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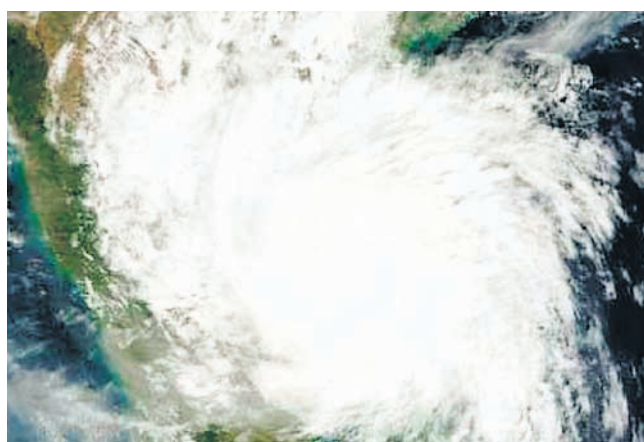
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CYCLONE BIPARJOY TURNS TO VERY SEVERE CYCLONIC STORM: IMD

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Tuesday said that cyclone Biparjoy has turned from extreme to a 'very severe' cyclonic storm and will cross the Jakhau Port in Gujarat by Thursday evening, although an 'orange' alert is still in effect for the state's Saurashtra and Kutch coasts.



'Biparjoy' to impact 12 Rajasthan districts

Jaipur: The cyclone impact will be seen in 12 districts. A warning has been issued in this regard, said the weather department. In view of the intensity of the cyclone, the Railways has partially and fully cancelled the operation of more than a dozen trains going from Rajasthan to Porbandar, Bhuj, Okha, and Gandhidham in Gujarat.

According to experts, the wind speed of this cyclone will also reduce by the time it reaches Rajasthan, but due to the high moisture level, heavy rain (from 60 to 100 mm) may occur at many places for two days.

"On June 16, heavy rain can be seen at some places in the districts of Jodhpur and Udaipur division. During this, the winds will blow at the speed of 45 to 55 km per hour in South-Western Rajasthan. On June 17 also, the effect of this system will be seen in the form of heavy rain in some parts of Jodhpur, Udaipur and Ajmer divisions. The impact of this cyclone will be seen in Banswara, Dungarpur, Udaipur, Sirohi, Jalore, Barmer, Jaisalmer, Pali, Jodhpur, Pratapgarh, Rajasamand, Chittorgarh districts. The Meteorological Department has issued a yellow alert for these districts.

Evacuation underway at Gujarat coasts

Kutch: As cyclone Biparjoy advances towards the Gujarat coast with a projected landfall near Jakhau port in the Kutch district, efforts to evacuate thousands of people to safer places are underway on a war-footing.

Officials in the coastal districts of Kutch, Porbandar, Devbhumi Dwarka, Jamnagar, Junagadh, and Morbi have initiated the process of shifting people residing in close proximity to the coast to safer locations.

Thousands of people living within 10 km from the shore are set to be moved to designated safe-havens.

El Nino weather patterns, cyclone Biparjoy led to delay in monsoon: Experts

New Delhi: El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO), due to which water temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean become cooler than normal because of the upwelling of cold water from the bottom of the sea, led to a delay in monsoon, while cyclone Biparjoy also played a crucial role in the delay, said experts.

According to private weather forecaster Skymet Weather Services Pvt Ltd, the sea surface temperatures (SSTs) in the Pacific Ocean are generally at or above normal levels near the equator. Following the end of the 'Triple Dip La Nina' event, below-average SST anomalies have diminished across most of the equatorial Pacific Ocean since December 2022.

"In April 2023, an El Nino 'watch' was issued, signalling the beginning of the warm phase of the ENSO phenomenon. Since then, all the Nino indices have remained positive-neutral or above the designated threshold. The Nino indices in the western half of the equatorial Pacific Ocean are still on the borderline, while the eastern portion consistently displays sufficient warming," said a Skymet official. According to India Meteorological Department (IMD), southwest monsoon arrived in the Kerala region a week later than its usual onset date, occurring on June 8 instead of June 1. The delay was attributed to cyclone Biparjoy.

Additionally, the presence of a cyclone in the Arabian Sea is impeding the progress of the rain-bearing system, preventing it from advancing towards the interior regions of the Indian peninsula.

This monsoon delay has also impacted regions such as Maharashtra, Odisha, half of Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Bihar, which typically experience the monsoon season by June 15. However, the northeast and west coasts of the country appear to be unaffected by these delays.

Unfortunately, the Bay of Bengal has not shown any indications of weather systems emerging, which are crucial drivers of monsoon.

'WE'LL SHUT YOU DOWN, RAID HOMES': EX-TWITTER CEO DORSEY ON PRESSURE FROM INDIA

New Delhi: Former Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey, in an exploratory remark, has claimed that India had put pressure on the micro-blogging platform, including giving threats of winding it down and conducting raids on employees' homes.

During an interview with YouTube channel Breaking Points late on Monday, Dorsey said that the threats came as Twitter refused to comply with the government's demands to block accounts during the farmers' protests in early 2021.

"We would raid the homes of your employees', which they did; We will shut down



your offices if you don't follow suit. And this is India, a democratic country," Dorsey said on the channel when asked to share some examples of pressure from foreign governments during his tenure, before Elon Musk took over. "India is a country

that had many requests of us around the farmers' protest, around particular journalists that were critical of the government, and it manifested in ways such as 'we will shut Twitter down in India', which is a very large market for us," Dorsey further said.

Oppn slams Centre over Twitter ex-CEO Dorsey's claims

New Delhi: Opposition parties on Tuesday slammed the BJP-led NDA government over former Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey's claim that it was threatened to shut down its offices or raid homes of its employees.

Veteran leader and Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal took to Twitter and slammed the government saying, "Jack Dorsey Ex-Twitter CEO said : BJP government during farmers protests threatened. To shut down Twitter-India offices. Raid homes of Twitter-India employees. Minister (Rajeev Chandrasekhar) denies. Some have no reason to lie. Others every reason to lie."

Even Shiv Sena Rajya Sabha MP Priyanka Chaturvedi said, "Social media rules quite strict in India, says Elon Musk. The billionaire owner of Twitter said that if it came to choosing between complying with the law and having Twitter employees jailed, he would choose compliance. So everyone screaming about what Dorsey said is incorrect, please sit down."

Trinamool Congress on Tuesday described the functioning style of the current Union government with that of Idi Amin as regards suppression of facts regarding anti-government protests.



Outright lie: Rajeev Chandrasekhar

"This is an outright lie by @jack -- perhaps an attempt to brush out that very dubious period of Twitter's history. Twitter under Dorsey and his team were in repeated and continuous violations of the India law. To set the record straight, no one was raided or sent to jail. Our focus was only on ensuring the compliance of Indian laws. Dorsey's Twitter regime had a problem accepting the sovereignty of Indian law. It behaved as if the laws of India did not apply to it."

Farmers call off protest after Hry govt announces to hike MSP for sunflower crop

Chandigarh | Agencies

In a major win for the protesting farmers, the Manohar Lal Khattar-led Haryana government on Tuesday announced that sunflower seeds will be procured as per minimum support price (MSP) of Rs 6,400 per quintal as demanded by the farmers.

The government also announced to withdraw the criminal cases filed against nine arrested farmer leaders.

"This is not a question of victory or defeat; this is our right," said Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait on government's decision to buy sunflower seeds from the farmers at MSP.

As their demands were accepted, celebrations began at the protest site with farmers breaking into a jig.

The protesting farmers, who were demanding procurement of sunflower crop at MSP as announced by the Centre and



held between the district administration and the farmer leaders over the past two days, which remained inconclusive.

On Monday, Khattar had invited the farmers for talks, but they had refused the proposal.

The farmers had said that they will not leave the highway till the government agrees to procure oilseeds at the MSP of Rs 6,400 per quintal as announced for the crop by the Central government for 2022-23.

The oilseed growers were not happy with the relief announced on June 10 by Chief Minister Khattar, saying "it was an attempt to prevent the 'mahapanchayat' called by farmers' associations".

According to a police advisory, commuters coming from the Ambala side were diverted from Sadhopur to NH152-D (Chandigarh-Hisar) and further commuters can travel via Ismailabad, Karnal and beyond via NH-44.

Delhi HC directs two cops to plant 100 fruit-bearing trees

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court has directed two police officials to plant 100 fruit-bearing trees following their altercation with a lawyer over protecting trees during civil work carried out by a government agency.

Justice Najmi Waziri presided over a contempt case against several city officials for violating court orders regarding tree conservation.

The court asked the two police personnel to carry out the tree plantation drive at the Delhi Armed Police Parade Ground in Kingsway Camp, specifying that each tree should have a minimum nursery life of three years and a height of at least 10 feet.

The court directed the Delhi Police to circulate the current order to raise awareness among police personnel about their responsibility to safeguard trees.

Considering the sincere regrets expressed by the two police personnel, the judge dismissed the contempt proceedings against them.

"...let 100 fruit bearing trees like Pilkhan, Jamun, Amaltas, Goolar, Kathal, Badh, Banyan, Kadamb, Kala Sirus, Safed Sirus, Papri and Mulsari, etc. be planted at the Delhi Armed Police Parade Ground, Kingsway Camp, Delhi by the said police officers," the court said.

MEITEI, KUKI BODIES SLAM 'PEACE COMMITTEE' FORMED BY MHA FOR MANIPUR

Imphal | Agencies

In a major setback to the government's efforts to restore peace in Manipur, an important Meitei civil society organisation on Tuesday announced its withdrawal from the peace committee while an apex Kuki organisation expressed their unhappiness over the committee's unilateral formation and objected to inclusion of Chief Minister N.Biren Singh in it.

The 51-member peace committee, headed by Governor Anusuiya Uikhey, was set up by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) last week to facilitate the peace-making process among various ethnic groups of the state, including peaceful dialogue and negotiations between conflicting parties or groups in Manipur, where devastated



ethnic violence since May 3 killed over 105 people and injured more than 320.

Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) Convenor Jeetendra Ningomba said that they are "extremely dissatisfied" with the composition of the peace committee.

"COCOMI rejected this committee since the sentiments of the people living in the valley region are very high against the Kuki militants groups and we had demanded the govt that first they should withdraw Suspension of

Operations with the militants," Ningomba told the media.

He said that peace cannot be achieved in Manipur unless the pressing issues of narco-terrorism and illegal immigration are effectively addressed, but the government did not do anything.

On the other hand, the Kuki Inpi Manipur, in a statement, said that its President was nominated as a member of the peace committee without prior and proper consultation and information, and the group objected to the government's unilateral decision.

Rahul again hops onto truck, this time from Washington to New York

WASHINGTON | Agencies

Days after he took a truck ride from Murthal to Ambala in Haryana to listen to the problems of truck drivers, former Congress President Rahul Gandhi, who's presently in the US, took a similar ride from Washington to New York and engaged in conversation with the Indian truck driver that centred around their daily lives.

RaGa travelled took a 190-km "American Truck Yatra" from Washington to New York. He travelled with Indian-origin driver Taljinder



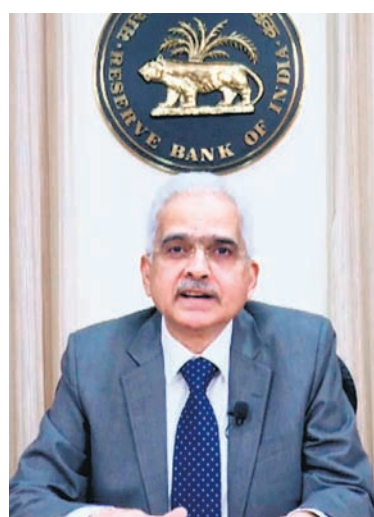
Singh, Vicky Gill and his companion Ranjeet Singh Banipal, and the journey ended with a breakfast at a roadside eatery.

During the ride, Rahul Gandhi asked several questions. He also noted that the trucks in the US are designed keeping in mind the safety and comfort of the driver, which is not the case in India.

Congress leader also listened to popular Punjabi singer late Sidhu Moosewala's songs along the way. Moosewala was killed in Punjab in May last year.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das on Tuesday expressed confidence that India will be among fastest growing economies in the world in 2023 which would grow at the rate of 6.5 per cent in the current fiscal. "We expect real GDP to grow by 6.5 per cent during 2023-24. In all likelihood, India will remain among the fastest growing large economies in 2023," the RBI Governor said while delivering the opening plenary address at the Summer Meetings organised by Central Banking in London. He said that the Indian economy displayed "exemplary resilience" post-pandemic and rebounded strongly from a contraction of 5.8 per cent in



2020-21 to a growth of 9.1 per cent in 2021-22 and 7.2 per cent in 2022-23, as proactive and coordinated response of fiscal and monetary policies nurtured a quick recovery. He said that various structural reforms related to banking, digitalisation, taxation, manufacturing and labour, implemented in the last few years, laid the foundation for strong and sustainable growth over the medium and long term.

"The government's continued thrust on capital expenditure is creating additional capacity and nurturing the much-awaited revival in the corporate investment," he said.

The Indian economy has also made rapid gains in openness and has gradually integrated with the global economy over the years, Das asserted.



G20 DEVELOPMENT MINISTERS' MEET FAILS TO REACH CONSENSUS ON REFERENCE TO UKRAINE WAR

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The G20 development ministers' meeting held in Varanasi on Monday failed to reach a consensus on the Russia-Ukraine war as differences arose between member nations over inclusion of its reference in the final outcome document and Chair's summary, with China and Russia objecting to it. The outcome document, which contains 14 paragraphs, said in a footnote that "Russia disassociated itself from the status of this document as a common outcome because of references in para 10 and 11". Another footnote said that China also objected to the reference of Ukraine crisis in the above-mentioned paragraphs. "The war in Ukraine has further adversely impacted the global economy. There was a discussion on the issue. We reiterated our national positions as expressed in other fora,



including the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly... Most members strongly condemned the war in Ukraine and stressed it is causing immense human suffering and exacerbating existing fragilities in the global economy - constraining growth, increasing inflation, disrupting supply chains, heightening energy and food insecurity, and elevating

financial stability risks," paragraph 10 said. "There were other views and different assessments of the situation and sanctions. Recognising that the G20 is not the forum to resolve security issues, we acknowledge that security issues can have significant consequences for the global economy," the paragraph 10 said further. "It is essential to uphold interna-

tional law and the multilateral system that safeguards peace and stability. This includes defending all the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and adhering to international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians and infrastructure in armed conflicts. The use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is inadmissible," paragraph 11 said. "The peaceful resolution of conflicts, efforts to address crises, as well as diplomacy and dialogue, are vital. Today's era must not be of war," the paragraph concluded. Meanwhile, the G20 development ministers' meeting, which was chaired by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, delved into various developmental challenges facing the globe and adopted an India-initiated seven-year action plan to accelerate progress on the sustainable development goals through an inclusive roadmap.

BJP inherited toolkit of British dictatorship: Kharge

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday slammed the BJP government at the Centre over former Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey's claims, saying that the party's top leadership is embarrassing the country as "they have inherited the toolkit of dictatorship from the British". Kharge said in a tweet in Hindi, "The political progeny of BJP-RSS, who stood against Indians and fought in favour of the British in the freedom movement, should not pretend to be nationalistic on the statement of the former CEO of Twitter." He added: "The BJP is on top in embarrassing the country. From the slavery of the British, the BJP has only adopted the toolkit of dictatorship. Didn't the Modi govern-



ment try to crush the farmers' movement? Prime Minister Modi himself called the food donor farmers 'agitators'. Even UP CM (Yogi Adityanath) accused the farmers of taking foreign funding. BJP ministers and leaders called the farmers Maoists, terrorists and traitors. They tried to block their way by laying wire, cement walls, and nails on the road. Oppressed with sticks. Over 750 farmers lost their lives. "Forget of giving them any kind of compensation, they did not even think of observing a minute's silence for them in the Parliament. 1.48 lakh

farmers are still forced to fight the cases filed during the farmers' movement. If these have been done, it is not a big deal for the Modi government to threaten journalists and farmer leaders. We will continue to thwart the BJP's conspiracy to end democracy in the country." Senior Congress leader P. Chidambaram also slammed the government over the revelations made by Dorsey and questioned "how the IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw runs his ministries?" "I am appalled by the revelations about how Ashwini Vaishnaw runs his ministries. First, the Balasore tragedy. Obviously, the minister or his officers did not read the CAG reports No. 22 and 23 submitted in December 2022 or the letter of the Principal Chief Operations Manager in February 2023.

Women turn out in big numbers after free bus travel scheme launched in Karnataka

Bengaluru | Agencies

After launch of the 'Shakhi scheme' for free travel by women by the Congress government in Karnataka, state-owned buses are seeing women passengers turning out in great numbers, an official statement said on Tuesday. A Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) statement said that from midnight on June 12 to 12 p.m., 41.34 lakh women passengers have traveled in government owned buses across the state. The cost incurred by the government is Rs 8.83 crore. As many as 17.57 lakh women travelled in Bengaluru Metropolitan



Transport Corporation (BMT) buses in and around the state capital, while 11.40 lakh women travelled in KSRTC, 8.30 lakh women in NWKRTC and 4.40 lakh in KKRTC. The data of bus schedules which are return-

ing to the depot after midnight are not included in the above data. On June 11 between 1 p.m. to 12 p.m, 5.71 lakh women passengers availed the scheme by traveling free and the cost incurred is Rs 1.40 crore.

'BJP in no mood to accommodate JJP, to shift focus on non-Jat voters in Haryana'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The BJP, which formed the government in Haryana in alliance with Dushyant Chautala's Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) after failing to get an absolute majority in 2019, seems to have now made up its mind to return to non-Jat politics in the state. According to BJP sources, JJP leader and Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala has been indicated by the saffron party that if he wants, he can opt out of the alliance. The BJP has now made up its mind to focus on non-Jat voters in the state in view of the 2024 Lok Sabha and the subsequent Assembly elections, sources said. The saffron party is banking upon independent MLAs to save its government in the states. Besides this, it is working on multiple levels to strengthen its presence among the non-Jat voters. In 90-member Haryana Assembly, the BJP currently has 41 MLAs, while the JJP has 10. If JJP opts



out of the coalition, then BJP will need at least five more MLAs to save the government. This is the reason why in the last few days, Haryana BJP in-charge Biplab Kumar Deb has met four independent MLAs - Dharampal Gonder, Rakesh Daulatabad, Randhir Singh Gollen and Somveer Sangwan - and Haryana Lokhit Party MLA Gopal Kanda. With support of Gopal Kanda and all seven inde-

pendent MLAs, BJP's tally reaches 49, sources elaborated. Like 2019, in 2024 also, the BJP has made a strategy to focus on non-Jat voters to win all the 10 Lok Sabha seats in Haryana and to get a majority on its own in the Assembly elections. Jats, with estimated vote share of 25 per cent, play an important role in influencing election results on 35 Assembly seats in the state. The BJP is especially eyeing on Dalits, who have the biggest vote share in the state after Jats. About 21 per cent of the voters in the state come from Dalit community and this is the reason why the Mayawati-led BSP, which could not win even a single seat in the 2019 Assembly elections, got 4.14 per cent votes in the state. The non-Jat voters in the state, comprises Dalits, Brahmins, Banias, Punjabis, Sikhs, Gujjars and Ahirs. They have estimated vote share of 69 to 71 per cent. BJP strategists believe that there are many contenders for jat votes in Haryana and their division is certain.

Mumbai's Mithi River rejuvenation project's first phase tunnel completed

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a significant step, the first phase of the sewer tunnel project, part of the Mithi River Rejuvenation Project, achieved breakthrough at the Kurla Garden, the BMC announced here on Tuesday. With a diameter of 2.60 metres, this is the smallest sewage tunnel in India, and is being bored 15 metres underground to divert the sewerage and enhance the quality of the Mithi River. The work on the tunnel, which will be dug for a total length of around 6.70 km from the Bapat Nala and the Safed Pul Nala to the Dharavi Sewage Treatment Plant, with five shafts, started in October 2021 and will be completed by September 2025. With the first phase of the 1.83 kms tunnel - boring for which started in November 2022 at the DSTP - done on Tuesday, the project is now described as "43 per cent complete", according to the BMC. Around 168 million litres of contaminated water flowing into the Mithi River from the two Nalas will now be diverted through the new underground sewage tunnel to the DSTP, thus making the city's main river cleaner. The sewage will be treated at the DSTP and released into the creek at the Mahim Nature Park, the BMC said.



Assam woman BJP leader killed by her partner: Police

Guwahati | Agencies

The police said on Tuesday that Jonali Nath, a woman BJP leader from Assam's Goalpara district whose body was discovered on Sunday night next to the highway, was murdered by her partner Hasanur Islam. The police detained Hasanur on Monday evening. The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) said that for more than two years, the deceased woman had an affair with Hasanur. Hasanur is a ward member of the Congress in Goalpara's Matia area, while Jonali served as the district secretary of the BJP in Goalpara. Jonali was married and she got involved with Hasanur in an illicit relationship two years ago. Inspector General of CID, Debraj Upadhyay, said that Hasanur Islam has admitted during interrogation of having an affair with Jonali for more than two years, but said that he had recently married another woman which upset Jonali. Upadhyay said that Hasanur also admitted that on Sunday night, Jonali came to meet him. He picked her up in his car after which a quarrel broke out between the two inside the



car. The police said that when Jonali found out about Hasanur's wedding, she began calling him, but he initially avoided her. Hasanur later agreed to meet her on Sunday, and picked her up from a market area in Matia.

DELHI COURT ALLOWS KARTI CHIDAMBARAM TO FLY ABROAD

New Delhi: A Delhi court has granted permission to Congress MP Karti Chidambaram, who is an accused in the Aircel-Maxis and INX Media cases, to travel to Spain and the United Kingdom from June 25 to July 17, noting that he hasn't violated any of the conditions imposed upon him by the court before. The four applications filed by Chidambaram in different corruption and money laundering cases were allowed as he stated his intention to attend sports championships in Spain and the UK, as well as visit his daughter who was working in London after completing her studies. Special Judge Namrita Aggarwal, while allowing his applications, noted that on none of the occasions, the accused has violated any of the conditions imposed upon him by the court concerned. However, the court directed Chidambaram to surrender his passport within 48 hours upon returning to India and cautioned him against tampering with evidence or influencing witnesses in the case. "He shall not make any attempt to tamper with the evidence or influence the witnesses of this case in any manner," the judge said. The court also directed the applicant to provide a security deposit of Rs 1 crore, prohibited him from opening or closing any overseas bank accounts or engaging in property transactions abroad, and also to inform about his travel itinerary, address and contact details for the period abroad to the court as well as to the investigating officers in all four cases.

Bride-to-be's helmetless scooter ride goes viral, Delhi Police issue challan

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a bizarre turn of events, a bride-to-be in Delhi found herself at the centre of attention, not for her impending wedding, but for her daring scooter ride without a helmet. The Delhi Police, in a creative approach to road safety, took to Twitter to share the video capturing this unconventional sight. In the video, a woman clad in a bridal ensemble is seen joyfully zipping through the streets on her scooter, seemingly unaware of the potential risks. As if the sight of a bride on a scooter wasn't entertaining enough, the police added a catchy twist to the video by accompanying it with the peppy Bollywood song "Sajanji Vaari Vaari" from the film 'Honeymoon Travels Pvt Ltd'. Truly a wedding procession like no other! However, the hilarity of the situation quickly took a serious turn as the video progressed. The next frame revealed a challan, dated June 10, indicating that the unidentified woman had been fined Rs 6,000 for her reckless actions. Apparently, not only was she riding without a helmet, she was also driving the



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ence (3/181 MVA) [Fine - 5000]	

scooter without a valid driver's licence -- double offense that landed her in financial trouble. The Delhi Police accompanied the video with a warning: "Going 'Vaari Vaari Jaun' on the road for a REEL makes your safety a REAL WORRY! Please do not indulge in acts of BEWAKOOFIYAN! Drive safe." Since its release, the video has garnered a significant amount of attention, accumulating nearly 68.9K views and sparking a flurry of amused comments. Social media users couldn't help but appreciate the Delhi Police's unique approach to raising awareness about traffic rules. Some even suggested that this unconventional bride should consider a career in stunt riding, given her fearless spirit and ability to captivate the audience. "Just wondering... how'd we know she was riding without a licence? Was she intercepted by the TP officer? Absolutely applauded by the action taken by DTP! But, still the question stands...," said a Twitter user. "Now I am getting more content of entertainment from various police tweeter handles. Rather than from Indian cricket team," said another Twitter user.



AS BHOPAL FIRE RAGED, RS5.5-CRORE HYDRAULIC LADDER STOOD 40 METRES AWAY



Team Absolute | Bhopal

While a blaze engulfed the seven-storey Satpura Bhawan in Bhopal yesterday, destroying government offices and documents, a Rs 5.5-crore advanced hydraulic ladder used for fire-fighting stayed parked just 40 metres away. Bought with much fanfare about nine months ago to help fight fires in buildings up to 18 storeys high, the lack of clearance from the Regional Transport Office and of qualified personnel ensured that it could play no role in fighting one of the biggest fires in Bhopal in recent years, said senior fire department officials.



The Army and Indian Air force had to get involved, and the fire was finally brought under control 14 hours after it broke out. Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Dr Narottam Mishra, however, said in Hindi, "There was no space for the hydraulic machine to pass. A parking area has been built there, blocking the way. Just this morning, Chief Minister Shivraj Chouhan has ordered that arrangements must be made to ensure enough space in big buildings (for fire-fighting vehicles to enter)." Before the hydraulic ladder was purchased, the fire brigade was using step ladders and machines which only had a reach of three-four storeys.

The same ladders were used in yesterday's operation. Four to five people had been trained to operate the new hydraulic ladder but, sources said, none of them were available when the fire broke out. The fire started around 4 pm on Monday from Satpura Bhawan's third floor, housing the regional office of the Tribal Welfare Department. It

spread quickly to three upper floors. As the fire came in contact with air conditioners and some gas cylinders, there were multiple blasts. Bhopal Police Commissioner Harinarayan Chari Mishra said that the cause of the fire appears to be a short circuit, but a team has been formed to investigate it.

CM convenes high-level meeting to review fire incident

Team Absolute | Bhopal



More than 12,000 files related to different schemes of the Madhya Pradesh government, as well as that of the Centre, were gutted in the massive fire that erupted at the Satpura Bhawan in Bhopal.

However, state Home Minister Narottam Mishra claimed that data can be restored. "Scheme-related data is often stored in hard disks and pen drives. It will take some extra efforts, but data can be restored," Mishra said after a high-level meeting chaired by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh to review the fire incident. He said a high-level committee headed by Additional Chief Secretary of Home Department, Rajesh Rajora has been tasked to investigate the fire and submit its reports within the next three days. "The exact cause of the fire will be ascertained after detailed investigation. Preliminary probe has however, revealed that the fire occurred due to a short circuit in an AC in the store room on the third floor," Mishra, who is also the state government spokesman, added. He further informed that during the meeting, the Chief Minister directed to arrange alternative offices for the ones that were affected by the blaze. "At least 4,000 employees were working in the Satpura Bhawan at the time of the incident. The arrangement of alternative offices are being made until it gets ready to resume services," Mishra added.

1 lakh 3 thousand bovines being nurtured in 1170 well-equipped Gaushalas of the state

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Swami Akhileshwaranand Giri, Vice-Chairman of the Gau Samvardhan Board has informed that one lakh 3 thousand bovines are being reared in the 1170 Gaushalas registered so far under the Mukhyamantri Goseva Yojana. All the gaushalas built in the scheme are well equipped. In these, separate sheds have been arranged for calves along with sheds for cows. Sick cattle are kept in a comfortable environment. A grant of Rs. one lakh 60 thousand per gaushala

has also been given to all gaushalas for fodder cutting machines, overhead tanks, submersible pumps and bores. In the year 2022-23, an amount of 202 crore 33 lakh was provided for the cattle of 1797 government and non-government Gaushalas of the state through District Gopalan and Pashudhan Samvardhan Samitis. The work of electrification has been completed in all the constructed Gaushalas by the respective power distribution companies at a cost of Rs 30 crore 23 lakh 38 thousand. A 5-acre pasture has also been developed along

with each Gaushala for arrangement of fodder and straw for the cattle. The pasture is operated through MNREGA. To provide shelter to about 3 lakh destitute cattle of the state, the construction of cow shelters is going on continuously under the Mukhyamantri Goseva Yojana. In other 363 Panchayats, the construction work of the infrastructure of Gaushalas has been completed. The operation of these Gaushalas will start after the panchayats complete the electrification work.

Rajnath Singh's "Seasonal Hindu" dig at Priyanka Gandhi in Madhya Pradesh

Team Absolute | Rajgarh

Some people in the Congress have become "seasonal Hindu" for political gain, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Tuesday while accusing the opposition party of trying to "hoodwink" the public by promising the "five guarantees" if it comes to power in Madhya Pradesh. His remarks at a 'Kisan Kalyan Mahakumbh' in Rajgarh came a day after Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi offered prayers to Narmada river, considered the lifeline of Madhya Pradesh. "Some people in Congress have become what I call 'seasonal Hindu'. I want to ask them why they did not



remember Narmada ji before. Why are you remembering Narmada ji now," Rajnath Singh said. The defence minister and senior BJP leader said it was Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan who declared Narmada river a living entity. "Now they (Congress) are carrying Hanuman ji's mace in their meetings and their events. Earlier they were wary of taking names of

Ram and Hanuman," he said. Assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh are scheduled later this year. "To hoodwink the public, the Congress is talking about five guarantees. When Kamal Nath ji's government was there, many announcements were made, none of them were fulfilled. Now Congress is talking about guarantees again," he added. The defence minister said Congress has always made promises but never fulfilled them but BJP always fulfils what it promises. "It was because of the difference in words and deeds of our politicians that a crisis of credibility emerged in Indian politics. But Prime Minister Narendra Modi and all the BJP ruled

states ensure that they fulfilled all the promises made to the people," he said. Rajnath Singh also lauded Chief Minister Chouhan's performance. "Looking at the work done by Shivraj Singh Chouhan and the confidence displayed by the crowd I can with certainty say that we will again form the government with more seats this time," he said. Rajnath Singh also described the farmers as "Anndaata" and "Jeevandaata". "Some people say that our Kisan is 'Anndaata'. Some say our Kisan is 'Jeevandaata'. But I say that our Kisan is indeed 'Anndaata' and 'Jeevandaata' but along with it our Kisan is our 'Bhagyavidhata' also," he said.

Along with CM Chouhan, United Nations Environment Programme Executive Director Erik Solheim planted saplings



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of Banyan, Kachnar and Mango in the garden located at Shyamla Hills. Along with CM Chouhan, Executive Director of United Nations Environment Program Erik Solheim also planted saplings. Solheim appreciated Chief Minister Chouhan's personal initiative for planting saplings daily and the activities being conducted to encourage

public participation in tree plantation. Founder of Youth of India Foundation Shri Shailesh Singh, Chairman of Kolkata Thunder Bolts Pawan Kumar Patodia, Life Coach and Dadasaheb Phalke Awardee Ashna Dhanuka participated in the plantation. Along with CM Chouhan, Ayush Sharma planted a sapling on his birthday, Akshat Sharma and Aditya Sharma were with him. Along with Chief Minister Chouhan, Devendra Yogi, Ravi Yadav, Santosh Yadav, Tilak Jogi etc. also planted saplings.

Women of families with tractors will also get Rs one thousand each

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's announcement in Rajgarh; Rs 1400 crore transferred to the accounts of 70 lakh farmers

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan transferred an amount of Rs 1209 crore 64 lakh to the accounts of sisters under 'Mukhyamantri Ladli Bahna Yojana' on June 10. In the amount transferred, 98.5 per cent of the payments have been successful. All the remaining 1.5 per cent cases have been identified individually. After finding out the problem, corrective action will be taken in the coming week, so that the amount is deposited in the accounts of the beneficiaries before June 25. Mukhyamantri Ladli Bahna Yojana has been started in the state for economic self-reliance of women, continuous improvement in their



health and nutrition level and to strengthen their role in family decisions. Under the scheme, an amount of Rs 1000 per month will be deposited in their bank accounts. Chief Minister Chouhan said that the amount of Rs 1000 per month received by the sisters will be increased to Rs 3 thousand respectively. As a result of the necessary financial arrangements, instead of Rs.1000 in the scheme, the amount will be increased to Rs.1250, Rs.1500, Rs. 2000, Rs.2250, Rs.2500, Rs. 2750 and

finally Rs 3000 respectively. Similarly, the minimum age of married eligible woman for the scheme has been reduced to 21 from 23 years. Presently married women in the 23-60 age group are eligible in the scheme. If a woman of a family above 60 years of age is getting less than Rs.1000 per month in Social Security Pension Scheme or any other scheme, then additional amount will be accepted in the scheme so that she can get a total amount of Rs.1000. Chief Minister Chouhan said that families

where there are tractors will also be benefited under the Ladli Bahna Yojana. Tractor will not be considered in the category of four wheeler. Therefore, the sisters of these families will also get Rs.1000 per month. Ladli Bahna Senas will also be formed. An army consisting of 21 members will be formed in big villages and 11 members in small villages. Ladli Bahna Senas will fight against injustice and exploitation. Ladli Bahna Sena will help women to get benefits of their welfare schemes.

Congress planning 'bigger role' for Priyanka ahead of 2024 Lok Sabha polls

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Bhopal

Even as Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra kicked off her poll campaign for Madhya Pradesh on Monday and announced five guarantees for the state, party sources said that she is likely to play a bigger role in the party in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. According to party sources, Priyanka Gandhi, who campaigned aggressively in Himachal Pradesh last year and in Karnataka earlier this year, will keep on campaigning for the party in the poll bound states of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana and Rajasthan. Priyanka Gandhi has already addressed a public meeting in Telangana's Hyderabad on May 8. She had targeted the Bharath Rashtra Samithi government in the state led by Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao over unemployment and several other issues during her first public meeting in the southern state. On Monday, she also kicked off her first public meeting in poll-bound Madhya Pradesh and announced the five guarantees in the state which included Rs 1500 per month to women, LPG cylinder for Rs 500, 100 units of free electricity and only half the price till 200 units, implementation of the old pension scheme and restarting the farm loan waiver scheme. Another source said that Priyanka Gandhi is likely to be made the chairperson of the Congress' Campaign Committee for the



2024 Lok Sabha elections to project her in a bigger role. The source added that the assembly polls in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Telangana may be just a kind of preparation for her ahead of the big role in the crucial 2024 Lok Sabha elections, where the party wants to make a comeback at the national level. The source said that a final call on this will be taken by the party leadership including party president Mallikarjun Kharge in the coming months ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections where several committees will be formed. However, senior leaders of the party remained tight-lipped on whether she will be made the chairperson of the party's Campaign Committee for 2024.

Congress churns on the guarantee given by Priyanka

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The state unit of the Congress has started brainstorming on the five guarantees given by Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi with the launch of the campaign for the assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh. The assembly election 2023 promissory note was discussed in the committee meeting held on Tuesday. The General Secretary of the Congress was on a visit to Jabalpur on Monday and in a public meeting there she had given five guarantees and promised to implement them. He guaranteed Rs 1500 per month for women and gas cylinders for Rs 500 per month. She also said that electricity bill waived up to 100 units and electricity bill half up to 200 units. Farmer's



loan waiver will continue and the benefit of old pension scheme will be implemented. After the announcement of Priyanka Gandhi, a meeting of the Assembly Election 2023 promissory note committee was held under the chairmanship of State Congress President and former Chief Minister Kamal Nath at his residence on Tuesday. Former Chief Minister and Rajya Sabha MP Digvijay Singh, former

Union Minister Suresh Pachauri, chairman of the promissory note committee Rajendra Singh, former minister Bala Bachchan, former minister Sajjan Singh Verma, Mukesh Nayak and other members of the promissory note committee were present in the meeting. Discussions were held on finalizing the manifesto of the Congress for the upcoming assembly elections in the state. The Congress has promised to implement the Nari Samman Yojana when it comes to the power. While Priyanka Gandhi has approved this plan, preparations are also on to include it in the promissory note.



EDITOR'S SPECS

UP govt uses sedition law 'recklessly'

Uttar Pradesh became familiar with the sedition law when protests began over the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in 2019. The sedition law – Section 124A – deals with words, signs or visual representation that brings or attempts to bring "into hatred or contempt or excites disaffection against the Government" and can be punished by imprisonment for life with a fine or imprisonment that may extend to three years with a fine. Uttar Pradesh witnessed a surge in sedition cases after the CAA protests and then the rape of a Dalit teen at Hathras in 2020. When protests broke out after the death of the 19-year-old Dalit victim of a brutal gang rape in Hathras district in September 2020, the UP government filed 22 cases of sedition against at least 18 unidentified individuals and five known persons, including a journalist and a politician. A retired IPS officer who faced sedition charges when he joined the anti-CAA campaign. In UP, 77 per cent of 115 sedition cases since 2010 were registered over the last three years. Of these, more than half were filed on issues of "nationalism" – accusing people of making "anti-India" remarks or writing and chanting "Pro-Pakistan" slogans. The data shows a 28 per cent rise in sedition cases filed each year between 2014 and 2020, compared to the yearly average of the second tenure of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) administration during 2010-14. The situation has come to such a pass that even memes, tweets, cartoons and photographs are attracting sedition laws. Journalists and social influencers are bearing the brunt and are being accused of anti-national activities. A senior superintendent of police, presently posted in an important eastern UP district, admitted that there has been an 'overuse' of sedition laws in the past few years.

IT PAYS TO MAKE PROPAGANDA FILMS

Vinod Mirani

Bhed Chaal' is a Hindi proverb very much used in relation to the Hindi film industry. It means that one huge success is followed by numerous other attempts. Original ideas are at a premium in the Hindi film industry.

The makers either depend on a foreign film, or a novel, or a South Indian film for a subject. Filmmakers always want to play safe because the risk factor is always high. The distributor, while being wined and dined, gets a sales pitch, like "Zanjeer se kam nahi hamari picture..." and such. Many smaller-budget imitations of 'Sholay', 'Zanjeer', 'Deewaar' and other such films flooded the market. That is to say, if one action film worked, many more were certain to follow.

With the introduction of the video format followed by CDs, the trend changed to copying Hollywood films. A star was sent two videos or discs to watch, and they were told that the first and second half of the film would be made!

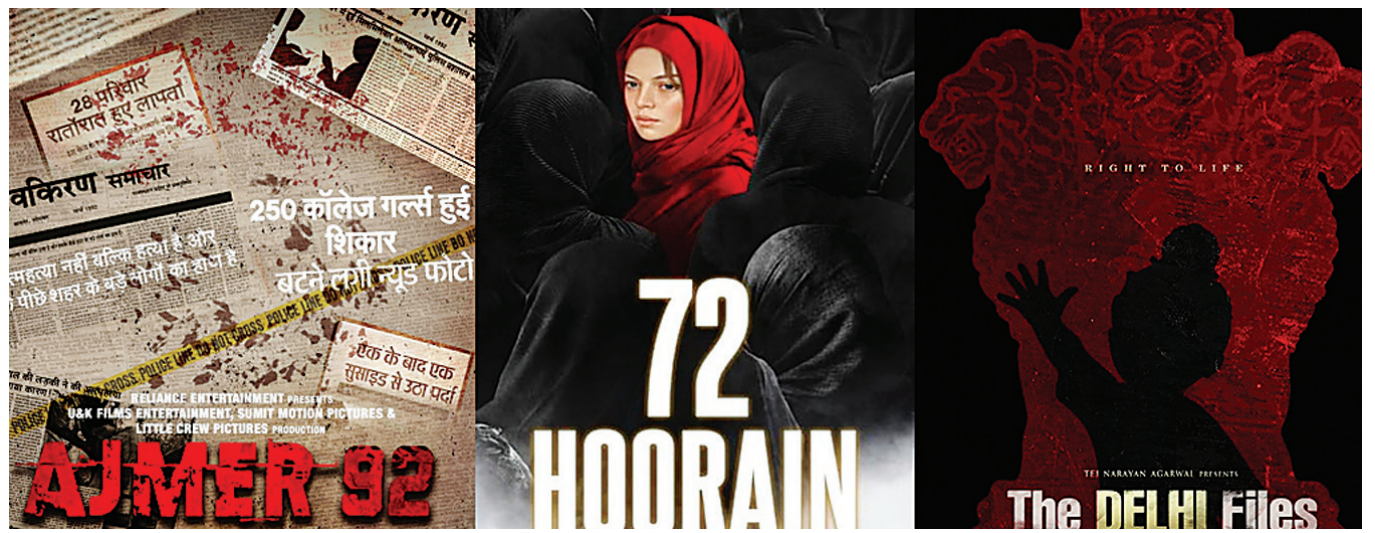
Hollywood films don't have songs and dance routines, so slots were created for Hindi 'adaptations'. Not in sync with the story lifted from videos or discs, the songs had to be forced in and usually happened to be out of place. A film producer tried to create all sorts of buffers to cover himself. How were Dharmendra and Hema Malini paired in more than 30 films, one after the other? Similar was the case with Rajesh Khanna-Sharmila Tagore/Mumtaz pair or Jeetendra-Jaya Prada/Sridevi or Amitabh Bachchan-Rekha films.

They were called hit pairs expected to guarantee a hit, and therefore were not to be disturbed. What happened was that every second producer wanted either the Laxmikant Pyarelal duo or R.D. Burman to score the music for his film and other equally talented composers were mostly sidelined!

Did the lyric writer come as a package deal with these two ruling composers of the time? The combination worked well and was easy to sell. Only a rare discerning filmmaker would opt for a lyric writer such as Majrooh Sultanpuri, or anyone else to suit the subject of his film.

Raj Kapoor launched his son Rishi Kapoor with 'Bobby', a love story. It was a blockbuster and every star wanting to launch his ward thought it to be a great idea.

Rajendra Kumar launched his son Kumar



Gaurav with 'Love Story', Manoj Kumar made 'Kalaakaar' for his son, Kunal Goswami, Dharmendra launched Sunny Deol with 'Betaab', and the other son, Bobby Deol, with 'Barsaat'. For Anil Kapoor, after a few films here and there, it was the home production, 'Woh Saat Din', that worked.

It became the preferred and safe formula for all filmmakers to launch a new face. Aamir Khan made his debut with his uncle Nasir Husain's film, 'Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak', Jackie Shroff made his mark with 'Hero'.

Director Sooraj Barjatya, a Rajshri Pictures scion, was launched with 'Maine Pyar Kiya', which inaugurated the careers take-off of both Sooraj and Salman Khan, whose second film it was. Aditya Chopra and Karan Johar followed suit and were successful in establishing not only their own careers, but also consolidating their banners.

Not very long ago, a film on the sports icon M.S. Dhoni proved to be a hit. And, before you could utter the word 'cricket', every second filmmaker was planning a sports-based film? We also had a rather costly biopic on Sachin Tendulkar, 'Sachin: A Billion Dreams'. He was as much an icon or maybe bigger. But the film turned out to be more of a documentary, where the icon was talking about his struggles on the way up. There was no script, let alone a bit of fictionalisation the way it was done with 'M.S. Dhoni: The Untold Story'.

Sports films never worked in India because we were always the losers. We basked in the glory of Milkha Singh and P.T. Usha, both losing by a whisker. The fact is, we had no winners.

When we got into winning ways, people wanted to make sports-based films, but had no clue how to. That is except Aamir Khan, who pushed himself into the background and gave importance to the content and glory of the wrestling champions on whom the film was based. His film, 'Dangal', was a milestone.

Briefly, films centred on nationalism and social messages. So, we had films such as 'Parmanu: The Story Of Pokhran', 'Uri: The Surgical Strike', 'Raazi', 'Ghazi', 'Attack', 'Kesar', 'Airlift', 'Mission Mangal', 'Toilet: Ek Prem Katha', 'Padman', 'Holiday: A Soldier Is Never Off Duty', 'Batla House', 'The Tashkent Files', and so on.

'The Tashkent Files' (box office: Rs 23 crore) by Vivek Agnihotri was a thought-provoking film, and though it did not make much of an impact on the cinema-going audience, it became a talked-about movie on the digital circuit, more so after the same maker's 'The Kashmir Files' was released. The film not only hogged much of news and television media, besides social networks, but it also set the box office jingling with a business of Rs 245 crore till date.

The box-office success of 'The Kashmir Files' was followed by another such issue-based film: 'The Kerala Story'. This film, again, has turned out to be a money-spinner, collecting Rs 235 crore so far! Nobody expected such films to stir up the media and public emotions, and also to rock the box office. I don't think even the makers of both these films did. They were probably made out of conviction and highlighted the social

evils and injustice done to people. In an industry where few makers know what works and what does not, film makers try to follow the last successful production and its formula, or what the industry describes as 'Bhed Chaal'. There is a crowd of filmmakers shortlisting such 'thought-provoking' themes based on news reports of real-life events.

A run for such films has started. The films in the offing are 'Ajmer 92', '72 Hoorain', 'Ajmer Files', 'The Vaccine War', 'Emergency', 'Operation AMG', 'Operation Balakot', 'India House', and 'Delhi Files'. These films are reopening a lot of files gathering dust. The intention of the makers of these films seems to be the realisation that such films may mean money more than spreading awareness about the wrongdoings plaguing the system. None of these makers took a stand when the wrongs were happening!

The films on these subjects are bound to create controversies and certain sections, opposed to them, have already branded them as 'propaganda films'!

Take the instance of 'Ajmer 92'. No sooner did the film's promos appear on YouTube, a Delhi-based Islamic organisation, Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, called for a ban on the film.

Other organisations and some political parties will join the bandwagon. And, as the makers would have hoped for, the film and the related controversy are all over television channels, dominating prime time slots.

international

UN REPORT REVEALS LONG-TERM BIAS AGAINST WOMEN

United Nations | Agencies

Almost nine out of 10 men and women worldwide still hold biases against women, according to a new UN report.

"Half of people worldwide still believe men make better political leaders than women, and more than 40 per cent believe men make better business executives than women," according to the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in its latest Gender Social Norms Index report on Monday.

"Social norms that impair women's rights are detrimental to society more broadly, dampening the expansion of human development," said Pedro Conceicao, head of UNDP's Human Development Report Office. According to the World Values Survey, 25 per cent of people believe it is justified for a man to beat his wife, Xinhua news agency reported.

These biases are contributing to the dismantling of women's rights in many parts of the world, with movements against gender equality gaining traction and human rights violations spiking in some countries. The underrepresentation of women in leadership is also a reflection of bias. On average, the share of women as heads of state or heads of government has remained around 10 per cent since 1995 and in the labor market, women occupy less



more than a third of managerial positions.

The report also sheds light on a broken link between women's progress in education and economic empowerment. Women are more skilled and educated than ever before, yet even in the 59 countries where women are now more educated than men, the average gender income gap remains a 39 per cent in favour of men. "Lack of progress on gender social norms is unfolding against a human development crisis," Conceicao said, noting that the global Human Development Index declined in 2020 for the first time on record and again the following year. "Everyone stands to gain from ensuring freedom and agency for women," he added. The UNDP report emphasised that governments

have a crucial role in shifting gender social norms, from adopting parental leave policies, that have changed perceptions around care work responsibilities, to labor market reforms that have led to a change in beliefs around women in the workforce.

"An important place to start is recognising the economic value of unpaid care work," said Raquel Lagunas, director of UNDP's gender team. "This can be a very effective way of challenging gender norms around how care work is viewed. In countries with the highest levels of gender biases against women, it is estimated that women spend over six times as much time as men on unpaid care work."

Data shows that despite the continued prevalence of bias against women, change is possible.

In 27 of the 38 countries surveyed, the share of people without bias increased. The report authors said that to drive change towards greater gender equality, the focus needs to be on expanding human development through investment, insurance, and innovation. "This includes investing in laws and policy measures that promote women's equality in political participation, scaling up insurance mechanisms, such as strengthening social protection and care systems, and encouraging innovative interventions that could be particularly effective in challenging harmful social norms, patriarchal attitudes, and gender stereotypes.



46 KILLED IN MILITIA ATTACK IN CONGO

Kinshasa: At least 46 people were killed in an attack by militias on a camp for the displaced persons in the eastern region of Congo, local sources said.

The fighters from the Cooperative for the Development of Congo (CODECO), a loose association of militia groups operating within Congo, attacked the Lala camp in Djugu district in Ituri province, a local official said on Monday on condition of anonymity. Most of the victims, including women and children, were burned to death while sleeping, he added as quoted by Xinhua news agency report. The country's army has deployed reinforcements in the area to repel the attackers, the source added.

Indian child rights advocate wins US Dept of Labor's top award



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Chennai-based lawyer and activist Lalitha Natarajan has won US Department of Labor's 2023 Iqbal Masih Award for the Elimination of Child Labour. Natarajan was presented the award by Consul General Judith Ravin at a ceremony in the US Consulate General in Chennai on May 30.

As a leader in the fight to end exploitative child labor in southern India, Natarajan identifies child victims of trafficking, specifically bonded

labor, assisting in their reintegration into society, the US consulate in Chennai said in a statement. In her role as a member of the Child Welfare Committee (North Zone), under the Department of Social Defence, Tamil Nadu, Natarajan ensures victims receive compensation under the Child Labor Act and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. Besides working on child labour issues, Lalitha also provides legal and counseling support to victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse.

Imran Khan still chasing talks with Pak Army

Islamabad | Agencies

Former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan has ruled out talks with the government led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif calling it an exercise in futility, but appeared to be keen on initiating a dialogue with the military establishment - the 'real decision makers', a media report said.

The PTI chairman said that he did not believe in "vengeance and will strive for the rule of law" if he came to power again.

Khan said that politicians, including the incumbent rulers, were "powerless and they have no authority to conclude the dialogues". The establishment is the "real decision maker and power is concentrated" within the military, he was quoted as saying by Dawn.

Khan made the remarks in response to a question whether he was ready to hold talks with politicians on the charter of economy.

Khan accused former Army Chief Qamar Javed Bajwa of "backstabbing" and said that he (Khan) could have sacked Bajwa on at least three different occasions, but he exercised



restraint. The PTI chief dispelled the impression of being under pressure and said that he was more concerned for the economy, the media outlet reported.

Rishi Sunak's personal ratings tumble to lowest since becoming UK PM

London | Agencies

Rishi Sunak's personal ratings have slipped to the lowest of his premiership in terms of being the best person to lead the UK, as he tries to hold a fractured Conservative Party together, a media report said.

Sunak is 10 points being Labour's Keir Starmer in terms of who is seen as the better leader, after a brutal week in Westminster, Daily Mail reported.

He was backed by just 33 per cent of those polled by Redfield and Wilton Strategies after Boris Johnson announced he was quitting Parliament and his controversial resignation honours list was published, Daily Mail reported. Keir was on 43 per cent, and his personal approval rating has also risen by 4 per cent ahead of three key by-elections



Labour needs to win to show they are on course for power at the next general election.

However, the battle for Boris

Johnson's former Uxbridge and South Ruislip could be tighter than expected. While Boris' 2019 majority of 7,210 should be well within the sights

of candidate Danny Beales, the imminent expansion of Labour mayor Sadiq Khan's Ulez vehicle tax scheme to the outer London borough could yet cause a backlash.

However, there is the additional complicating factor of an insurgent campaign of Righting Reclaim party leader Laurence Fox, which could claim some Tory votes. Constituency-level polling by Tory peer Lord Ashcroft earlier this month found voters were quite evenly divided as to whether they would prefer a Conservative government with Rishi Sunak as prime minister (29 per cent) or a Labour government led by Sir Keir (27 per cent) - while 30 per cent wanted neither, Daily Mail reported.

The Tory civil war that has helped the party plummet in the polls is unlikely to die down any time soon.



MAHA STORY: SHINDE 'MOST POPULAR', DYCM FADNAVIS NEXT; SHINDE-MODI A 'DREAM-TEAM'

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

Springing a surprise, the ruling Shiv Sena on Tuesday claimed that Chief Minister Eknath Shinde was voted as the "most popular" leader in Maharashtra, several notches higher than the ally Bharatiya Janata Party's Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis.

Going a step further, Shinde has been catapulted above Fadnavis and below Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with the legend: "Modi in rashtra; Shinde in Maharashtra" (Modi in India, Shinde in Maharashtra), rattling the state BJP.

These are touted as the findings of an undated, purported Voters Survey in which the startling results have emerged.

The Shiv Sena proclaimed that as far the popular choice for the post of CM was concerned, Shinde had bagged 26.1 per cent of the voters' nod, piping Fadnavis - by a margin of 2.9 per cent - to play the second fiddle by securing 23.2 per cent.

The shocks for the BJP continued. The ad contends that Modi and Shinde are getting huge affection



from the people in the survey, virtually making them a "dream-team".

"The partnership of Modi-Shinde that has resulted in many public welfare projects has got the top position in a recent survey," said the ad, rating BJP circles. "Accordingly, 49.3 per cent of the people in Maharashtra have selected the partnership of Shinde-Fadnavis. We thank the masses for their support," said the Shiv Sena, patting itself. As many as 30.2 per cent of the voters rooted for BJP and 16.2 per cent preferred the Shiv Sena - or a total of 46.4 per cent - in

the survey, details of which are not disclosed.

The survey results come with a large photo of Modi looking and grinning at Shinde who reciprocates, but the anticipated usual picture of Fadnavis conspicuously missing from the ads.

Though the Shiv Sena's name symbol of Bow-and-Arrow figures at the top right, there is no reference to the party's founder the late Balasaheb Thackeray, (the father of former CM Uddhav Thackeray) to whom Shinde and his supporters regularly pay lip-

service. The ad has created more than mere ripples in political circles, with many speculating whether Shinde is flexing his muscles vis-A-vis the aggressive Fadnavis and showing him his place. It may be recalled that in the 2014 and 2019 Assembly elections, the BJP had fought the polls on the plank of "Narendra (Modi) in India, Devendra (Fadnavis) in Maharashtra".

However, now Shinde has ejected Fadnavis from that slot as per the survey results, and he has perched himself there with the brand new slogan of 'Modi in rashtra, Shinde in Maharashtra'. The full-paper ad figures in many leading Marathi papers and comes days after a row was kicked up over the CM's son and Thane MP, Dr Shrikant Shinde's threat to quit, and the bickering over the much-delayed cabinet expansion plans. The ad comes barely a fortnight ahead of the first anniversary of swearing-in of Shinde-Fadnavis regime on June 30, 2022, after the Maha Vikas Aghadi government of Shiv Sena (UBT)-Congress-Nationalist Congress Party led by Thackeray was toppled.

4 DEAD, 3 INJURED AS CHEMICAL TANKER CATCHES FIRE ON MUMBAI-PUNE EXPRESSWAY

Team Absolute | Pune

At least four people were killed and three others injured after a chemical tanker overturned and caught fire on the Mumbai-Pune Expressway on Tuesday, officials said.

The tragedy took place on a bridge in the Khandala ghat sections near Lonavala and resulted in massive traffic snarls on the Mumbai-bound arm of the expressway.

Hundreds of litres of the unidentified chemical seeped on the road, causing a risk of vehicles skidding and leading to more tragedies.

The tanker could be seen burning from afar with the flames reaching at least 15-16 metres in the air. Some of the burning chemicals fell on the road under the bridge near Kuneegaon village and halted the traffic below, and one speeding two-wheeler was reported to have skidded on the chemicals with a man and a minor boy getting seriously injured.

Local witnesses said that at least four persons have perished in the tragedy, and three more hurt and further official details were awaited as efforts to douse the blaze got underway and a crane was deployed to shift the tanker a safe distance away from the highway lanes. The tanker blaze, the cause of which not yet clear, led to a 7-8 kms long traffic jam, hampering the movement of the fire



brigade and other rescue vehicles. Highway authorities have diverted the oncoming traffic via the Lonavala bypass towards Mumbai, though traffic towards Pune was allowed to proceed slowly.

Mumbai court acquits 2 accused in Best Bakery case

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Additional Sessions Judge M.G. Deshpande on Tuesday acquitted two persons arrested in connection with the 2002 Best Bakery riots case in Vadodara, in which 14 people were killed, for lack of sufficient evidence against them.

The persons acquitted are Mafat Gohil and Harshad Solanki, who were absconding for nearly 11 years before their arrest in 2013, and the second part of the trial against them started in 2019.

The Best Bakery in Vadodara witnessed violent communal riots on March 1, 2002 that claimed 14 lives in retaliation for the clashes in Godhra town three days earlier.

The Gujarat Police had booked 21 persons on charges of murder, but all the accused were acquitted in



2003.

Soon afterwards, one of the victims, Zahirabi Shaikh, along with an NGO moved the Supreme Court against the verdict, urging that the orders and judgements of the trial court and Gujarat High Court should be quashed.

Accepting the plea in 2004, the Supreme Court had ordered a re-investigation and retrial, and transferred the case to Mumbai to ensure a fair trial. After the Mumbai trial, retired Bombay High Court Justice Abhay Thipsay (then a Sessions Judge) acquitted eight persons and sentenced nine to life imprisonment in 2006. Subsequently, in 2012 the Bombay High Court acquitted five and confirmed the life sentence awarded to the four others, relying on the testimonies of the eyewitnesses to the incident.

Though Gohil and Solanki had faced the first trial in the Vadodara court, they had gone absconding during the retrial in Mumbai.

After their arrest, the duo applied for bail claiming they were not aware of the retrial, but their pleas were rejected on grounds that there was sufficient evidence to prosecute them.

During the trial, their lawyer Prakash Salsingkar vehemently argued against the use of the earlier Mumbai trial's evidence against them.

Two others accused in the case and facing retrial had died during the pendency of the case.

Mumbra mass conversions story as bogus as 'The Kerala Story': Maha Congress

LAMPOONING CLAIMS THAT 400 PEOPLE WERE ALLEGEDLY 'CONVERTED THROUGH ONLINE APPS', THE MAHARASHTRA CONGRESS TERMED IT "AS BOGUS AS THE CONTENTIONS OF 'THE KERALA STORY' FILM", HERE ON MONDAY.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

State Congress Working President M. Arif Naseem Khan said that after listening to some telephonic conversations, the Uttar Pradesh Police from Ghaziabad



rushed to Thane and arrested one local youth to publicise the issue of alleged conversions to Islam.

"We challenge the government to publish the list of those 400 persons who have allegedly converted as per the wild claims," Khan said.

He pointed out how the controversial film "The Kerala Story" also made such baseless claims that 30,000 women were converted and recruited by the IS, and how

the film was screened widely during the recent Karnataka assembly elections.

"The film was promoted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself. However, when the issue reached the courts, the film-makers themselves clarified that it was a work of fiction. The people of Karnataka also rejected it outright. The Mumbra story of 400 alleged conversions is equally fake," said Khan.

A Thane Court on Monday granted transit remand to the prime accused Shahnawaz Khan, a.k.a. Baddo -- in the alleged conversion

case through gaming app -- and ordered to be presented before a Ghaziabad court within three days.

Khan, 23, a resident of Devripada (Thane) was tracked and nabbed by the Mumbra Police in the district from a resort in Alibaug (Raigad district), and today handed over to a 4-member team of Ghaziabad Police camping here for the past six days.

Absconding for several days since the alleged conversion racket erupted in Uttar Pradesh, Khan was reportedly in touch with some children who were targeted through a gaming app, 'Fortnite'.

4 MINORS DROWN OFF MUMBAI'S JUHU, ALL BODIES FISHED OUT

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Mumbai Police, after a maritime and aerial search operation lasting over 22 hours, have recovered the bodies of all the four minor boys who were sucked into the Arabian Sea off Juhu's Kolivada on Monday evening, the BMC Disaster Control said here on Tuesday.

Earlier on Tuesday, the police recovered the bodies of Dharmesh Valji Faujiya and Shubham Yogesh Bhogania, both 16, and they were sent to the R.N. Cooper Hospital.

The missing bodies of two others, Manish Yogesh Bhogania, 12, and Jay Roshan Tajbariya, 15, were also recovered after over 22 hours from the Arabian Sea, stirred up by Cyclone Biparjoy.

Of the total five victims who were drowning last evening, one boy was



rescued by the locals and fisherfolk, while the Mumbai Police, BMC fire brigade with speedboats, along with an Indian Navy chopper searched the sea till almost midnight for them.

The five were part of 8 school friends who had gone on an impromptu half-day picnic to Juhu late on Monday afternoon, on the eve of the school reopening for the new academic year from Tuesday.

From the eight, five reportedly ignored warnings and went to a small fishing jetty from where they were swept off by the powerful waves in the water, and the power current quickly sucked them over half-km into the sea. The 8 minors, all non-swimmers, lived in a slum area of Vakola and had quietly slipped off for the evening sojourn that resulted in a watery grave for half the group, and the first major monsoon tragedy in

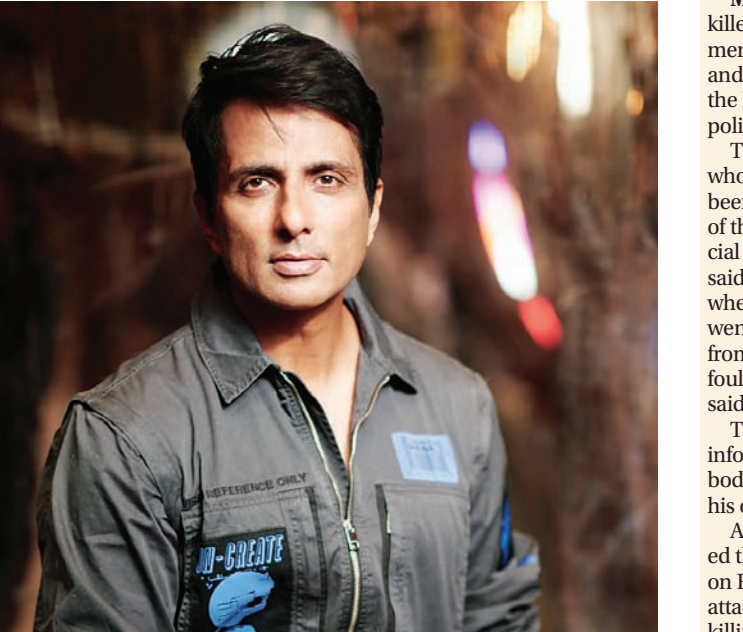
Sonu Sood offers hearing-impaired 'Roadies' contestant a role in 'Fateh'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Sonu Sood, who is known for his charity during the Covid-19 pandemic, recently offered a role to a hearing-impaired contestant named Shubham, from Uttar Pradesh in his upcoming film 'Fateh' during the auditions for Season 19 of 'MTV Roadies - Karm Ya Kaand'.

'Fateh' is Sonu's home production. The actor began hosting the reality show last year for its 18th season in South Africa. Though he holds a tough hand in 'Roadies', Sonu Sood has shown his compassionate side many times. This was most evident during the Covid-19 pandemic, when the actor and his team worked diligently, providing social, medical and financial aid to lakhs of migrant workers who were severely impacted. His work during the pandemic was recognised for which he gained recognition from both the Delhi government and the United Nations Development Programme.

Sonu Sood has a varied career,



having acted and produced many films though he is best known for his roles in films such as 'Shabheed-E-Azam', 'Jodha Akbar', 'Dabangg', 'Singh is King', 'Kung Fu Yoga',

'Devil' and most recently 'Tamilarasan'. 'MTV Roadies - Karm Ya Kaand' airs on MTV and is available to stream on JioCinema.

FOOD DELIVERY AGENT KILLS NEIGHBOUR, HIDES BODY IN VICTIM'S HOME

Mumbai: A 26-year-old man allegedly killed his neighbour following an argument, covered his body in a bedsheet and concealed it in the victim's house in the Dharavi area of central Mumbai, police said on Monday.

The accused, James Paul Kanaran, who worked as a food delivery agent, has been arrested under relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), an official from the Shahu Nagar police station said. The murder came to light on Sunday when some people in the neighbourhood went to collect maintenance charges from the victim's house and noticed a foul smell emanating from his home, he said.

The police were subsequently informed and the victim's decomposed body was found covered in a bedsheet in his own house, he said.

A probe revealed the victim had invited the accused for a drink in his house on Friday night and the latter allegedly attacked him following an argument, killing him on the spot, the official said.

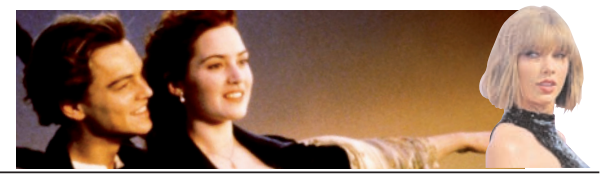
The accused roamed around casually in the neighbourhood after the crime and was nabbed after the police laid a trap, the official said.

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Jennifer Garner reveals 'crucial' link to her Hollywood stardom

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Jennifer Garner has insisted that it is important to be 'nice' to crew on set because she knows she could never do their jobs. The 51-year-old actress, who spent her summers working in various behind-the-scenes roles at theatres before finding fame, admitted that she kept getting moved to different departments because she wasn't particularly skilled in areas such as set-building or costume fitting, reports 'Female First UK'.

Speaking to 'Abbott Elementary' star Sheryl Lee Ralph for Variety's 'Actors on Actors' series, she said: "People have no idea that they are the crucial link to getting your start. I worked in summer stock every summer. I would hang the lights and build the sets and sell the tickets."

"I've been fired from costume departments before, and they sent me to construction. I got sent back to costumes. They sent me to tickets. I might as well be a performer, and I better be nice doing it, because I know I can't do those other jobs," she added.

As per 'Female First UK', the '13 Going On 30' actress - who was previously married to fellow Hollywood star Ben Affleck from 2005 until 2018 and has Violet (17), Seraphina (14), and 11-year-old Samuel with him - has in recent years turned away from movies to go back to television with roles in the sitcom 'Party Down' and Apple+ drama 'The Last Thing He Told Me'.

She explained that she 'loves' being able to spend more time with a character for a batch of episodes as opposed to when she is starring in a movie.

And Jennifer still works with the same team on her shows now as she did when she first made her name with her award-winning role as Sydney Bristow in ABC's action thriller series 'Alias'.



HARRY STYLES PAUSES IRISH CONCERT TO HELP FAN WHO HAD FALLEN OVER

Los Angeles | Agencies

The 'As it Was' hitmaker Harry Styles paused his performance to assist a fan in the crowd at his Irish concert who had seemingly fallen over.

The 'Falling' singer was performing at Slane Castle in County Meath when he made sure the gigo-gear was brought to safety after taking a tumble, reports 'Female First UK'.

Pointing in her direction, the former 'One Direction' star said in a clip circulated on social media: "Give her a bit of space and water. Is everybody else good? You good? Did you fall, is it slippery?"

After making sure she was safe, the 29-year-old pop star made a joke about his own accident in Ireland. He quipped about "the time I got head-butted in Tallaght".

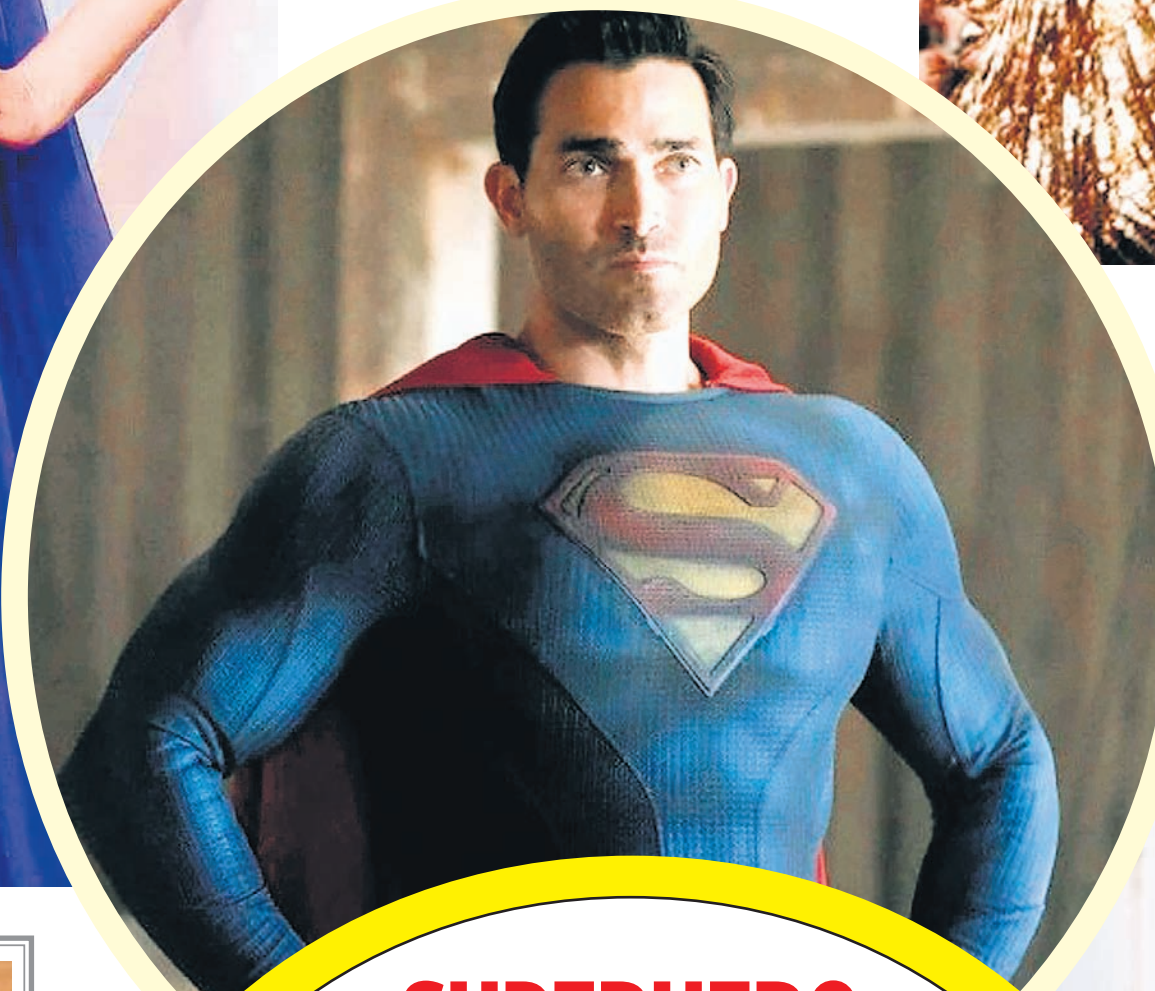
As per 'Female First UK', so far this tour, Harry has helped fans come out, done gender reveals, and even drank out of his own shoe on the first night of the Australian leg.

The 'Kiwi' singer gave in after chants from the crowd at HBF Park in Perth in February and completed the Aussie tradition of doing a 'Shoey', drinking alcohol, usually beer, from one's own shoe.

He then proceeded to take off his sneaker before pouring an unknown drink into the shoe and shaking his head in disgust.

Harry told the crowd: "This is one of the most disgusting traditions I've ever witnessed."

The 'As It Was' hitmaker then did the deed and put his soggy shoe back on.



Director obsessed with hitting John Wick from different angles: Keanu Reeves

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Keanu Reeves, who is known for the 'John Wick' movies, has shared that the director of the film 'John Wick: Chapter 4', Chad Stahelski, is obsessed with poking the character of John Wick through many angles and the situations of other characters.

Dishing out some interesting details on the 'John Wick' series, the actor said, "Chad really hooked into this idea of trying to study John Wick through the situations of other characters, and he was really drawn to the good, the bad, and the ugly." And so, enters Donnie Yen as Cain, and Shamir Anderson as the tracker, we have Hiroyuki Sanada, who I worked with on '47 Ronin', he has a daughter who's working with him, and that's the incomparable Rina Sawayama, and then the antagonist of the piece, the Marquis, Bill Skarsgard."

He continued, "You're kinda following their stories as they're trying to get John Wick and, Cain and John Wick have a past, the tracker is kind of a younger character, who's kind of outside of it was not an assassin but and kind of takes a deal to force to become an assassin."



SUPERHERO SERIES 'SUPERMAN AND LOIS' GETS RENEWED FOR SEASON 4

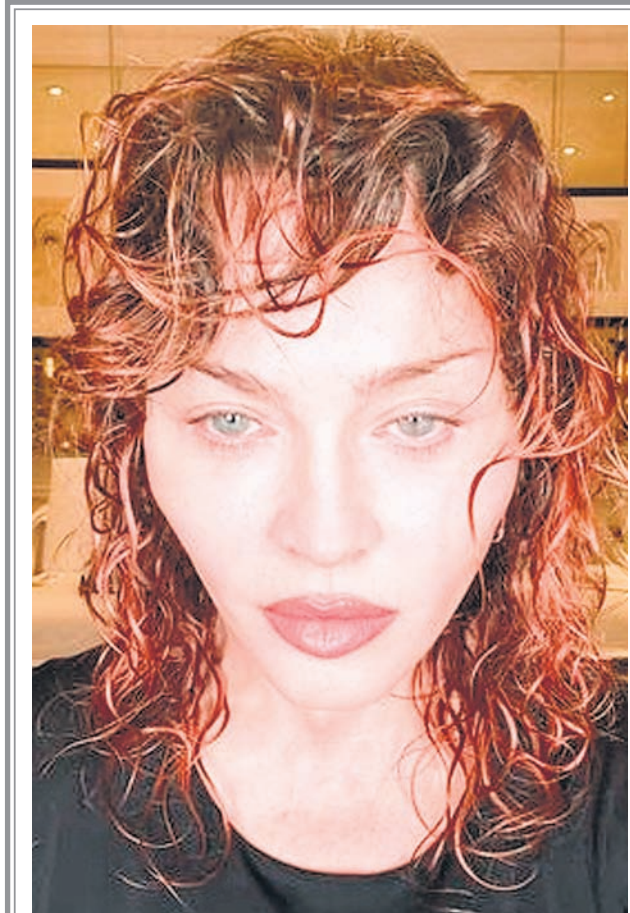
Los Angeles | Agencies

The television series 'Superman and Lois', has been renewed for Season 4. The upcoming season will run for 10 episodes. The American television network The CW, best known for its DC superhero shows such as 'Arrow', 'The Flash', 'Supergirl' and 'Legends of Tomorrow', has picked the series for the renewal.

As per 'Deadline', in addition to trimming the cast, the series likely would lean more heavily into its core premise as a family drama going forward while still honouring its superhero roots. The size of its order, 10 episodes vs. 13 for the other legacy CW series, also reflects its higher cost.

According to 'Collider', "Superman & Lois" was already lucky to survive the overhaul at DC when James Gunn and Peter Safran took over. Fears that the series would be brought down amidst massive changes at the company were assuaged when Gunn assured that the series would get at least one or two more seasons to tell the story of the super couple."

In a statement, Brad Schwartz, President of Entertainment of The CW Network, said, "We are thrilled to bring All American: Homecoming and Superman & Lois back to The CW. These series are two of our strongest performers across our linear and digital platforms with some of the most passionate fan bases in all of television." "We are grateful to our partners at Warner Bros. Television and Berlanti Productions for their continued collaboration, and we cannot wait to get started on the new seasons," he added.



Madonna surprises fans with dramatic new mullet hairstyle

Los Angeles | Agencies

Madonna isn't one to shy away from a huge style transformation and her latest look has the songstress sporting a dramatic new hairstyle.

The 'Vogue' singer, 64, took to social media to stun her followers with her new look as she took a step away from her usual style of locks, reports 'Mirror.co.uk'.

The drastic change saw her chop off her waist-length hair and opt for a trendy shag haircut. Debuting her new look on her Instagram Stories, the pop icon gave a glare down the lens of the camera to show off the mullet-type style with a red tint.

She wrote on the image: "When you know your only day off isn't really a day off."

As per 'Mirror.co.uk', it's far from the first shocking revelation Midge has shown off in recent years. In September last year, she surprised her followers on TikTok when she first showcased her red hair as she stepped away from the blonde shade her fans had become used to.

And she took time out to hit back at criticism of her new appearance following this year's Grammy Awards in February.

K-drama star Park Soo Ryun dies at 29

Seoul | Agencies

South Korean star Park Soo Ryun, who is known for 'Snowdrop', and has appeared in several musicals such as 'The Days We Loved' and 'Siddhartha' has died following a fatal accident at the age of 29.

The actress fell down a flight of stairs while returning to her home. She was rushed to a hospital, where doctors 'declared her brain dead after resuscitating her', reports 'Osen'.

She reportedly died just a day before her performance in Jeju Island. In honour of the actor, her family has decided to donate her organs.

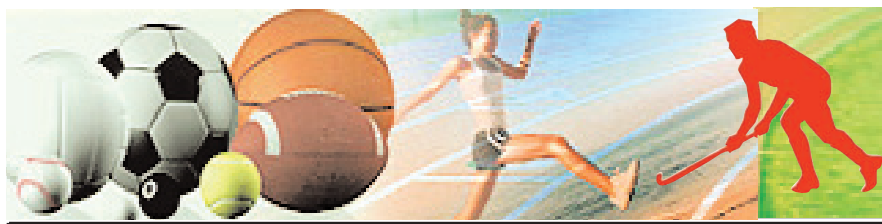
Park Soo Ryun's mother told Soompi, "Only her brain is unconscious, and her heart is still beating. There must be someone who desper-



ately needs (organs). As her mother and father, we will be able to live comforted (by the thought that her heart) has gone to someone and is beating."



Lady Mary Charteris



INDONESIA OPEN

SINDHU, PRANNOY ADVANCE TO ROUND OF 16; TREESA-GAYATRI BOW OUT IN OPENER

Team Absolute | Jakarta

Ace Indian shuttler PV Sindhu and HS Prannoy advanced to the Round of 16 of the Indonesia Open, a BWF Super 1000 event, after registering wins in their respective opening round matches, here on Tuesday.

Sindhu, ranked 13th in the world, secured a win 21-19, 21-15 over world no 9 Indonesian Gregoria Mariska Tunjung, whom she lost in the semifinal of the Malaysia Masters last month.

The Indonesian shuttler had earlier denied Sindhu the Madrid Spain Masters title with a victory in the final.

With a win, the Indian ace put an end to her two-match losing streak against the Indonesian and extended her head-to-head record to 8-2.

Sindhu will face familiar foe world No. 3 Tai Tzu Ying of Chinese Taipei, who is also the defending Indonesia Open champion, in round two.

In the men's singles event, Prannoy registered an easy 21-16, 21-14 win over world No. 11 Kenta Nishimoto of Japan to set up a meeting with Angus Ng Ka Long of Hong Kong, who defeated two-time world champion Kento Momota of Japan in the opening round.

However, Indian women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and



Gayatri Gopichand suffered an early exit after losing 22-20, 12-21, 16-21 to Japanese duo of Rin Iwanaga and Kie Nakanishi in

their opening match. This was the pair's fourth straight first-round loss in BWF World Tour tournaments this

season. Men's doubles combination of MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila too failed to get past the first round

as they suffered 21-12, 6-21, 20-22 loss at the hands of Malaysians Ong Yew Sin and Teo Ee Yi.

Shami can ask really good questions of Australian batters: Jason Gillespie



Niharika Raina | New Delhi

Former fast-bowler Jason Gillespie believes senior India pacer Mohammed Shami can ask good questions of the Australian batters' defensive techniques if he succeeds in finding some movement off the pitch during the upcoming World Test Championship (WTC) Final at The Oval from June 7-11.

With pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah absent, Shami will have an important role to play in leading India's charge with the ball in the WTC Final. Shami was the leading wicket-taker in IPL 2023 with 28 scalps, finding success by bowling majorly Test-match lengths.

Against Australia, Shami has picked 40 wickets from 11 Tests at an average of 31.27, with a career-best spell of 6-56. His record of playing Tests in England stands at 38 wickets in 13 games at an average of 40.52, with Shami yet to pick a five-wicket haul in the country.

"Shami impresses me a lot and I love how he keeps running in

hard. He does a wonderful job for India. I love that he presents the seam, and releases the ball so well. His wrist and fingers are right behind the ball and you see the seam go all the way down the pitch and he gives the ball a chance to move off the seam. He can swing the ball in the right conditions and can get a little bit of swing," said Gillespie.

"But his seam presentation is as good as anyone in world cricket in my opinion. So I think he's going to play a big role in those conditions if there is any movement to be found off the pitch. Mohammed Shami can certainly exploit that and he can ask some really good questions of the Australian batters' defensive techniques, because he pitches the ball up and when he looks to just get a little bit of movement, then I think he's a fine bowler," said Gillespie in an interview with correspondent. Fellow-pacer Mohammad Siraj was Royal Challengers Bangalore's leading wicket-taker with 19 scalps and found rewards in sticking to an attacking line and length.

Final round of Sr Women's National Football Championship 2022-23 to kick off on June 14

Team Absolute | Amritsar

Strong contender Odisha will square off against Jharkhand in the opening fixture of the final round of the Senior Women's National Football Championship 2022-23 will begin here on Wednesday.

Comprising 12 teams divided into two groups, the final round of the 27th edition of the tournament will be held across two venues -- GNDU Sports Complex and Khalsa College.

The matches will be played in a single round-robin format, with the top two teams from each group qualifying for the semifinals, which will be played on June 25 and 26 respectively. The final will be played on June 28 at the GNDU Sports Complex in Amritsar.



Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Chandigarh, Odisha, Karnataka and Jharkhand are placed in Group A while Manipur, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Railways, West Bengal and Haryana complete Group B. The 12 teams are coming on the back of a thrilling group stage, informed a report on the AIFF website.

Haryana (Group I), Maharashtra (Group II), Himachal Pradesh (Group III), Jharkhand (Group IV), Tamil Nadu (Group V) and Manipur (Group VI) all topped their respective groups.

Meanwhile, Chandigarh (Group II), Karnataka (Group VI), West Bengal (Group V) and Odisha (Group III) advanced to the final

round as the four best second-placed teams.

At 11 goals, Anju is currently the top scorer of the tournament, followed by Goa's Karen Estrochio and Karnataka's Maitreyi Palasamudram at eight goals. Karnataka's Kaviya Pakkirisamy and Kerala's P. Reshma occupy the fourth and fifth spots respectively in the top goalscorers list.

Held in Kerala, the final of the previous edition of the Senior Women's National Football Championship was won by Manipur -- their third consecutive title triumph, after they defeated Indian Railways in a penalty shootout. Interestingly, the two sides will face each other in the final round on June 19 at the GNDU Sports Complex.

Team showed good character, says coach Stimac after India's 1-0 win over Vanuatu

Team Absolute | Bhubneshwar

Indian football team head coach Igor Stimac was delighted with the character shown by his team as they ground out a 1-0 victory against Vanuatu in their second game of the Intercontinental Cup at the Kalinga Stadium, here.

A late Sunil Chhetri goal ensured a win for the hosts on Monday, ensuring their passage to the final as the Blue Tigers made it two wins in a row in the ongoing edition of the Intercontinental Cup.

This was the seventh straight win for India on home soil but it was not easy by any means. They were dominant against Vanuatu but weren't as effective in the final third.

Stimac made a host of changes around the hour mark, bringing in the likes of Lallianzuala Chhangte, Sahal Abdul Samad, Anirudh Thapa and Jeakson Singh. The

changes made a big difference as India displayed more urgency and a better attacking rhythm.

With the hosts finding it tough to breach the deadlock, Chhetri popped up with a winner during the 80th minute, volleying home a cross from Subhashish Bose into the roof of the net. Reflecting on the result, Stimac praised his players for their perseverance despite the problems they faced in the attacking third.

"Many things were not as I wanted them to be. And I will work on that. But many things were also beautiful and we could enjoy them. What I am happy about is the consistency and (the urge) to keep trying. Not losing faith because when you don't open the scoring in games like these...it becomes more difficult. Minutes pass by quickly when you are not scoring," the India coach said in the post-match press conference.

"We kept the faith. We didn't lose clarity about what we needed to do, we kept doing that and the goal came. The team showed good character," he added.

Stimac made nine changes to his playing XI from the 2-0 win against Mongolia in their opening match of the Intercontinental Cup, with only Sandesh Jhingan and Sunil Chhetri keeping their place.

Meanwhile, Nandhakumar Sekar, the new signing of East Bengal FC, was handed his senior team debut. The India coach highlighted the importance of rotating his players to keep them fresh for a busy schedule ahead. India will take on Lebanon in their final group game of the Intercontinental Cup on Thursday before playing the final three days later. Lebanon, who are placed second in the standings, need to secure a point or more against India to guarantee their place in the final.

Bhavesh Shekhawat wins 25m Rapid Fire Pistol in Kumar Surendra Singh Memorial

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Rajasthan's Bhavesh Shekhawat won the men's 25m Rapid Fire Pistol (RFP) event, in the ongoing 21st Kumar Surendra Singh Memorial (KSSM) Shooting Championship (Pistol) at the M.P. State Shooting Academy ranges in Bhopal on Tuesday.

The Indian international shooter had to get into a shoot-off twice with second-placed Udhayveer Sidhu of Punjab after both had tied with 26 hits in the 40-shot final.

Both Bhavesh and Udhayveer got four hits in the first shoot-off series,



before the former shot four yet again in the second series to claim the title, as the Punjab lad could manage three. Delhi's Arpit Goel won bronze in the Olympic event with a score of

21. Bhavesh had earlier also topped the qualification round with a solid 584, which equalled the meet record, with Udhayveer way behind in second with 576.

It is to be noted that scores of the KSSM are taken into account for national team selection and with the world championships and Asian Games coming up, Bhavesh would be pleased with his effort. Besides the three medalists, Mitesh Manilal Gohil of Gujarat, the Navy's Rajat Yadav and the Army's Neeraj Kumar, also made the top six, the NRAI informed in a release on Tuesday.

Sahil Dudhane of Maharashtra won the junior men's RFP with a score of 28 in the final. Udhayveer was second again, this time with 25 hits while statemate Jagvijay Partap Singh Sekhon was third.

'Only Virat can reveal why he left Test captaincy': Sourav Ganguly



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former BCCI president Sourav Ganguly has said that the board was not ready for Virat Kohli to step down as India Test skipper, adding that it was his personal decision and the star batter can only reveal why he left the captaincy in the longest format of the game.

Ganguly's latest remarks come in the wake of fans calling for the reinstatement of Kohli as India's Test captain after the Rohit Sharma-led side suffered a 209-run defeat to Australia in the World Test Championship final. However, Kohli hasn't been at his best with the bat in Test cricket in the last three years.

"BCCI were not prepared for Virat Kohli leaving the Test captaincy. It was unexpected for us also after the South Africa tour. Only Virat Kohli can reveal why he left the captaincy. There is no point talking about this now because Virat Kohli left the Test captaincy. Selectors had to appoint an India captain. And Rohit was the best option at that time," Ganguly told Aaj Tak in an interview, after the WTC final.

Kohli finished his tenure as the fourth-most successful captain in Test history, with 40 victories and 11 draws in 68 matches as the Indian

captain. The 34-year-old is only behind Graeme Smith, Ricky Ponting and Steve Waugh on the list of captains with the most Test wins.

Mbappe informs PSG he will not renew contract in 2024: Report

New Delhi: French football star Kylian Mbappe has informed Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) that he will leave the Ligue 1 club after his contract ends next year.

The 24-year-old French international, who joined PSG in 2017, penned a new two-year contract with the French champions last year, with the option of a third year when it expires in June 2024. But, the Parisian striker informed PSG, in a letter received on Monday, that he would not exercise the option of one more year (until 2025) in his contract, French leading sports daily L'Equipe reported. The decision means that Mbappe would be free to depart without any transfer fee at the conclusion of the next season, and could agree a pre-contract move with a club outside France from January 2024.

Germany secure late draw with Ukraine in international friendly

Team Absolute | Bremen (Germany)

Late goals from Kai Havertz and Joshua Kimmich helped Germany to clinch a 3-3 stalemate against resilient Ukraine in front of 35,975 spectators at the Weser stadium, here.

The Germans assumed control from the kick off as Niclas Fullkrug came close with only two minutes played. Fullkrug remained in the thick of things as he opened the scoring four minutes after deflecting Marius Wolf's dangerous shot.

The hosts should have made it two but for all that Julian Brandt rattled only the side netting from promising position in the 11th minutes on Monday.



The visitors from the Ukraine sparked to life out of thin air as Brandt's misplaced pass allowed Oleksandr Tymchyk to set up for Viktor Tsygankov, who beat Germany goalkeeper Kevin Trapp with a low shot from a tight angle in the 18th minute.

Serhiy Rebrov's boys gained momentum and turned the tide five minutes later when Antonio Rudiger deflected Mykhailo Mudryk's volley to make it 2-1 for Ukraine.

Germany nearly restored parity just before the break but Leroy Sane's free kick hit only the crossbar, a Xinhua report said.

The visitors grabbed a bright start into the second half and shocked Germany with the 3-1 lead as Artem Dovbyk dispossessed Matthias Ginter inside the box before squaring into the path of Tsygankov, who made no mistake and sewed up his brace into the empty goal in the 56th minute.

Germany pressed frantically and got rewarded in the closing stages as

Havertz controlled a long ball before beating Ukraine goalkeeper Anatoliy Trubin from close range in the 83rd minute. The hosts remained on the front foot and restored parity in the dying minutes as Joshua Kimmich converted a foul play penalty to make it 3-3 on the scoreboards.

"The result shows the shape of the squad. We started well, we had everything under control but then we gave things out of our hands. We must see how we can improve things as we still have coordination problems on the pitch," said Germany head coach Hansi Flick. "We played very well over ninety minutes and gave our very best," said Ukraine head coach Serhiy Rebrov.



'A role is a role'

The script remains my hero, says Kajol about her OTT debut

Team Absolute | Mumbai

After ruling the silver screen for a good decade, Kajol is making her OTT debut with 'The Trial - Pyaar Kaanoon Dhokha'. So, is working on a web series different from films? Kajol doesn't see any difference.

"Regardless of the format, a role is a role. It requires the same amount of hard work," Kajol said at the trailer launch of the Disney+ Hotstar series in Mumbai on Monday.

When asked about the difficulties she might have faced in migrating from the silver screen to OTT, Kajol said: "It is a rather simple choice for me. I have always maintained that if I work, I will have fun, I will work with good people, and the script will always be my hero, always."

Talking about the work involved, Kajol said: "Whether it is an OTT platform or a film, for me, a role is a role, both formats require the same amount of work. Perhaps, doing an eight-episode series for OTT required more time, but it is the same."

Kajol added: "The work is the same. I am not different in any manner, my work is not different in any manner. I don't think it is not that difficult a choice to make."



OTT OR THEATRE

'Actor should not be worried about release platform', says Arshad Warsi

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Arshad Warsi, who made his OTT debut with the streaming series 'Asur', feels that if an actor is getting good work and enjoys his work, one should not be worried about its release platform.

Arshad has been garnering a lot of positive response for his work in the recently released second season of 'Asur'.

As the OTT fever grips the audience owing to its accessibility, the actor spoke about the revolution it has brought. He said: "OTT is a great thing that has happened. It is giving work to a lot of good actors and the audience is getting to see the acting of some very good actors."

He further mentioned: "See, films and OTT are two different things altogether and they will always be different. I enjoy cinema and I enjoy OTT as well. If you enjoy your work and you are getting good work to do, I think one should not worry about where the work is getting released."

Talking about what made him to say yes to 'Asur' for his OTT debut, he said, "I loved the story. Actually, I loved many things about it. When I heard the idea of the show, I enjoyed it so much because I knew this will surely work with the Indian Audience. I found it interesting and that made me to say yes to it."

'Asur 2' is currently streaming on Jio Cinema and has 8 episodes.

Varun Dhawan, Janhvi Kapoor-starrer upcoming takes direct-to-digital route

Mumbai: The upcoming film 'Bawaal', headlined by Bollywood stars Varun Dhawan and Janhvi Kapoor, will be directly released on the OTT. The film, which is set against the backdrop of the World War II, has been directed by Nitesh Tiwari, who is known for 'Dangal'.

A source close to the development has said that the film revolves

around the subject which is a little off beat and doesn't fall in the category of an out and out commercial masala entertainer. The makers then decided that OTT will be the best suited medium for the exhibition of the film.

The film will now be released in October on Prime Video and an official announcement shall be made soon. The source told Bollywood Hungama, "Sajid Nadiadwala (producer) got into conversation with his actors, Varun and Janhvi, and it's only after having all been on the same page did he take this call. The entire team believes that 'Bawaal' will win over the audience's love on OTT".

The source further mentioned, "The film is a poetry in motion and is expected to reach out to an even wider audience base on digital medium, which might not have been possible with theatrical release. The idea is to go global with Bawaal and Amazon is the perfect partner for that reach".



SRK calls Vijay Sethupathi one of his favourite actors

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan, whose film 'Pathaan' broke box-office records, is known for his witty remarks, and his recent social media activity solidified the same. During the recent #AskSRK session, SRK said that the 'Vikram' and '96' star Vijay Sethupathi is one of his favourite actors.

The actor engaged with fans in a fun session of #AskSRK in which he answers the questions of his fans.

His replies in the session are always something to watch out for, as they're not only witty and funny but full of his amazing sense of humour.

A Twitter user asked Shah Rukh Khan and Vijay the superstar responded by saying, "@VijaySethuOffl is awesome one of my favourite actors and in 'Jawaan' he is tooooooo cool".

One Twitter user asked SRK about his evening plan for the day, to which the actor replied, "Was thinking will watch 'Jawaan' with Atlee".

Another user asked Shah Rukh Khan which was physically more challenging for him 'Dunki' or 'Jawaan'. SRK gave a categorical reply as he said, "Jawaan" for sure lots of action".

SRK, who returned to the big screen after a gap of four years with 'Pathaan' after the 2018 release 'Zero', has 'Dunki' in which he will share the screen with Taapsee Pannu and 'Jawaan' in the pipeline.



Adah Sharma to be seen next as female superhero

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Adah Sharma, who is basking in the success of her latest release 'The Kerala Story', is set to start working soon in an international production. The actress will play the role of a female superhero in the film. When contacted, Adah confirmed the development but chose to keep the details under the wraps. The actress said, "I've always found female superheroes very cool and all I can say is yes I'm playing one now and I can't wait to share more stuff about it soon. Action is a genre I really enjoy being part of." She further mentioned, "I like to try different genres, varied roles and I'm lucky people are thinking of me for different characters. After 'The Kerala Story', I thought this would be very different. I like to talk about a project only when I come out with a trailer for it. Until then, I'm a little superstitious. (I will share) more on this soon".

Meanwhile, 'The Kerala Story' has collected Rs 238 crore in Indian domestic market as per trade sources.

Divya Dutta feels short films deserve more recognition

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Divya Dutta, who is known for 'Badlapur', 'Veer-Zara' and several other films, feels that the audience doesn't give the importance to short films.

Divya said that some short films, which cater to today's current societal problems, should be made and watched too.

The actress was seen attending the special screening of a short film 'Birha: The Journey Back Home' in Mumbai, recently.

Speaking about the film, Divya said: "We as audience don't give importance to short films. I would want whenever this film is out, people should watch it. It is a beautifully made film and the performances are bril-

liant." The actress said: "In today's scenario when the relationships are getting diluted, such films should be definitely made and should be watched also. It focuses on how you should value your relations, especially with your parents." Talking about her future projects, she said, "My three big shows and two films will be released soon. Currently, I am working on two more projects. By the end of this year, I will have 5-6 releases. The genres of the projects are very different, there is action, drama and thriller."

'Birha: The Journey Back Home' also stars Rajit Kapur, Manav Vij and Sahil Mehta. Directed by Puneet Prakash, the film is a punjabi short film which highlights the plight of a family that gets devastated by unjustified ambitions of a young child who gets lured by the West.



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Shweta Tiwari