," said Ramesh Tiwari, a retired teacher whose extended family lives in Iitora. Several residents of Barhi claimed they have been cut off from Satna, Maihar, Rewa, Shahdol, Anuppur, Katni, Jabalpur and other districts. The students of Barhi Government College, who come from Iitora, Kuteswar, Hardua, Khirwa and many more villages located on the other side, have to cross the bridge on foot. Auto services are available on both sides of the bridge, but hop-on/hop-off is time-consuming and not cost-effective. Reaching colleges or schools in time has become a task. The current estimate for repairs is Rs 22 crore, excluding the Goods and Services Tax. On what necessitated repairs again, Praman

Kumar Tripathi, Executive Engineer, Bansagar Project, told 101Reporters that a flawed design that couldn't withstand the increased traffic was the main reason. "We are trying to correct the issues, which is why so much money has to be spent on the bridge from time to time. The vehicular movement was less in the beginning, which is not the case now. So we have to keep the bridge in good condition. The new cracks were noticed in the same spot where repairs were done five years ago. The departmental process for the present set of repairs has begun. It is likely to start soon, for which we are expecting approval from the state government within a week's time," he said. A week later, when we checked with the Engineer again, they were still waiting on the approval.

international

PAKISTAN CAN TAKE BATTLE INTO ENEMY TERRITORY: DG ISPR

Islamabad | Agencies

Major General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, the Director General (DG) of Pakistan's Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), has asserted that Jammu and Kashmir "was never and will never become a part of India", adding that any "misadventure" by New Delhi against Islamabad can be responded befittingly. In his maiden press conference since taking charge as head of the military's media affairs wing in December 2022, the DG ISPR accused India of committing over 56 ceasefire violations along the Line of Control (LoC). "If, due to any miscalculation and misunderstanding, India tries to conspire against Pakistan, then we will give a befitting reply. There should be no doubt about it," he said. Talking about the country's armed forces readiness to respond to any emergency situation, Chaudhry said that if the "Indian propaganda against Pakistan" continues and a situation of confrontation arises, then "we can take this battle to the enemy's territory as well if required". Talking about the ceasefire violations along the LoC, the DG ISPR said that Pakistan had shot down at least six quad copters, stating that Pakistan Army is prepared to deal with any such attempts by India. Chaudhry's strong remarks come at a time



when a Pakistani delegation has just crossed over to India to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Defence Ministers meeting in New Delhi on Thursday. Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif will be participating in the meeting virtually. The significance of the military establishment's strong position against India through such statements, would also have a major impact on the upcoming SCO Foreign Ministers meeting in Goa next month which will be attended by Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari in person.

35,999 AFGHAN REFUGEES RETURN HOME FROM IRAN

Kabul: A total of 35,999 Afghan refugees have returned to Afghanistan from neighbouring Iran over one month, local media reported on Wednesday. The Afghan refugees who used to stay in Iran for years have returned to their homeland in Afghanistan in the past month, and the process of returning the refugees to their country continues, Xinhua news agency quoted local media as saying. A couple of months ago Bakhtar also reported the return of more than 300,000 Afghan refugees from Iran to Afghanistan. More than 2.5 million registered Afghan refugees reportedly have been living in Iran and about the same number are living in Pakistan. The Taliban government has been calling upon Afghan refugees living abroad to return home and contribute to the reconstruction of their home country. According to the UN, Afghans make up one of the largest refugee populations worldwide. There are 2.6 million registered Afghan refugees in the world, of whom 2.2 million are registered in Iran and Pakistan alone. Another 3.5 million people are internally displaced, having fled their homes searching for refuge within the country.



Taliban killed mastermind behind 2021 Kabul airport attack: US

Washington | Agencies

US officials have said that the Islamic State (IS) terror group mastermind thought to have planned the devastating 2021 bombing at the Kabul airport has been killed by Afghanistan's ruling Taliban government. According to multiple media reports, the US identified the suspect as a leader within the terror group's Afghan branch known as IS-K, but didn't name the individual and refused to reveal how this person was killed, for fear that doing so would jeopardise American intelligence-gathering capability in the region, reports Xinhua news agency. The individual was "the mastermind of the horrific attack" on August 26, 2021 that killed 13 US service members as well as 170 Afghan civilians. John Kirby, coordinator for strategic communications at the National Security Council, was quoted by CNN as saying, referring to it as one of a "series of high-profile leadership losses" that IS-K has



suffered this year. The US was not involved in the Taliban's operation, nor was it notified by the regime about the death, the reports said. Confirmation of the person's death and identity was based on the US' own intelligence gathering. The administration reportedly began calling relatives of the US troops killed in the suicide bombing to inform them of the suspect's death, but its refusal to disclose further details left one relative frustrated. "They couldn't give me his name; they couldn't tell me the details of the operation," Darin

Hoover, the father of Taylor Hoover of the US Marine Corps, was quoted by The New York Times as saying. Dissatisfied about the inadequate information he got from the government, Hoover said the call left him feeling "frustrated, again". The death of the suspect "doesn't absolve the administration or the State Department or the Pentagon from taking responsibility or accountability for what happened, Hoover was quoted by CNN as saying. They haven't stepped up and said we messed this up and it won't happen again". "And I personally think it can happen again," he added. Three days after the Kabul airport attack, the US launched a drone strike on August 29, 2021, hitting a white Toyota the officials believed at the time was loaded with explosives. It later became clear that what were inside the car turned out to be water containers, and that those killed by the US Hellfire missile were not terrorists, but 10 Afghan civilians, including seven children.

Fighting in Sudan is turning humanitarian crisis into catastrophe: UN official

Khartoum | Agencies

Fighting in Sudan is quickly turning an already dire humanitarian crisis into a catastrophe, said UN Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya. What has been unfolding in Sudan since April 15, when violent clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces broke out, is a nightmare for ordinary citizens and aid workers alike, she told the Security Council in a briefing. Even prior to April 15, humanitarian needs in Sudan were at a record high. Up to 15.8 million people -- a staggering one-third of the country's population -- needed humanitarian aid, she said, adding that four million children and pregnant and lactating women were malnourished. Some 3.7 million people were internally displaced, Msuya added.



"This conflict will not only deepen those needs. It also threatens to unleash an entirely new wave of humanitarian challenges. Fighting is massively impeding and imperiling aid operations. A humanitarian crisis is quickly turning into a catastrophe," she warned. More than 450 people have been

violence. The toll on mental health and psychological well-being, especially among children, is unimaginable, she added. Msuya said the world body's commitment to the people of Sudan remains resolute even though the situation is extremely dangerous and alarming, adding that the UN is exploring ways to replenish stockpiles so that it can deliver aid to partners in Port Sudan and elsewhere, as soon as it is safe to do so. The UN is activating a hub in Nairobi, Kenya, to support the rapid response, and is preparing for refugee influxes into countries across the region, she said, adding that tens of thousands of people have arrived in the Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, and South Sudan. "What the people of Sudan need, what we need to reach them, is an immediate ceasefire and a lasting solution to the crisis," said Msuya.

15.6 mn children in US infected with Covid

Washington | Agencies

Some 15.6 million children in the US are reported to have tested positive for Covid-19 since the onset of the pandemic in early 2020, according to a latest report. The report by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Children's Hospital Association revealed that about 9,000 child Covid-19 cases were recorded in the week ending April 20. Over the past 7 months, weekly reported child cases plateaued at an average of about 27,000 cases, while in the past four weeks the average reported weekly cases dropped further to about 11,000. Xinhua news agency quoted the report as saying. Reported cases are likely a "substantial undercount" of Covid-19 cases among children, it said. There is a need to collect more age-specific data to assess the severity of illness related to new variants as well as potential longer-term effects, said the report. It is important to recognise there are immediate effects of the pandemic on



children's health, but importantly there is the need to identify and address the long-lasting impacts on the physical, mental, and social well-being of this generation of children and youth, said the AAP. The US remains the worst-hit country in the world with the highest number of both Covid-19 cases and deaths. As of Wednesday, the country's overall caseload and death toll stood at 106,585,478 and 1,159,417, respectively.



DEFYING POLICE NOTICE AND HEAT, MAHA FARMERS START 52-KM 'LONG MARCH' IN AHMEDNAGAR

Team Absolute | Ahmednagar

Defying a police notice and soaring temperatures, hundreds of Maharashtra farmers started their 3-day 'long march' from Akole to Loni, in support of their demands from the state government, the organisers said here on Wednesday.

The agitation, coming exactly a month after the Nashik-Mumbai 'long march', has been organised by the All India Kisan Sabha and other organisations, and will reach the office of Dairy Development & Revenue Minister Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil in Loni on Friday. The Ahmednagar police had issued notice to the organisers refusing permission for the long march in view of the scorching summer temperatures - upto 39 degrees Celsius in the district,



ostensibly to avert a Navi Mumbai type tragedy. Nevertheless, the farmers carrying red flags, banners and posters, shouting slogans for their demands started their march towards Loni, 52 km away through a winding route.

The 15,000-plus marchers were flagged off by journalist-activist P. Sainath and comprised top AIKS leaders like Dr Ashok Dhavale, Dr Ajit Nawale,

CPI-M state Secretary Uday Narkar and others this afternoon.

AIKS General Secretary Nawale said the tillers demand the vesting of forest lands in the names of the farmers and agricultural workers, remunerative prices for cotton, milk, soyabean, tur, gram and other products.

He said that owing to the recent natural calamities "plus the corrupt and immoral politics" witnessed in the state, the basic problems of farmers, workers, agricultural labourers and all workers have been neglected and issues of development are side-lined.

Keeping in mind the concerns arising out of the high temperatures, the organisers have made suitable arrangements for drinking water, shade, walking only in the morning and evening hours, etc, Narkar said.

CURBS ON SHIV SENA (UBT) LEADERS GOING TO RATNAGIRI REFINERY SITE

Ratnagiri: As hundreds of villagers continued their protest for the third day, the Maharashtra Police have banned the entry of several Shiv Sena (UBT) leaders to the proposed giant Ratnagiri Refinery & Petrochemicals Ltd, coming up with Arab help near Barsu, officials said here on Wednesday.



Notices have been served on various Sena (UBT) leaders, including MP Vinayak Raut and the party's district chief Vilas R. Chalke and others, asking them not to proceed to Barsu as a potential law and order situation could arise.

Ignoring the government's pleas Raut and others have decided to travel to Barsu and meet the agitation villagers today. Taking a tough stance, the Ratnagiri Police have extended the prohibitory orders in the RRPL site vicinity till May 31 in view of the drone survey and land drilling works taken up there. The prohibitory orders are applicable within one km of Barsu, Panhale, Dhopeswar, Goyal, Varchiwadi-Goyal, Khalchiwadi-Goyal, and those flouting them shall be penalised, said the Police Inspector Vineet Chaudhary.

The Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi leaders have urged the ruling Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party government to exercise restraint, call off the soil survey and testing and allow the villagers their right to protest against the project in the lush coastal belt.

However, BJP's Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis said that irrespective of the protests, there's no going back and "the RRPL project will come up in the state at the proposed location". Sena's Industry Minister has said that it was the MVA government headed by ex-CM Uddhav Thackeray which had suggested the Barsu location and accused the Opposition of playing political games.

Insurance scheme for K'taka villages mooted by previous Maha govt: Fadnavis

Vijayapura | Agencies

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis while campaigning for the BJP in Karnataka said on Wednesday that the health insurance scheme launched by his government for the border villages in Karnataka was planned by the previous government.



Speaking to reporters, Fadnavis maintained that it was the time of elections and matters of dispute should not be discussed at this juncture. He clarified that the stand taken by the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES) is not the stand of his party.

He maintained that the BJP will win the most number of seats in elections. Under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the government headed by Chief Minister Bommai will regain power.

"PM Modi has ensured the welfare of the poor and the double engine government has achieved development. The Congress party is appeasing Muslims. We will not indulge in vote bank politics," he said.

The Maharashtra government earlier had announced the Jyotirao Phule Health Scheme for people of 865 villages of Karnataka. The move created a rift with

neighboring Karnataka state. CM Bommai had slammed that it was a decision against the federal system.

"Maharashtra government should immediately take back the announcement and respect the direction of Union Home Minister Amit Shah," CM Bommai had urged. The harmony between two states must be protected, he added.

"If Maharashtra continues with its obstinacy, the Karnataka government will announce certain schemes for Kannada people living in border 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 schemes," CM Bommai had stated.

AS SHARAD PAWAR INTERVENES, MAHA GOVT TO TALK TO RATNAGIRI PROTESTERS



Mumbai: A team of Maharashtra government officials will on Thursday meet representatives of the villagers opposing the proposed giant Ratnagiri Refinery & Petrochemicals Ltd (RRPL), coming up with Arab help near Barsu.

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) President Sharad Pawar said that he met Industry Minister Uday Samant and discussed the situation. "The Minister said that presently only soil testing and survey is being carried out. I have said that if the villagers are objecting, then the government should meet and hammer out their problems before going ahead with the work," Pawar told mediapersons. He pointed out that before taking up any such mega-projects, it is necessary to take the locals into confidence and resolve their grievances. "If the RRPL project is going to benefit the people of Konkan we have no objections, but it should be after the cooperation of the locals. First the government must find out why the people are protesting," Pawar said. However, he said that if an amicable solution is not worked out on Thursday, then all the political parties could sit together and evolve a solution.

"Woman In Hijab Harassed For Roaming With Hindu Man": Cops

Team Absolute | Aurangabad

Police detained three men for harassing a woman wearing a hijab who they suspected was roaming with a Hindu man in Aurangabad city of Maharashtra, an officer said on Wednesday.

The process to register a case at Begampura police station in the city is underway.

A video of the incident which occurred in the Makai Gate area on Monday has gone viral. The viral clip shows some men accosting a woman wearing a hijab and snatching her mobile phone. The woman is seen pleading with her harassers to return her phone.

Police identified the woman through the video and asked her to lodge a complaint, but she refused, the official said. "This incident occurred on Monday. The youths suspected that a Muslim woman was roaming with a



Hindu man. They followed the woman and harassed her. Police have initiated the process to register a suo motu complaint after the woman refused to submit a complaint," said Deputy Commissioner of Police Deepak Girhe. Another police officer said the woman had come to visit the famous Bibi Ka Maqbara in Aurangabad.

AJIT PAWAR LEADS THE RACE IN 'FUTURE CM' BANNERS, BUT UNCLE PAWAR FROWNS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Amid a jumpy political situation in Maharashtra since the past few weeks, Nationalist Congress Party's Leader of Opposition Ajit Pawar has emerged as the front-runner in banners proclaiming him as the 'Future Chief Minister', here on Wednesday.

It started on Tuesday in his 'sasural', Ter town in Osmanabad district, where his in-laws reside, some supporters erected huge banners and posters with the message: "Ajit Pawar, Son-in-Law of Ter, Our Leader, The Future Chief Minister".

On Wednesday, Ajit Pawar's banners-posters as 'Future CM' popped up in Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Nashik and all the way in Nagpur -- the last where a similar poster had come up with the name of Bharatiya Janata Party's Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis.

However, NCP President and his uncle Sharad Pawar was not exactly enthused at the banner-poster proclamations concerning his brash nephew and has pulled up the party activists to refrain from



such blatant propaganda. An obviously unapproving Congress state President Nana Patole merely commented that "whichever party has the maximum number of MLAs will get the CM's post".

In a swipe, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut said

that even Union Home Minister Amit Shah has come to Nagpur this day to view whose banner is more impressive -- an obvious hint at Fadnavis' posters in his hometown.

Earlier, in January-February, besides Ajit Pawar, even other NCP bigwigs like state President Jayant Patil and MP Supriya Sule-Pawar had shot to prominence as 'Future CM', but the issue died down soon after.

The latest round of soothsaying comes days after the mercurial Ajit Pawar, 64, publicly expressed a pet desire to ascend to the Top Post, triggering a furious political debate.

After all, he has been a former four-time Deputy CM, including in the 80-hour-long two-man government headed by ex-CM Devendra Fadnavis in November 2019, and considered sufficiently experienced for a 'promotion'. The state has been agog with speculation over Ajit Pawar's next political move, like hopping over to the BJP in return for the CM's post, though he himself has repeatedly and vehemently denied any such intentions, often in his humorous and wise-cracking style.

TEEN ELOPES WITH MAN, TRACED TO ODISHA AFTER 3 YEARS

Thane: Police in Maharashtra's Thane traced a young woman, nearly three years after she eloped with a man, to Odisha with the help of her Aadhaar number, an official said on Wednesday. The woman was 17 years old when she went missing in 2019 prompting her father to file a complaint with the Manpada police station in Dombivali, said assistant police inspector Preeti Chavan of the city police's anti-human trafficking cell (AHTC). As part of their exercise to review undetected cases, police recently tried to track down the girl with the help of her Aadhaar number and succeeded in tracing her to Odisha, said the official. The girl, now an adult, had eloped with a 28-year-old man and the two married later, said the official. While the young woman was united with her family, the man was arrested and handed over to the Manpada police, said the official.

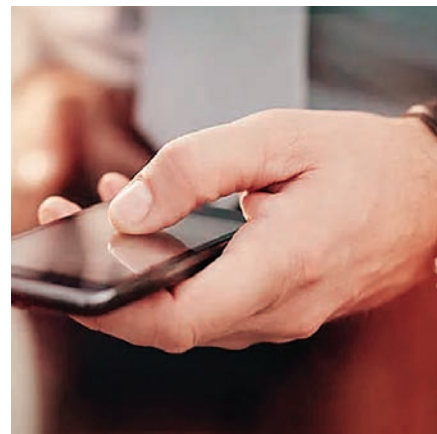
Man Tries To Get Refund For Cancelled Tickets, Ends Up Losing Rs 4.8 Lakh Online

Team Absolute | Thane

A man from Maharashtra's Thane city lost nearly Rs 5 lakh in cyber fraud after he relied on the results of a Google search to seek refunds for his cancelled trip to an African nation, an official said today.

In his police complaint, the man said that he had booked return tickets to Kenya's capital Nairobi as he and his friend wanted to visit the city of Mombasa. The tickets were booked for April 29 and May 05 and he paid Rs 1.46 lakh for them.

However, the complainant's plans changed and he decided to cancel the tickets and seek refunds, said the official. He filled out a form for refund on the



website of the airline on April 11. When the complainant could not get through to

the airline's helpline, he ran a Google search and got what he thought to be the contact number of the airline, said the official.

He dialled the number and was told that the airline's technical team would get in touch with him and facilitate the refund, the official said. A man then spoke to the complainant and said he was eligible for a refund of Rs 1.28 lakh. He asked the complainant to download an app, got complete access to his phone and stole Rs 4.8 lakh from his accounts, said the official.

On the basis of the man's complaint, the Chitalsar police on Tuesday registered a case under the IT Act. A probe is on, said the official, adding that no arrest has been made yet.

Mumbai Trader Kills Daughter, 11, Then Hangs Himself: Cops

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A 42-year-old share broker strangled his 11-year-old daughter with a rope before using it to hang himself at his central Mumbai home, an official said on Wednesday.

Police are yet to establish the reason behind the murder-suicide, but they have recovered a note purportedly written by the stockbroker, Bhupesh Pawar, blaming his wife. Pawar first killed his daughter Arya with a rope

at his home in Ganesh Galli, Lalbaug, on Tuesday afternoon. He then hanged himself using the same rope, the official said. Pawar's wife was out for some work at the time. She discovered the motionless bodies of her husband and daughter after returning home around 4 pm, he said. Pawar had an office in the Parel area, the official said. The bodies of the father and daughter were handed over to the family after post-mortem, he added.

MAN BOOKED FOR 'OBJECTIONABLE' SOCIAL MEDIA POST ON EX-MAHARASHTRA MINISTER JITENDRA AWHAD

Thane: An FIR has been registered in Thane against a man for allegedly posting derogatory content on social media against Nationalist Congress Party leader Jitendra Awhad, an official said on Wednesday. A case was registered against the man, a resident of Thane city, under section 294 (singing, reciting or uttering any obscene song, ballad or words, in or near any public place) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Information Technology Act. The objectionable tweets were flagged by the office of Awhad, a former Maharashtra minister. No arrest has been made so far, and further investigation is underway.

Mumbai reports 185 Covid-19 cases, active tally at 1,186

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai on Wednesday reported 185 new cases of Covid-19. The addition of the fresh cases took the total tally of infections in the city to 11,62,322, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said in a health bulletin. The city has been recently witnessing a sudden spike in the daily cases of coronavirus. On Tuesday, Mumbai had reported 191 Covid-19 cases and one death.

No death was reported on Wednesday, the death toll in the city remained unchanged at 19,762, the health bulletin said. The bulletin said that the recovery count increased by 234 more patients to touch the total number of recoveries to 11,41,374.

The city now has an active caseload of 1,186 patients, it further said.

According to the data in the bulletin, Mumbai's overall growth rate of cases between April 19 and April 25 was 0.0149 per cent, and the recovery rate stood at 98.2 per cent.

So far, 188,39,139 Covid-19 tests have been conducted in the city, including 1,845 samples taken in the past 24



hours, as per civic data. The caseload doubling time is 4,722 days, as per civic data.

The fresh cases rose thrice compared to Monday when 226 infections were recorded in the state.

At 328, the Mumbai circle reported the highest number of fresh cases on

Tuesday, followed by 161 in Pune Circle, 160 in Nagpur circle, 24 in Latur circle, 23 in Kolhapur circle, 14 in Nashik circle, 11 in Akola circle and single case in Aurangabad circle, the health department bulletin on April 25 had said.

Nagpur, Latur and Mumbai circles reported a single fatality each on

Container carrying eight vehicles burnt in mishap on NH 48

Team Absolute | Mumbai

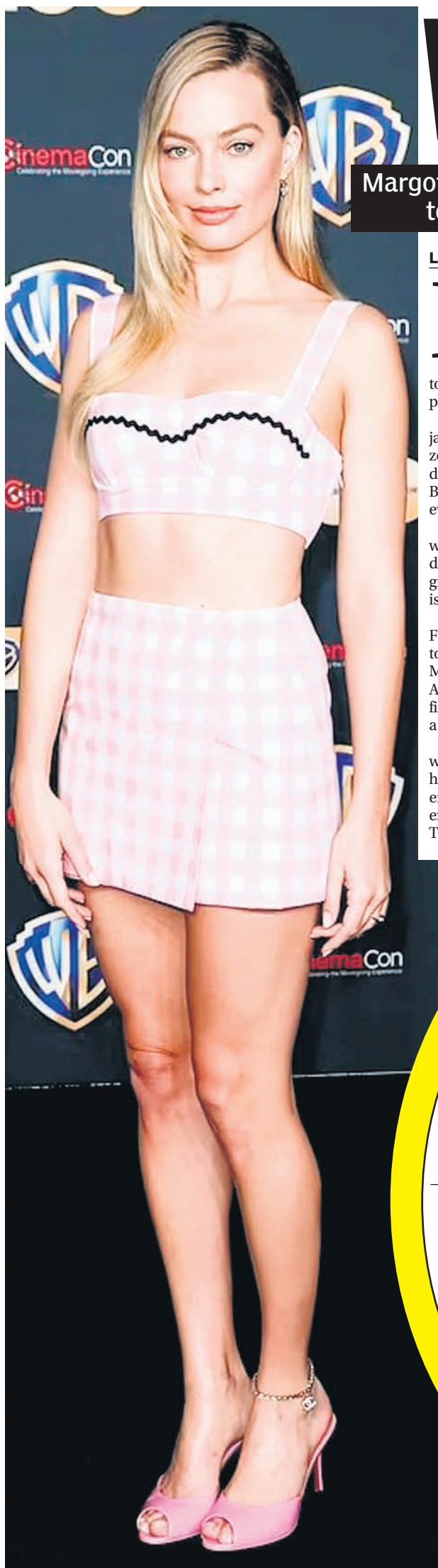
A container carrying vehicles to JNPT caught fire near Chinchpada near Somata in Palghar Taluka on the Mumbai Ahmedabad National Highway. All eight cars were burnt in this mishap. One of the four containers carrying Left Hand Drive vehicles for export caught fire on the Mumbai lane of National Highway 48 at 3 pm on April 26. The container was carrying eight Baleno cars which were to be exported. A short circuit in the container is said to be the probable cause of the fire.

Before the fire brigade team could reach the spot all the cars were burnt. The traffic on NH 48 was regulated



for some time and has restored normalcy. There was

no human loss in this mishap.



What a doll!

Margot Robbie brings her Barbie character to life with signature pink outfit

Los Angeles | Agencies

Margot Robbie nailed Barbie-chic as she promoted her hotly-anticipated new film with co-star Ryan Gosling and director Greta Gerwig at CinemaCon. The Australian actress wowed at the event with a baby pink ensemble that showed off her incredibly toned physique. Margot posed with her co-star Ryan who will be playing a version of the Ken doll in the quirky new movie.

Paying tribute to the film's director - Ryan opened his hot pink jacket to reveal a white T-shirt with Greta Gerwig's name emblazoned across it in the classic Barbie font. The duo were joined by director Greta, Margot's producer husband Tom Ackerley, Ugly Better star America Ferrera and producer David Heyman at the event held in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Although Greta has been pictured directing the film on location wearing all-pink, when it came to CinemaCon she decided to dress more formal. Gathering for day two of CinemaCon, the group stopped for photos to promote the upcoming project - that is set for a July 21, 2023 release.

The cast is a who's who of Hollywood powerhouses, with Will Ferrell playing the CEO of Mattel, and Helen Mirren as the narrator. Marvel star Simu Liu, Issa Rae, Michael Cera, and Kate McKinnon star as inhabitants of Barbieland, while Rhea Perlman, America Ferrera, and Alexandra Shipp are also attached to the film. Dua Lipa, who also plays one of the Barbies, will be releasing a hit written especially for the movie, MailOnline has revealed.

The film is directed by Greta Gerwig, who wrote the screenplay with her partner Noah Baumbach. Photos from the set of the film have been whetting the appetites of fans for over a year, and viewers got another official glimpse of what to expect in a new trailer released Tuesday.



'Get rid of them'

John Stamos Had 11-Month-Old Olsen Twins Fired from Full House for Crying

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood actor John Stamos was seemingly not a huge fan of the Olsen twins on 'Full House'.

Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen were cast in the role of Michelle Tanner when they were infants, which made it difficult for Stamos as the girls kept crying, reports 'Deadline'.

"We're doing the scene. Joey and I were changing the baby, right? And Danny's gone and said, 'Take care of the kids'. 'Yeah, we got it. We got it,'" Stamos said during an appearance on the Good Guys podcast.

"So, we're carrying the

baby downstairs and we take her in the kitchen and we hose her down. And she was screaming. Both of them. They wanted to be anywhere else but there, and so did I."

Stamos continued: "They were 11 months old, and god bless them. They kept switching: 'This one's not gonna cry'. I couldn't deal with it. And I said, 'This is not gonna work', and I screamed it 10 times.

"I said, 'Get rid of them, I can't work like this'. And so they got rid of them. They bring on these two red-headed kids... I'm sure their parents loved them and thought they were attractive... It had nothing to do with (them being) redheaded, but they

weren't attractive." Filming for Full House continued without the Olsen twins but Stamos had a change of heart and ask to bring back the Olsens as he deemed the other kids as "terrible".

"It was a day or something; we tried the other kids, it didn't work," Stamos added.

'Full House' was the Olsen twins' breakout role with the show running for eight seasons on ABC.

Mary-Kate and Ashley would go on to star in a series of films as well as start their own fashion brand building a business empire at a young age.

Ellie Goulding 'working' on documentary about her life 'beyond music'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Despite years of being very private, singer Ellie Goulding is reportedly working on a documentary about life "beyond her music". The 'Burn' singer has spent years being notoriously private, but is now said to hope to use a film special to highlight campaign work including her fight against global warming, reports femalefirst.co.uk. A source told The Sun: "Ellie is keen to let fans into her world and speak beyond her music. Earlier this year, she invited cameras to record her life away from red carpets and show the real her." The project will cover her music and time in the studio at home but Ellie also wants to shine a greater light on her work as a climate-change activist. She is really passionate about using her profile for good and thinks a documentary will do just that."

Goulding has recently been involved in the United Nation's 'One Young World' campaign, and will be following in the footsteps of other big name artists who have recently made films giving glimpses into their private lives including Lewis Capaldi, Lady Gaga and Katy Perry. In November 2017, the singer was awarded the UN's 'New Voices Award' in recognition of her activism and became a Goodwill Ambassador for UN Environment, and she's a patron of women's shelter 'The Marylebone Project'. Despite her previous privacy, she recently told The Independent newspaper she regrets responding to unfounded rumours she once cheated on Ed Sheeran with Niall Horan. The singer has insisted she and Ed, 32, never dated.



Emily Ratajkowski flaunts her 'abs in a racy sheer top'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Emily Ratajkowski put on a racy display as she posed up a storm in a stylish ensemble for an eye-popping video. The model took to her Instagram Stories to show off her incredible figure as she struck a series of sexy poses. In the clip, she flaunted her washboard abs in a sheer beige top, giving a flash of her black lace bra underneath.

Emily added to her fashionable ensemble with a clinging grey skirt with a person's body printed across it. She gave herself a few extra inches in a pair of heeled brown boots and swept a black leather-look jacket across her shoulders.

The bombshell styled her fringed brunette locks in a straight fashion across her shoulders before lifting her tresses into a ponytail-style with her hand.

She added to her striking features with a dewy make-up palette and accessorized her edgy look with gold hoop earrings.



'A 25-minute opening extravaganza'

NEW 'INDIANA JONES' FILM HAS 25-MIN LONG FLASHBACK SCENE FEATURING YOUNG HARRISON FORD

Mumbai | Agencies

Upcoming film 'Indiana Jones and The Dial Of Destiny', which stars Harrison Ford, Mads Mikkelsen and Phoebe Waller-Bridge, will feature a 25-minute long flashback sequence where in Indiana Jones will be seen playing a 35-year-old with the help of cutting-edge technology for a grand opening scene.

The director of the film, James Mangold recently broke down Harrison Ford's de-aging process in the film. Dishing on the advancement in technology, enabling the de-aging process, director James Mangold said: "We had hundreds of hours of footage of him in close-ups, in mediums, in wides, in every kind of lighting, night and day. I could shoot Harrison on a Monday as, you know, a 79-year-old playing a 35-year-old, and I could see dailies by Wednesday with his head already replaced."

The film, which is set in the nostalgic year of 1969, follows the events after Indiana Jones is summoned by his god-daughter Helena Shaw for one final mystery that embarks him on an adventure, revealing secrets of Neo-Nazis' involvement in NASA posing a vicious threat to the country.

The director also shared the goal of depicting two contrasting realities from the past and the present as he said: "It was an incredible technology, and, in many ways, I just didn't think about it. I just focused on shooting what's (approximately) a 25-minute opening extravaganza that was my chance to just let it rip. The goal was to give the audience a full-bodied taste of what they missed so much. Because then when the movie lands in 1969, they're going to have to make an adjustment to what it is now, which is different from what it was." Lucasfilm's 'Indiana Jones and The Dial Of Destiny' marks Indy's final adventure, and will debut in theatres on June 30, 2023, in English, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY

Gemma Owen





IPL 2023: JASON ROY, BOWLERS LED KKR TO 21-RUN WIN OVER RCB

Bengaluru | Agencies

A quickfire fifty from Jason Roy followed by clinical bowling performance by spinners Varun Chakaravathy, Suyash Sharma and all-rounder Andre Russell led Kolkata Knight Riders to an impressive 21-run over Royal Challengers Bangalore in an IPL 2023 match and helped them end their four-match losing streak in the tournament at M Chinnaswamy Stadium, here on Wednesday.

An aggressive 56 off 29 balls from Roy and a quick 48 off 21 balls from captain Nitish Rana, along with unbeaten 18 and 12 from Rinku Singh and David Wiese propelled Kolkata to reach 200/5 in 20 overs.

In defence, Suyash began the pull-back for Kolkata by taking 2/29, before Chakaravathy and Russell picked 3/27 and 2/29 respectively in restricting Bangalore to 179/8, despite captain Virat Kohli's 54 off 37 balls and Mahipal Lomror impressing in an 18-ball 34.

It was an innings of three halves for Kolkata with the bat on a dry-looking



pitch. They shined in power-play by going wicketless, slowed down in middle-overs and got a finishing kick in the death overs by fetching 69 runs.

Before Wednesday's match, Kolkata's first-wicket numbers made for a very grim read: 86 runs from seven matches. But Roy flipped the script with his free-flowing strokeplay as Kolkata's first-wicket stand was worth 83 runs in 9.2 overs.

Roy was driving and smashing Mohammed Siraj for three fours, before delightfully hitting a well-picked six off David Willey. On the

other end, N Jagadeesan was trying his best to match up to Roy, cutting and driving twice off Willey for boundaries.

Jagadeesan struggled to match up Roy's pace and Vyshak Vijaykumar put an end to his innings in the tenth over when the right-handed batter didn't get enough elevation on a pull, holing out to deep mid-wicket.

Four balls later, the vociferous crowd roared again as Vyshak cleaned up Roy with a top-class yorker angled on leg-stump, as Bangalore gave away 27 runs from overs 7-11,

conceding just one boundary.

Rana and Venkatesh Iyer hit boundaries off Wanindu Hasaranga, Vyshak and Willey whenever they pitched short or gave width, while rotating the strike. Bangalore also gave reprieves to Rana twice -- Siraj dropped his catch at long off and Harshal Patel shelled a chance at fine leg in 13th and 15th overs.

Iyer signalled a shift in gears by slamming Harshal down the ground for four, followed by Rana slamming consecutive sixes over deep backward square leg to take 19 runs off the 16th over. Rana then hit Vyshak for successive fours, and ended the 17th over with a lofted six over deep cover.

Brief scores

Kolkata Knight Riders 200/5 in 20 overs (Jason Roy 56, Nitish Rana 48; Wanindu Hasaranga 2/24, Vyshak Vijaykumar 2/41) beat Royal Challengers Bangalore 179/8 in 20 overs (Virat Kohli 54, Mahipal Lomror 34; Varun Chakaravathy 3/27, Andre Russell 2/29) by 21 runs.

Villa move to fifth, Wolves nearly safe in Premier League

London | Agencies

A powerful header from defender Tyrone Mings gave Aston Villa a 1-0 win at home to Fulham, lifting them to fifth in the Premier League.

Mings' goal saw Villa get back to winning ways after a 1-1 draw away to Brentford at the weekend, and Unai Emery's side now has six wins and a draw in their last seven matches, reports Xinhua.

Villa dominated the game with 14 shots, but only three on target, against a rival that had only one effort in the entire game. Wolverhampton beat Crystal Palace 2-0, taking a huge step closer to retaining their top-flight status, while inflicting the first defeat on Palace since Roy Hodgson returned as coach.

Joachim Andersen's own goal put Wolves ahead in the third minute when he redirected Ruben Neves' corner



into his own net under pressure. Jose Sa made a couple of good saves to keep Palace at bay, and Wolves sealed the win thanks to Neves' late penalty after an error by Palace keeper Sam Johnstone.

Jamie Vardy scored a vital 80th-minute equalizer for Leicester City to claim a 1-1

draw away to Leeds United. Leicester had a stunning goal disallowed by VAR before Leeds took the lead in the 20th minute thanks to Luis Sinisterra. Vardy had a second goal ruled out for off-side in the closing minutes in a game that leaves Leeds a point above Leicester in the table.

La Liga

Castellano scores four as Girona thrash Real Madrid

Madrid | Agencies

Valentin Castellano had a night he will never forget as he scored four goals in Girona's 4-2 humiliation of Real Madrid in La Liga.

The striker put Girona ahead with a powerful header in the 12th minute, after a fine cross from Miguel Gutierrez, whom Madrid sold to the Catalan club in the summer, reports Xinhua.

His second goal came 12 minutes later after he beat Eder Militao to a long ball and fired past Andriy Lunin, who played in goal for Madrid after Thibaut Courtois was affected by a stomach bug.

Vinicius Jr pulled a goal



back for Real Madrid, which was at close to full strength, in the 34th minute, but Castellano completed his hat-trick early in the second half after a cross from Ivan Martin, and he netted his fourth of the game in the 62nd minute with another unstoppable header.

Lucas Vazquez netted a late consolation for Real Madrid, but the result once again highlights how Carlo Ancelotti's side is focused on

Europe and the Copa del Rey, although the coach apologized for the display in his post-game press conference.

Fourth-placed Real Sociedad had to withstand a lot of pressure in the second half away to fifth-place Betis, but held on for a draw that keeps them six points clear of their nearest rival for a place in next season's UEFA Champions League.

The visitors had the best of the first half, but Betis reacted well, and Sergio Canales was inches away from a winner, only for his shot to go just over the bar.

Betis could slip to seventh depending on Villarreal and Athletic Club Bilbao's results on Thursday.

SL vs IRE 2nd Test, Day 3

KARUNARATNE, MADUSHKA SLAM CENTURIES AS SRI LANKA TAKE CONTROL

Galle | Agencies

Ireland were made to toil hard by Sri Lankan batters on day three of the second Test at Galle International Stadium, here on Wednesday as captain Dimuth Karunaratne hit his 16th Test century while Nishan Madushka notched up his maiden hundred in the longest format of the game.

At stumps on day three, Sri Lanka were trailing Ireland by 135 runs, having reached 357/1 as rain brought early finish to the play. Though the hosts' lost Karunaratne's wicket, Madushka remained unbeaten on 149 while Kusal Mendis was unaccounted for at 83, with Ireland all-rounder Curtis Campher taking the only wicket to fall on day three.

Starting the day from 81/0 and trailing by 411 runs, Karunaratne led the early charge, hitting his first boundary in aggressive style, slashing Campher's first ball of the day hard



over the cordon for four, and there was little let-up thereafter.

His half-century came up off 61 balls, and his century took another 54 balls to arrive. The left-handed batter equalled the record for most Test hundreds as an opener among Sri Lankan players. He equalled Marvan

Atapattu's record of 16 Test tons with his century.

Besides Karunaratne and Atapattu, Sanath Jayasuriya (13 hundreds as opener) is the only Sri Lankan opener with more than ten Test hundreds. Madushka, his partner in a mammoth 228-run partnership, became

the 19th Sri Lankan opener to notch up a Test hundred which came off 159 balls. A significant opportunity arrived in the over before drinks, with Madushka edging Andy McBrine - Ireland's most economical bowler - to Andrew Balbirnie at slip, but the Ireland captain couldn't cling on to a difficult chance.

That reprieve kick-started a counterattack from Mendis. He pulled White for his first six in the following over, before notching up a 59-ball half-century with a glide through the off-side in the next over.

Soon after, he smashed debutant Humphreys for three consecutive sixes as Madushka continued to tick along, ending the day on 149 before bad light and then a thunderstorm brought an early end to proceedings.

Brief Scores: Ireland 492 lead Sri Lanka 357/1 in 77 overs (Nishan Madushka 149 not out, Dimuth Karunaratne 115; Curtis Campher 1/47) by 135 runs.

Madrid Open

EMMA RADUCANU WITHDRAWS DUE TO HAND INJURY

Madrid (Spain) | Agencies

The British No. 1 tennis player Emma Raducanu has withdrawn from the Madrid Open due to a hand injury, hours before her first-round match on Wednesday.

Former US Open champion was scheduled to face World No. 73 Viktoriya Tomova in the first round, with a potential showdown with World No.1 Iga Swiatek in the second round.

"Emma Raducanu withdraws from the Mutua Madrid Open due to injury in her right hand," the tournament said in a statement.

She will be replaced by lucky loser, Julia Grabher of Austria in the draw.

Raducanu's withdrawal means she will probably be out of the world's top 100 for the first time since her US Open win in 2021. The Brit has been battling a wrist problem



over the last few months. After losing to Bianca Andreescu in the first round of the Miami Open, Raducanu has said that she will take the time to reassess her options regarding the wrist injury she has been nursing during the spring hard-court season.

"I just need to review after this tournament really and figure out what my next steps are. We have been managing it, keeping on top of it. I'm able to play in the short term. But the current solutions aren't very viable long term," she said after her first-round loss at the Miami Open, last month.

The 20-year-old Brit struggled with physical health in 2023. An ankle injury sustained in Auckland hampered her Australian Open preparation, and she was forced to withdraw from Austin in February due to tonsillitis.

A wrist injury also beset her during the North American spring hard-court season, though she reached the fourth round of Indian Wells.

Hangzhou Asian Games

Indian women's hockey team to tour Australia as part of their preparation

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Indian women's hockey team will tour Australia for a five-match series, which will commence on May 18 and will conclude on May 27. India will play Australia in the first three games of the series, followed by two matches against Australia A.

All the matches will be played at MATE Stadium in Adelaide. India will play their opening match of the tour on the 18th May before playing back-to-back games on the 20th and 21st May. The visitors will then compete against Australia A on the 25th and 27th May. The Australian



women's hockey team is currently ranked third in the world, while the Indian team is ranked eighth. The tour will serve as a warm-up event for the Hangzhou Asian Games, which will take place in September-October this year. Currently, the Indian

women's hockey team players are gearing up for the Australia Tour by putting in the hard yards to further fine-tune their strategies and combinations in the ongoing Senior Women's National Coaching Camp at SAI, Bengaluru.

Series against New Zealand is a brilliant opportunity, says Babar Azam

Rawalpindi | Agencies

Pakistan skipper Babar Azam stated the upcoming home ODI series against New Zealand, starting at the Pindi Cricket Stadium here on Thursday, is a brilliant chance for his team to fine-tune their combinations while starting their road to prepare for the Asia Cup and ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023.

After the series starts from Rawalpindi, the city will also host the second ODI on Saturday, followed by the two teams playing the remaining three matches in Karachi.

The two sides will begin the ODIs after an exciting five-match T20I series ended in a 2-2 draw on Monday.

"Each and every match that we play from now on holds a great significance for



us. This series is a brilliant opportunity for us to fine-tune our combinations and gather the momentum ahead of the mega events in the shape of Asia Cup and the much-anticipated World Cup," said Azam in a statement issued by PCB.

Pakistan's record since the start of last year in ODIs has been a remarkable one, beating Australia (2-1), West Indies (3-0) and the Netherlands (3-0) before losing to New Zealand (2-1) earlier in the year in Karachi. They are also scheduled to play three ODIs against Afghanistan in August.

"This team has done well in the past one year in the one-day format and I have firm faith in my boys that they will perform according to expectations in the exciting next seven months," added Azam.

Men's T20I Player Rankings

MARK CHAPMAN, IFTIKHAR AHMED ATTAIN CAREER-BEST POSITIONS

Dubai | Agencies

Middle-order batters Mark Chapman of New Zealand and Iftikhar Ahmed of Pakistan have attained career-best positions among batters in the latest ICC Men's T20I Player Rankings released on Wednesday, after the end of their five-match series that ended 2-2 in the last week.

In the batters' rankings list led by India batter Suryakumar Yadav, who is the lone batter from his country in top ten, Chapman has rocketed 48 places to 35th in the rankings. The left-handed batter smashed unbeaten knocks of 71 off 42 deliveries and 104 off 57 balls in the last two matches to finish with a series topping aggregate of 290 runs. Chapman's previous best T20I batting ranking was 54th attained in February 2018.

Iftikhar, who scored 36 in the final match, has jumped six



places to joint-38th position. He is the third-highest ranked Pakistan batter after wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan (up from 798 rating points to 811 after scoring 98 not out in the final match) and captain Babar Azam, who are ranked second and third in the list. Iftikhar's



previous best was 43rd position in November last year. Other players to move up the T20I rankings after the series are New Zealand players Chad Bowes (up 82 places to 118th in the batting rankings) and leg-spinner Ish Sodhi (up two places to 14th in the bowling rankings)



while Pakistan all-rounder Imad Wasim has moved up all three lists. Imad is up 15 places to 127th after scoring 31 in the final match, while his hauls of three for 19 and two 21 have lifted him 120 places to 93rd. He is also up 44 places to 24th among all-rounders.



'Nandini ruled over people's heart'

AISHWARYA SAYS NANDINI FROM 'HUM DIL DE CHUKE SANAM' IS VERY SPECIAL TO HER

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, who is gearing up for the release of her upcoming film 'Ponniyin Selvan: 2' recently opened up on playing Nandini in the Sanjay Leela Bhansali directorial 'Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam'.

During a media event organised for 'PS: 2', Aishwarya, who was seen touching director Mani Ratnam's feet out of respect, was asked about her special connection with the name Nandini as it's her character's name in 'PS: 2' as well.

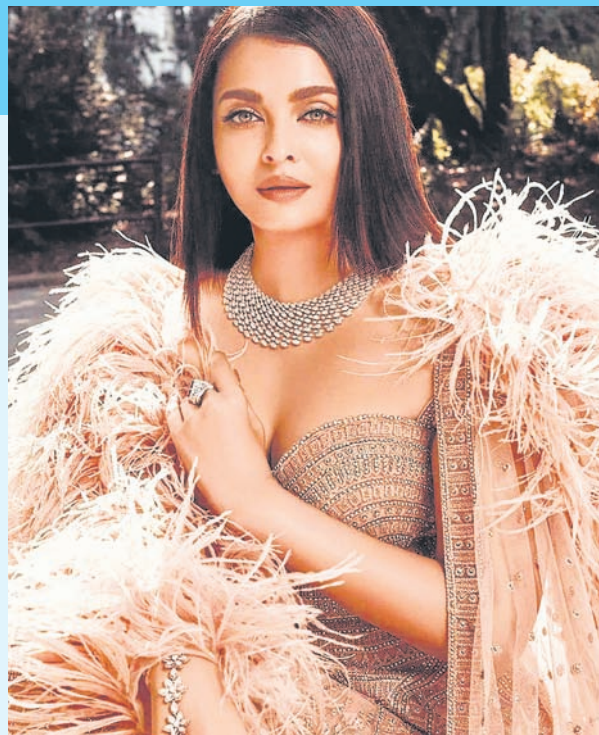
Talking about the same, the actress told the media, "What a coincidence. It's amazing na? Even Nandini in 'Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam' was very very memorable. She ruled over people's heart and I'm so so thankful that I got to

play Nandini then too. She had remained special to the audience and, of course, to me".

In 'Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam, Aishwarya' starred with Salman Khan as his love interest who gets married to another man under familial pressure. The other man, essayed by Ajay Devgn soon learns about Nandini's lost love and they set out to search for Salman's character of Sameer.

She further mentioned, "That was Sanjay Bhansali ji and today for my Mani Garu, I got to play Nandini in 'Ponniyin Selvan'. That's just tremendously a blessing, to have gotten to play such strong women, such layered women and women with character that touch the lives of so many women out there. There's a relatability and I am very, very grateful".

'PS: 2' is set to arrive in cinemas on April 28.



'SAPNA IS BACK'

Krushna back on the comedy talk show, makers drop hilarious promo

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Stand-up comedian Krushna Abhishek has finally returned to the 'The Kapil Sharma Show'. Krushna, who is known for playing the character of Sapna on the show, informed his fans through his Instagram post that he is back.

In the latest promo dropped by the makers of the show, Krushna is seen entering the stage on a rickshaw with the song 'Dhol Bajne Laga... koi laut ke aaya hai' from Anil Kapoor's film 'Virasat'

playing in the backdrop. As soon as he enters the show, Kapil hugs him and Krushna jokingly says he was not coming on the show because of monetary issues.

Krushna also has shared a video with the song 'Dil Deewana Bin Sajna Ke', playing in the backdrop and he was seen making an hilarious entry in the show.

He captioned it: "Sapna is back. Thank you my fan family for all the love".

Archana Puran Singh has responded with heart emoji to the post.



DILJIT DOSANJH CLAPS BACK AT THOSE SAYING HE DISRESPECTED INDIAN FLAG AT COACHELLA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Popular Punjabi singer and actor Diljit Dosanjh has given a befitting reply to those who claimed that he disrespected the Tricolour at Coachella. He asked them to stop spreading "fake news". A clip featuring Diljit is doing the rounds on social media, where he is seen pointing at a woman waving Tricolour in the crowd and told audience: "Eh mere Punjabi bhain bhraawan layi, mere desh da jhanda laike khadi aa kudi, eh mere desh layi, negativity ton bacho, music saareyan da saanjha (All my Punjabi brothers and sisters, this girl is holding my country's flag. Stay away from negativity. Music is for everyone)." However, his comment was cut on social media and instead a hateful message was presented against India and the Indian flag. Now, Diljit has given a befitting reply. He tweeted: "Don't spread fake news and Negativity." "Mai Kiha Eh Mere Desh Da Jhanda Hai. Eh Mere Desh Lal.. Means meri eh performance mere desh Lal. Je Punjabi Nhi Aundi Tan Google Kar leya Karo Yaara Kion ke Coachella Ek Big Musical Festival Aa Othey Har desh to log aunde ne.. that's why Music Sab Da Sanjha Hai. Sahi gal nu puthi kive ghumauna koi tuadey wargeya ton sikhey enu v google kar leyo." "I said that this is my country's flag, this is for my country.

Meaning - this performance is for my country. If you don't know Punjabi, then Google it. Coachella is a big music festival, which is attended by people from across the world...

That's why music is for everyone. Someone should learn how to twist a good thing to bad from you... Google this as well."

'This performance is for my country'



It is important to train children in primary school for self-defence: Anushka

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Anushka Kaushik, who is currently seen in the political thriller 'Garmi', emphasised on giving self-defence training to children during primary classes and she also revealed how she bagged the role in Tigmanshu Dhulia's web series.

She trained herself in martial art styles like Wing Chun and also learned to handle a rifle. Anushka said that she learned all these fighting skills for self defence and not for getting any roles.

Anushka shared: "Martial art is used for self-defence and Wing Chun is a form specifically designed for women to defend themselves. In my class, I am the only girl, and all the other students are boys. Therefore, I strongly believe that it is important to train children in primary school for self-defence. It is an art that should be mandatory in the primary school curriculum."

The 'Thar' actress recalled her journey as an actor which started from doing theatre. She also shared how she changed her name to Anushka Kaushik from Anushka Sharma as people were unable to find her on social media.

"I started my acting journey with theatre before transitioning into a social media influencer. At one point, people started appreciating my work, but they couldn't find me on social media because my real name is Anushka Sharma, and I used to face issues because of that. So, I changed my name to Anushka Kaushik."

Anushka also remembered how Tigmanshu called her for the series after watching her YouTube video.



"I remember I was leaving some office and happened to receive a call, where I was informed that Tigmanshu Sir had watched my YouTube video which he really liked and wanted to meet me. I had been focusing more on my YouTube space at the time. Although the clip they saw wasn't my favourite, I was still happy about it that they liked it. And, that's how I auditioned,"

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Actress choreographer Geeta Kapur, who is seen among the panel of judges with Terence Lewis and Sonali Bendre on the dance reality show, 'India's Best Dancer Season 3', shared how she felt about judging the show along with Sonali whom she had previously choreographed.

Geeta also talked about the newness she is looking at in the third season and her friendship with Terence.

Talking about working with Sonali, she said: "Working with such an artist is always a humble experience. Sitting next to her is a mix of unreal and surreal because I feel like I really came to this place to sit next to her. I will say that I am always humbled to sit next to those who are so great in their own way, and I feel like I didn't get there, but I have the opportunity to sit next to them."

After having judged the previous seasons of 'India's Best Dancer', she was asked what new she is looking at the contestants in this season.

She said: "I think many dancers get lost in just learning art or dance forms and lose their personality somewhere in between when we watch our Bollywood movies and look at iconic characters like Madhuri Dixit or SRK. That's why I want to see a dancer who also brings out his unique personality through the dance form."

Speaking about judging the show with Terence again and her friendship with him, she said: "The equation is different because we are friends, we grew out of two random people who came from two different places and are now very close. We did so many shows together and also created a nice bond. We try to create a nice bond in the meeting and I like to sit in the panel and love pulling his leg."

I think many dancers get lost in just learning dance forms: Geeta Kapur



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Sidhika Sharma