

# absolute india



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## BUYING IN HEAVYWEIGHT STOCKS PUSHES INDIAN MARKETS TO ALL-TIME HIGH

Team Absolute | New Delhi

After multiple attempts, the domestic market successfully managed to sustain record high levels, thanks to the increased buying interest in heavyweight stocks, said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

The domestic indices ended Wednesday's session after hitting fresh all-time highs during the day. The NSE Nifty 50 soared 54.70 points or 0.82 per cent to 18,972.10, while the BSE Sensex surged 499.39 points or 0.79 per cent to 63,915.42.

The market's bullish momentum was further supported by strong FII inflows and a narrowing current account deficit, both of which positively impacted investor sentiments. The gains were widespread, with pharma and metal sectors leading the way as top performers, outshining others, Nair said.

Indian markets are at an all-time high, driven by strong inflows from the FII in the past few months.

Christy Mathai, Fund Manager-Equity, Quantum AMC, said that from a macro standpoint, India stands out as compared to peer countries, with inflation moderating, and investing activity and growth picking up. Also, the growth hurdles of Indian economy has corrected to a



large extent. Infrastructure has been improving consistently, corporate balance sheet strength has improved, and financial system is in a robust state to fund the potential growth. Despite the recent rally, fundamentals point to the possibility of strong earnings growth in medium term, Mathai said.

Valuations around the long-term average makes a strong case for reasonable returns as earnings upcycle gains strength. Investors could be better off by staying invested and maintain their equity allocation in line with long term asset allocation plans.

Overall, Indian markets, Nifty have remained flat week on week barring Wednesday's uptick, which resulted in Nifty touching new highs, said Jaykrishna Gandhi, Head-Business Development, Institutional

Equities, Emkay Global Financial Services.

Bank Nifty has underperformed during this period and is poised to lead the rally into July on the back of the HDFC merger, he said.

The US markets continued the positive data with consumer confidence climbing to highest levels since January 2022, new home sales jumped 12.2 per cent to highest levels since February 2022, and home prices were up 0.9 per cent in April for the top 20 cities in the US.

Institutional selling to comply with the 10 per cent holding ceiling has been weighing on the stock. This will be over once the merger is affected. The prospects of the merged entity look very bright and this will attract more institutional investment from sector specific funds and ETFs, which are not bound by the 10 per cent ceiling.

### CLSA CITES CAUTION ABOUT INDIA'S EXCEEDINGLY RICH VALUATIONS, MARGIN EROSION, OPTIMISTIC EPS PROJECTIONS

New Delhi: Concerns surrounding valuation is the most commonly cited reason for hesitating from greater portfolio allocation towards India, foreign brokerage CLSA said in a report.

Furthermore, India's dividend yield of just 1.3 per cent is little more than a third offered by the pan-emerging market average, just above the lowest recorded relative level in over 27 years.

India underperformed APAC regional equities by 25 per cent from end-October 2022 to end-March 2023 before clawing half of the lost ground in 2Q23.

"We are now less concerned about half of the 10 reasons we cited for our 40 per cent underweight stance in our November 2022 report," the CLSA report said.

"Yet, we remain cautious for now given exceedingly rich valuations, margin erosion depleting India's relative profitability, consensus EPS growth expectations remaining too optimistic (certainly versus the delivered track record), the RBI likely lagging EM central banks in the timing and scale of policy easing, and our econometric model signalling the market is 14 per cent overbought," CLSA said.

India's non-financial sector net profit margin has compressed significantly more since the November 2021 peak than for emerging markets overall, by 300 bps (9.5 per cent to 6.5 per cent) versus 140 bps (7.5 per cent to 6.1 per cent) for EM.

This ongoing relative margin depletion has further driven down India's relative return on equity to just 1.1x that of EM (ROE of 13.4 per cent versus 12.1 per cent) while investors have to pay a 2.2x book premium for Indian assets generating not much more profitability.

"Again, we struggle to justify the down trend in India's relative ROE in conjunction with the re-rating of the market's price book in the absence of structurally superior growth and/or lower cost of equity," CLSA said.

The projected EPS growth remains too optimistic versus delivered, it added.

## AAP supports UCC, calls for wider consultation before implementation

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Wednesday said that it will support the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) but these set of laws should be implemented only after wider consultations.

Talking to reporter, AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sandeep Pathak said that since Article 44 of the Constitution advocates for UCC, they believe it should be implemented.

"In principle, we support the UCC. Article 44 also supports it. However, since it is connected to all religions, it should be implemented only after wider consultation," Pathak said. Asked whether



they will contest the 2024 Lok Sabha elections with the Congress, he said that it depends on the attitude of the grand-old party. Pathak said that the current situation suggests that all opposition parties should come together and fight against the Modi

Government, but it depends on the Congress.

### ELECTION CAMPAIGN: CHIDAMBARAM

New Delhi: A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi pitched for Uniform Civil Code (UCC), senior Congress leader P. Chidambaram on Wednesday hit back saying that the nation stands divided today owing to the words and deeds of the BJP, which has "failed" to provide good governance, and is implementing the UCC to polarise the electorate to win elections. He said that a family is knit together by blood relationships. "A nation is brought together by a Constitution which is a political-legal document. Even in a family there is diversity. The Constitution of India recognised diversity and plurality among the people of India. A UCC is an aspiration. It cannot be forced on the people by an agenda-driven majoritarian government."

### UCC WILL HAVE ADVERSE IMPACT ON MINORITIES: SAD

Chandigarh: The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) on Wednesday asserted that the preparation of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) and its implementation throughout the country will have an adverse impact on minority and tribal communities.

In a statement issued here, senior SAD leader Daljit Singh Cheema said: "We must take into account the fact that the Constitution makers did not give UCC the status of fundamental rights. It was kept in the concurrent list and is part of the Directive Principles of the state policy. Changing this status is not desirable, as it will cause friction in the society. Besides minority communities, tribal societies which have their own personal laws will be most affected," he said, adding, "If any particular personal law is discriminatory, it could be amended but forming a UCC for the entire country is not advisable."

The SAD leader also asserted that the 21st Law Commission had concluded that UCC was neither feasible, nor desirable.

## BHIM ARMY CHIEF SHOT AT IN UP



Saharanpur | Agencies

Chandrashekhar Azad Ravan, the chief of the Bhim Army, was shot at in Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur today, police said.

Two bullets were fired at Azad's car. The first bullet entered the seat of the vehi-

cle, grazing his waist as it passed through the door. The second bullet hit the back door, narrowly missing him.

"The convoy of Chandra Shekhar Aazad was fired at by a few car-borne armed men. A bullet brushed past him. He is alright and has been taken to CHC for medical treat-

ment. Police is investigating the matter," senior police officer Vipin Tada said. The Bhim Army chief was travelling in a Toyota Fortuner when he was attacked. Photos of an injured Mr Azad and his damaged vehicle were shared by the Bhim Army on social media.

## INDIA'S THIRD MOON MISSION SLATED BETWEEN JULY 12-19, LANDER MODIFIED

Chennai: Indian space agency ISRO is gearing up for its third moon mission -- Chandrayaan-3 -- slated between July 12 and July 19, officials said.

"We have the launch window between July 12 and July 19. The exact date has not been finalised," a senior official of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), not wanting to be named, told reporter.

Speaking to the media, ISRO Chairman and Secretary in the Department of Space, S. Somanath, said the space agency will look at launching the moon mission at the earliest date, which could be July 12 or July 13.

He said the launch window is there between July 12 and July 19.

The main purpose of Chandrayaan-3 is to safely land the lander on the moon soil. Following that a rover will roll out to do the experiments.

## 'Adipurush' row Make documentary on Quran and see the consequences: HC

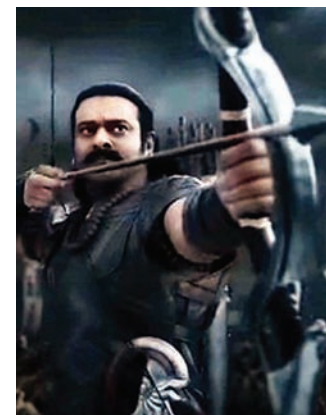
Lucknow | Agencies

The Allahabad High Court on Wednesday urged filmmakers to stay away from religious texts and not make movies about them.

It told filmmakers to make a documentary on Quran and see the consequences as it heard petitions seeking a ban on the film 'Adipurush'.

The court also directed the Information and Broadcasting Ministry and the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) to submit personal affidavits in response to pleas seeking the ban.

A bench of Justice Rajesh Singh Chauhan and Shree Prakash Singh said, "Aap logo ko Quran, Bible ko



bhi nahin touch karna chahiye. Main yeh clear kar dun ki kisi ek dharm ko mat touch kariye. Aap log kisi bhi dharm ke baare me galat tarah se mat dikhaye. Court

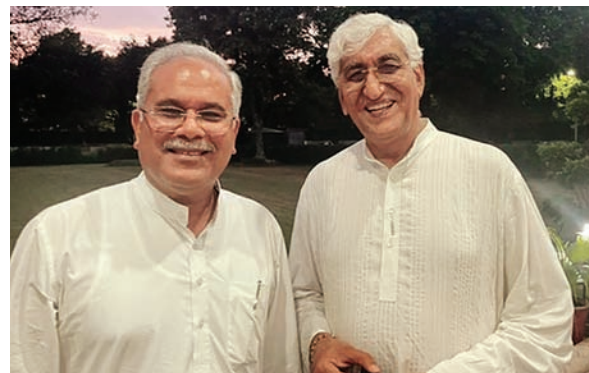
ka koi religion nahin hai (You must not touch the Quran or the Bible. Let me clarify that you must not touch any religion. Please do not show religions in the wrong light. The Court has no religion)."

It further said, "Filmmakers only want to mint money."

Justice Chauhan orally remarked before suggesting that even a short documentary on the Quran would cause a massive stir. "If you make even a short documentary on the Quran depicting wrong things, you will see what can happen," the court orally remarked.

The High Court said that something or the other is being done continuously to disturb social harmony.

## Senior Congress leader T.S. Singhdeo to be Chhattisgarh Dy CM



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday approved the proposal to appoint senior party leader T.S. Singhdeo as Deputy Chief Minister of poll-bound Chhattisgarh, putting an end to the duel going on in the state.

Announcing the decision, Congress General Secretary, Organisation, K.C. Venugopal said: "Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge ji has approved the proposal for appointment of TS Singh

Deoji as the Deputy Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh.

The decision comes after Kharge held a long discussion with Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, state in-charge Kumari Selja, state unit chief Mohan Markam and senior minister Tamradhwaj Sahu at his residence here. Venugopal was also present in the meeting.

Baghel and Deo has been engaged in bitter war of words in the state for last two years. However, in recent months, Deo had gone soft on Baghel.

## Covid-19 was created as a 'bioweapon' by China: Wuhan researcher

In an interview conducted by Chinese-born human rights activist and author Jennifer Zeng, Chao Shao claimed that the researchers were tasked with identifying the most effective strain for spreading among various species, including people, Jerusalem Post reported. Chao Shao also shared an incident involving another researcher at the institute named Shan Chao, who admitted to being provided with four strains of coronavirus by a superior to test and determine which one had the greatest potential to infect multiple species, including humans.

Beijing | Agencies

The deadly SARS-CoV-2, the virus behind Covid-19, was deliberately engineered as a "bioweapon" by China, claimed a researcher at the infamous Wuhan Institute of Virology, media reports said.

Chao Shao mentioned that several of his colleagues were sent to hotels accommodating athletes during the 2019 Military World Games held in Wuhan in the pretext of "checking the health or hygiene conditions".

However, Chao Shao suspected they were potentially involved in spreading the virus.

Chao Shao also emphasised that the information represented only a fraction of the entire puzzle, the report said. The true origin of the pandemic,



which has claimed the lives of 7 million lives worldwide, remains a subject of ongoing investigation. The recent revelations by the newly declassified intelligence report by the US government on the origins of Covid-19 also did not confirm whether the pandemic was the result of a lab leak or the virus jumped into people from an

infected animal.

"All agencies continue to assess that both a natural and laboratory-associated origin remain plausible hypotheses to explain the first human infection," said the long-anticipated declassified report from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

Importantly, almost all intelligence agencies "assess that SARS-CoV-2 was not genetically engineered", the report said. "Most agencies assess that SARS-CoV-2 was not laboratory-adapted; some are unable to make a determination. All intelligence community agencies assess that SARS-CoV-2 was not developed as a biological weapon," it added. The report acknowledged the research conducted at the lab, including on animal sampling and genetic analysis.

## IIT-Bombay tops in India, 149 globally in QS World University Rankings

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay has broken into the world's top 150 universities and topped India rankings in the latest Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings, UK, officials said here on Wednesday.

The IIT-B has climbed up from 172 last year to 149 this year in the global ranking - first time that it has been included within the Top 150, with an overall score of 51.7/100.

Over, it has improved on its performance by 23 places and in the 2024 edition, it has been placed within the top 10 per cent of the world's highest 1,500 universities that were considered worth ranking.

This is the first time in eight years that any Indian institution of higher education has made it to the top 10 per cent -- in 2016, the

Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru had been ranked at No. 147.

While the IIT-B has zoomed up, the IISc nose-dipped from 155 to 225, IIT-Delhi fell from 174 to 197, IIT-Kanpur came down from 264 to 278 and IIT-Madras fell from 250 to 285, IIT-Guwahati improved from 384 to 364, IIT-Roorkee remained at 369.

The IIT-B scored impressive -- 81.9 in employer reputation, 73.1 in citation per faculty, 55.5 in academic reputation, 47.4 in employment outcome, 54.9 in sustainability, 18.9 in faculty-student ratio, 4.7 in international faculty, 8.5 in international research network and 1.4 in international students, all scores out of a maximum of 100 points.

Among these nine parameters, the employer reputation indicated the strongest one for IIT-B with a world ranking of 69.



# WON'T ALLOW BJP TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM PUBLIC ISSUES: RAHUL ON PRICE RISE AMID MODI'S UCC PITCH

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former Congress President Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday targeted the BJP-led Central government over the price of essential commodities, alleging that the BJP was busy increasing the wealth of the capitalists.

He also listed the prices of tomatoes, vegetables and cooking gas, and said that the poor are yearning to eat while the middle class is struggling to save some money.

Rahul in a tweet said, "Tomato: Rs 140/kg, Cauliflower: Rs 80/kg, Toor Dal: Rs 148/kg, Branded Arhar Dal: Rs 219/kg and cooking gas cylinder above Rs 1,100. The BJP government is busy in increasing the wealth of the capitalists and collecting taxes from the public, forget the poor and middle class families."

Targeting the Central government, the former Lok Sabha MP said, "Youth are unemployed, if there is employment then income is very less and there are hardly any savings due to inflation. The poor are yearning to eat, the middle class



is yearning to save."

"In the Congress-ruled states, we reduced the prices of gas to provide relief from inflation, put money in the accounts of the poor for financial assistance. Bharat Jodo Yatra is a pledge to remove hatred, remove inflation, unemployment and bring equality -- BJP will not be allowed to divert attention from public issues," he said in a veiled reference to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

push for the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) ahead of the crucial state Assembly elections.

"For nine years there is still the same question. After all, to whom does this 'Amrit kaal' belong?' the Congress leader asked.

His remarks came a day after Modi while addressing BJP booth workers in Madhya Pradesh said that Muslims were being misled in the name of UCC.

## K'TAKA HIGH COURT REFUSES TO QUASH FIR ON RAHUL GANDHI, OTHERS

**Bengaluru:** Karnataka High Court on Wednesday rejected the petition by Rahul Gandhi and others seeking quashing of a case registered by MRT Music in connection with infringement of copyrights by using KGF Chapter - 2 song for promotion of the party during Bharat Jodo Yatra.

The FIR was registered against Rahul Gandhi, Rajya Sabha member Jairam Ramesh and senior leader Supriya Srinathe. The case was registered against them under the violation of Copyright Act.

The complainant MRT Music has initiated criminal proceedings for the violation for using the KGF Chapter-2 song in a promotional video of Bharat Jodo Yatra.

The bench stated that the petitioners have tampered with the source code without permission and played the audio which amounts to infringement of copyright of the complainant.

# Govt postpones implementation of increased tax on credit card payments on foreign tours

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Finance Ministry on Wednesday said that there will be no change in tax collection at source (TCS) for all purposes under the liberalised remittance scheme (LRS) for overseas travel tour packages, regardless of the mode of payment, for amounts up to Rs 7 lakh per individual per annum.

The hiked TCS rates would now become applicable from October 1.

Earlier, there were protests when government had announced that the TCS rates would be hiked and come into force from July 1.

The government had notified the Foreign Exchange Management (Current Account Transactions) (Amendment) Rules, 2023 through an e-gazette notification dated May 16, to remove the differential treatment for credit cards vis-a-vis other modes of withdrawal of for-



eign exchange under LRS.

After concerns were raised by banks and financial institutions, the government consequently held discussions with various stakeholders, and it was decided to give more time for the implementation of revised TCS rates and for the inclusion of credit

card payments in LRS.

The increased TCS rates therefore will now come into force from October 1. It has now been decided after discussions with stakeholders that adequate time would be given to banks and card networks to put in place requisite IT based solutions.

# Land acquisition: Farmers stage protest in Gurugram; lock HSIIDC, Tehsil offices

Gurugram | Agencies

Hundreds of farmers of Kasan, Mokaldas, Sehrawan, and other adjoining villages on Wednesday staged protest and locked the offices of Haryana State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (HSIIDC) and Manesar Tehsil, demanding the cancellation of land acquisition.

The protesters alleged that the government acquired 1,810 acres of land in 2011 at just Rs 55 to 90 lakh per acre which is extremely low in comparison to the current land value.

They said that they do not want to surrender their land and will continue to oppose government's land acquisition plan.

"We are protesting since



year but the government has not responded to our demands. Farmers should be compensated at current land value as per new land acquisition law. If the government does not accept our demand then the land should get free

of acquisition," said a protesting farmer.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) visited the protesting farmers and tried to pacify them, however farmers did not give up on their protests.

# Fairfield by Marriott Jaipur brings its warm hospitality and uplifting spaces

Lalit Sharma | Jaipur

Fairfield by Marriott, part of Marriott Bonvoy's portfolio of 31 extraordinary brands, announced the opening of Fairfield by Marriott Jaipur, celebrating the brand's debut in one of India's most enthralling and historical cities. Poised to deliver an inviting and seamless experience, the hotel will soon be the address of choice for travellers looking for a smart and convenient stay as they explore this mystical destination, known for its medieval forts, palaces, and prismatic festivals.

The warm and welcoming, Fairfield by Marriott Jaipur is at a 30-minute drive from the Jaipur International Airport and sits within easy reach of the metro and bus stations. Located in the city-center, the hotel offers easy access to majestic palaces, vibrant markets, wildlife parks and stunning architecture that is a captivating showcase of the city's royal heritage. Visitors can catch a glimpse of the city's regal charm at the Amber Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, or the Albert Hall Museum, a fine example of Indo-Saracenic architecture. A stroll through the bustling Johari Bazaar home to



exquisite Jaipur jewellery, handcrafted clothes and furniture is an unmissable experience, along with the iconic Hawa Mahal, fondly known as the 'Palace of the Winds', the City Palace and the Maharaja Sawai Mansingh II Museum all within 10 kilometers of the hotel.

"With the opening of Fairfield by Marriott Jaipur, we are excited to bring the reliability and consistency of the Fairfield brand to Jaipur," said Ranju Alex - Area Vice President South Asia, Marriott

International Inc. "This opening marks the 25th Fairfield by Marriott within the Marriott Bonvoy portfolio. As we continue to grow and engage with an expanding customer base, we look forward to adding more hotels in captivating destinations across India". Fairfield by Marriott Jaipur is an ideal base for entrepreneurs and business travelers. The hotel offers 76 spacious, modern and well-equipped rooms including one suite. The public spaces evoke the warm hospitality signature of the Fairfield by Marriott brand, featuring a modern and calm aesthetic with open layouts, multifunctional spaces and plenty of natural light.

The hotel's signature, all-day dining restaurant, Twenty One Bar and Cafe, serves a rich buffet of international and local favourites, paired with a decadent ala carte menu. Fairfield by Marriott Jaipur has two event venues, Crystal and The Forum, with approximately 3,000 square feet of total banquet space, suitable for meetings, conferences, weddings, and social events. The hotel's commitment to sustainability shines through their eco-conscious practices that includes LED lighting and a strong emphasis on waste management and recycling.

# Minor girl raped, murdered in Jharkhand; two arrested

Ranchi | Agencies

A jilted boy along with his friend allegedly raped his minor girl-friend, beat her to death, injured her private part with glass and then hanged her body on a tree to make it look like a suicide in Jharkhand's Pakur district, police said.

The police have arrested both the accused. Since both the accused are minors, they have been sent to a juvenile home.

The girl's body was found hanging from a tree near Dhavadangal Dam on June 20. The blood stains on the clothes of the minor girl led the police to suspect that



she had been murdered after the rape. Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Navneet Hembram said that on his

instructions, a five-member team was formed under the leadership of station in-charge Abhishek Kumar Rai to investigate the matter.

Police interrogated a dozen youths on the basis of suspicion. Police got a clue from the youths that her minor lover could be involved in the murder of the minor girl.

Thereafter, the police arrested the minor lover and his friend on the basis of the girl's mobile.

The boy said that he was having an affair with the girl. For past some days, her mobile was always busy. Later it came to know that the girl had an affair with someone else. Then he conspired with his friend to kill her. He called the girl near Dhavadangal Dam by calling from a friend's mobile and carried out the crime.

## PORTION OF TEMPORARY BRIDGE WASHED AWAY IN GANGA RIVER IN BIHAR

**Patna:** A portion of temporary bridge (Pipa Pul), connecting district headquarters Hajipur with Raghapur village, was washed away in the Ganga river in Bihar's Vaishali district.

The bridge collapsed on Tuesday evening.

Now, villagers of Raghapur are cut off from the rest of the district.

Raghapur is assembly constituency of Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav. Local residents claimed that the portion of the bridge was swept away amid heavy rainfall coupled with storm.

"After the bridge was washed away, now we can only cross the river through boat. People of 22 Panchayats are affected by it. Travelling in boats is risky as its owners sometimes overload it," Abhishek Kumar, a resident of Raghapur, said.

# 5 people, 12 cattle charred to death as three trucks collide on Jaipur-Ajmer Highway

Jaipur | Agencies

Five people and 12 cattle were charred to death when three trucks collided on the Jaipur-Ajmer highway on Wednesday.

The ensuing fire was so severe that the driver and helper in one of the trucks could not even get a chance to escape, the police said.

The accident took place near Dudu on the Jaipur-Ajmer highway. After the accident, the highway witnessed traffic chaos for a few hours.

The police said that one of the trucks was carrying cattle, which too were burnt alive.

Following the incident, Dudu police station staff, fire services, civil defence personnel and home guards reached the spot to douse the fire. The police said that two trucks had stopped at Ramnagar on the highway when another truck enroute Ajmer lost control and collided with one of the trucks. The truck was fitted with a diesel tank and CNG kit leading to a large explosion. Following the explosion, the diesel tanks fitted in the other trucks also exploded. The explosion led to the death of



five persons while 12 cattle were also charred to death.

SHO Dudu Jaisingh Basera confirmed the deaths.

# Gujarat coast on high alert: Fishermen advised to avoid sea ventures till July 2

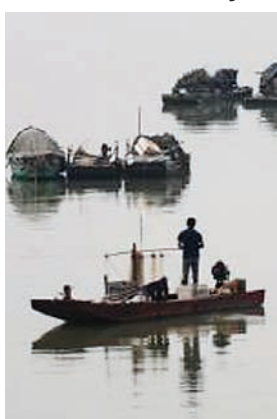
Gandhinagar | Agencies

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Wednesday issued a warning for fishermen operating along the Gujarat coast, particularly the south Gujarat coast, from June 28 to July 2.

The IMD strongly advises against venturing into the sea during this period.

As per the IMD, squally weather conditions are expected, with wind speeds ranging from 40-45 kmph and gusts up to 55 kmph along and off the Gujarat Coast from June 28th to July 2nd. Consequently, it is crucial for fishermen to refrain from venturing into the Arabian Sea during these days.

The warning extends to several areas, including Jakhau, Mandvi (Kutch), Mundra, New Kandla, Navlakhi, Jamnagar, Salaya, Okha, and Porbandar along the North Gujarat coast. It also applies to areas off the South Gujarat coast, such as



MulDwarka, Veraval, Diu, Jafrabad, Pipavav, Victor, Bhavnagar, Alang, Bharuch, Dahej, Magdalla, and Daman.

Additionally, the weather man predicts high waves ranging from 3.2 to 3.6 meters along the coast from Jakhau to Diu Head of Gujarat coast, starting from 17.30 hours on June 27 to 23.30 hours on June 28.

Current speeds are estimated to range between 68 and 121 cm/sec.

# Milk war: K'taka decides not to expand Nandini outlets in Kerala

Bengaluru | Agencies

The Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) has decided not to expand Nandini outlets in neighbouring Kerala following strong objection by the Vijayan government, sources confirmed on Wednesday.

The decision was made following talks between Minister for Animal Husbandry and Dairy Development J. Chinchu Rani and KMF CEO.

Nandini milk and milk related products are sold in huge quantities across Kerala. The brand is popular, especially in the bordering districts of Karnataka such as Kasargod.

However, the decision has left a large number of Kannada people, who live in Kerala border regions, disappointed. The decision has been taken as per the directions of the newly elected Congress government in Karnataka.

Earlier, Kerala had objected to the sale of milk, curd and other dairy products by the Karnataka



Milk Federation run by the Karnataka government. The neighbouring state complained of the Kerala Milk Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation (KCMMF) brand Milma being affected by the sale of Nandini products.

The Congress and JD (S) in Karnataka had earlier strongly

opposed the move of the previous BJP government to allow sale of Amul milk and curd in Karnataka.

The issue was raised during the Assembly elections and then the BJP government had to clarify the matter. It was also alleged that the then BJP government was conspiring to merge Nandini with Amul.

KCMMF had questioned that if Nandini sells its milk in Kerala, what will happen to the milk which is produced and sold to Milma by the Kerala farmers. It had also objected that Karnataka had violated the cooperative framework of the national dairy sector.

# KARNATAKA ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF FREE RICE PROGRAMME FROM JULY 1

**Bengaluru:** Putting an end to all speculations on launch of its flagship Anna Bhagya scheme envisaging 10 kg free rice for all members of BPL cardholders' families, Karnataka's Congress government on Wednesday announced that the scheme would be implemented from July 1.

The government will provide five kg rice and it will transfer the money through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) for another five kg rice, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah stated on Wednesday, adding that Rs 170 will go for each member of the families having BPL cards.

The money would be transferred to the account of the head of the family of BPL cardholders through DBT and the arrangement will be in place until the government finds the supply of rice.

The decision is taken in the backdrop of non-availability of rice.



## MADHYA PRADESH ACHIEVING FIRST POSITION IN THE COUNTRY IN WATER CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT IS A MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT: CM CHOUHAN

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that Madhya Pradesh ranks first in water conservation and management in the country, this is a big achievement. Madhya Pradesh is first in the country in many areas, we have been leading in cleanliness for some years. It is a matter of pride and glory for all of us. Irrigation capacity has increased in the state, we are arranging irrigation with pressurized pipes in place of canal irrigation to use every drop of water, due to which irrigation is possible over 1.75 times more area with the available water. Along with this, a network of water structures has been laid in the state. Madhya Pradesh has been rewarded by the Government of India for these works only. Water Resources, Panchayat and Rural Development and



Narmada Valley Development Department deserve congratulations for this achievement. CM Shri Chouhan was addressing the ministers before the Cabinet meeting. Water Resources Minister Shri Tulsiram Silawat presented the citation and symbol of the fourth National Water Award-2022 received from the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti to the Chief Minister Shri Chouhan.

Water Resources Minister Shri Silawat said that under the leadership of Chief Minister Shri Chouhan ever

since the construction of irrigation projects in the form of micro irrigation schemes have started, more water is being saved in Madhya Pradesh. Madhya Pradesh was honoured with the first prize in the category of Best State by the Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation of Union Ministry of Jal Shakti to honour its excellent efforts in the field of water conservation/management.

## BJP & Cong spar over corruption

Politics in MP heats up after PM's visit

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi hit out at Opposition accusing its leaders of indulging in corruption, the politics in poll-bound Madhya Pradesh, where the BJP and the Congress are in direct contest, has heated up.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Wednesday reiterated the Prime Minister's claim of the "Opposition indulging in corruption", and said that the BJP government would not spare anyone who would usurp public money.

Chouhan further said: "Congress has always done politics of appeasement and used people just for its votebank."

"The Congress has history of fake guarantees. A slogan of 'Gareebi Hatao' was made by the Congress way back in 1971, but poverty reached its peak. While in the last nine years of the BJP government, the poverty has decreased drastically. The Congress always used the people of ST and SC communities for their



votes, but did nothing for them. Now, when the elections are at the next door, they have come up with yet another fake guarantee," Chouhan added. Responding to Prime Minister Modi's statement that he would not spare anyone who was indulging into corruption, MP Congress Chief Kamal Nath said he (Modi) was giving a clear message to Shivraj, who has made Madhya Pradesh a "corruption state". "PM Modi said that no scamster will be left, so the people of

Madhya Pradesh want to know that Dumper scam, Vyapam scam, Poshan Aahar scam, Police recruitment scam, Nursing college scam and E-tendering scam happened during our Chief Minister's tenure. Are you sending him into jail or giving protection to scamsters?" Kamal Nath said. Meanwhile, former chief-minister and Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh also took jibe at Prime Minister Modi, saying the latter should have ask his party workers that whether

the houses built under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) were bulldozed by Chief Minister Chouhan in Madhya Pradesh.

"You (PM Modi) should have asked the BJP workers to find out whether the houses of the people who got the Prime Minister's residence were demolished by the Shivraj government? If it has been broken, then how are those people living their lives and where are they living in the rain," Digvijaya Singh said.

## How many people know about UCC? Real issues are unemployment, corruption: Kamal Nath

Team Absolute | Bhopal

After Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a pitch for the Uniform Civil Code while addressing BJP workers in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh Congress chief Kamal Nath on Wednesday responded, saying that most people are not aware of UCC and the main issues bothering them are unemployment and corruption.

Responding to a press query, former chief minister Kamal Nath said, "How many people know about UCC? There are issues of unemployment and corruption in Madhya Pradesh."

He also said the BJP has sidelined Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and projected Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the Assembly elections.

When asked the PM Modi's speech over UCC, the Congress leader said, "BJP is talking about its own agenda, while the people have their own issues. Here in Madhya Pradesh, peo-



ple are fed up with corruption under the BJP government. No matter who is BJP's face for elections, people have decided to change the government in

Madhya Pradesh." Further, he claimed survey reports of Madhya Pradesh are indicating that people do want the BJP govern-

ment in Madhya Pradesh. "I have also conducted surveys and I am confident that the Congress is going to form the government with absolute majority. I have full faith in the people of Madhya Pradesh."

During his visit to Bhopal on Tuesday, PM Modi made a pitch for the UCC. While engaging in a dialogue session with BJP's youth workers, Modi has said, "You tell me, in a home, how can there be one law for one member and another law for another member? Will that home be able to function? Then how will the country be able to function with such a dual system? We have to remember that even in the Constitution, there is a mention of equal rights for all".

Attacking the opposition, PM said, "These people (opposition) level allegations against us but the reality is that they chant 'Musalman, Musalman'. Had they really been (working) in the interests of Muslims, then Muslim families would not have been lagging in education and jobs."

## Most BJP supporters feel Dharendra Shastri's speeches will benefit party

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The speeches of Dharendra Shastri of Bageshwar Dham are expected to play a crucial role in the upcoming Assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, according to the ABP-CVoter Opinion Poll. The survey showed that 37.8 per cent of people believe that his speeches would benefit the saffron party.

People were asked, "According to you, which party will benefit from the statements of Dharendra Shastri of Bageshwar Dham in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly elections?"

In response, 16.8 per cent Congress supporters also agreed that the BJP will benefit from the speeches, while 58.3 per cent of BJP supporters reposed faith in his speeches.

The survey showed that, apart from the general public, 22 per cent of Congress supporters and 16.5 per cent of BJP supporters believe that neither party will benefit from Shastri's speeches.

A few people also said that it would help the Congress, which included 27.7 per cent of 'others'. A total of 51.2 per cent of Congress supporters believed that Shastri's speeches would benefit them in the elections, while 17.8 per cent BJP supporters believed that only the Congress will benefit from his



speeches. The Opinion Poll was conducted with a sample size of 17,113 between May 26 and June 26, covering all the 230 Assembly seats.

## Son of ex-BJP minister held in drug peddling case in MP

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Crime Branch of Madhya Pradesh Police have claimed to have arrested former BJP minister Kamal Khan's son, Bilal Khan in connection with a two-year-old drug peddling case in Indore.

Police claimed that Bilal's name had cropped up during the investigation, and he was being interrogated for his alleged involvement. Sources said he was nabbed on June 26.

According to Indore district police, Bilal Khan allegedly has links with the local network of an inter-state MDMA smuggling racket and a reward of Rs 4,000 was declared for his arrest earlier. In 2021, the MP Police had



seized drugs worth Rs 70 crore, and Bilal Khan was one of the suspects in the case. Bilal was on the run since then and police were hunting for him.

Indore Deputy Commissioner of Police Nimish Agrawal said, "Bilal Khan was held from Chhoti Gwaltoli after being on the run for two years. He is one of the suspects in a two-year-old drug peddling case. He is

being interrogated for his alleged involvement in a drug peddling case."

Bilal Khan's (25) father Kamal Khan is a senior BJP leader, who was a former state minister for minority cell of Madhya Pradesh.

Police claimed that it was the MP's biggest MDMA drug seizure case. So far, 40 persons have been arrested in the case, including a pharmaceutical unit owner from Hyderabad in Telangana, police said.

During the investigation, police found that the consignment of MDMA drug was supposed to be sent to South Africa from Indore under the pretext of manufacturing medicines. The Crime Branch had raided the spot and seized the drug.

Team Absolute | Seoni

A 40-year-old man stuck on a tree in the flooded Benganga River in Seoni district of Madhya Pradesh was rescued by an Indian Air Force (IAF) helicopter on Wednesday, officials said.

Four other persons are also trapped on an islet nearby, but they are safe. Efforts are on to rescue them but difficulties were being faced in the task, they said.

These five persons got stuck in the river near Kharpadiya village after the water level rose suddenly, they said. IAF Helicopter Called From Nagpur

"After being alerted about this incident, an IAF helicopter was called from Nagpur (in Maharashtra) to rescue the stranded. Around 2.45 pm, the chopper rescued one person trapped on a tree in the middle of the river," Keolari Sub Divisional



Magistrate Sandeep Shrivastava said. The remaining four persons who are trapped on an islet are safe, he said.

The rescue work by the helicopter had to be stopped due to shortage of fuel, the official said.

Man Identified As Shambhu Kahar, Ugli police station in-charge C L Singmare said the man rescued by the IAF helicopter was identified as Shambhu Kahar.

"The State Disaster Emergency Response Force (SDERF) is continuously making efforts to rescue the four other persons, but facing problems due to strong current of river water," he said.

Keolari's Sub Divisional Officer of Police (SDOP) B F Gothia said that four persons, including a woman, had gone to graze their animals near Satdhara on Wednesday morning but due to heavy rains in the upper streams, the water of the river rose and these persons got trapped.

## Leopard Spotted Near Mhow Caught; To Be Released In Forest



Team Absolute | Mhow

A leopard that had been moving around Mhow town in Madhya Pradesh's Indore district for the past month was caged at an automobile testing track on Tuesday, an official said on Wednesday.

The big cat was first spotted in the army area in Mhow and it had killed six goats since then, said Forest Ranger Mahesh

Kumar Ahirwar, who supervised to search and rescue operation.

Footage of the CCTV cameras installed at the auto testing track near Pithampur confirmed the big cat's presence in the area, he said. Following this, a cage was laid with live prey and the leopard walked into it on Tuesday night, he said. The leopard will be released in the forest on Wednesday night, Ahirwar said.

## Strengthening primary health care in state to improve screening of hypertensive individuals is the need of the hour

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Hypertension is considered one of the major cause of premature death in India. Although easy to treat, if left uncontrolled and untreated, it can lead to heart attack and stroke, chronic kidney disease etc. It is estimated that one in every four adults in India has hypertension and the situation is no different in Madhya Pradesh, where about 22.5% female and 25.9% male suffer due to HTN as against the national figure of 21.3% and 24% respectively. Uncontrolled blood pressure is one of the main risk factors for cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) such as heart attacks and stroke, and are responsible for one-third of total deaths in India. Despite that only 7% women and 6% men who have hypertension take medicine in India. With this in view the Workshop on the rising burden of NCDs & prevention and care of Hypertension organized jointly by National Centre for Human Settlements & Environment (NCHSE) and Consumer VOICE, New Delhi in Bhopal on 28th June 2023. The chief Guest Dr. Prabhakar



Tiwari, CMHO, Bhopal while addressing the participants said that people in rural India has the belief that they work hard therefore they can't suffer from hypertension. Stressing on the importance of India's frontline primary care in rural and semi-urban areas, he said that "primary health care centres in Madhya Pradesh support the efforts of the government through uninterrupted supply and availability of hypertension protocol medicines and helps in scaling up hypertension control in the state." Dr Tiwari further emphasized on the need for lifestyle modifications to curb hypertension.

Ashim Sanyal, COO of Consumer Voice during his introductory lecture raised concern that the screening of hypertensive individuals was lowest in

Madhya Pradesh (61.3 per cent). Talking about how timely intervention can save patients from serious hypertension problems like stroke and organ damage, he said that "most Indians are not aware that they are suffering from hypertension. Strengthening primary healthcare will not only reduce mortality but also significantly reduce the need for secondary and tertiary care and its related costs."

Dr Abhishek Goyal, Professor and Head Department of Pulmonary Medicine, AIIMS Bhopal said that obstruction in breathing during sleep is a serious disorder or Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA). About one Billion people suffer from OSA worldwide. Approx 1/3rd Males and 1/4th females have OSA and patients with severe OSA have an increased risk of hypertension, heart attack, heart failure and strokes. OSA is a modifiable and highly prevalent factor in the development of hypertension.

Office of CMHO has also arranged a health check-up camp at the venue of the workshop for check of blood pressure and sugar level of participants and others and distributed medicine free of cost.

## Haryana Government will give digital certificates to 5 lakh students by CRISP's developed Blockchain technology



Team Absolute | Bhopal

The futuristic technology Lab in CRISP, develops advanced IT Solutions using Blockchain / AI/ML / Robotic automation and other futuristic technologies under the leadership of Managing Director, CRISP Dr. Shrikant Patil. His main agenda is to make this organization a synonym for Skill Development. And in that succession, recently Centre for Research and Industrial Staff Performance (CRISP) and the Board of School Education Haryana (BSEH) inked an agreement. CRISP will provide the

Digital Certificate printing and online verification service using Blockchain technology to the Board of School Education Haryana.

"This is one of its kind collaboration with the Haryana Government where CRISP's developed Blockchain technology is being used for the betterment of students and in the future, we will work with different states of India as well.

The organization has Capability Maturity Integration Level 5 (CMMI Level 5) certification, which is considered as best certification in IT and E-gov sector," said Dr. Shrikant Patil.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Rainfall relief expected across India

Active monsoon conditions are likely to continue over northwest, central and west India during next five days and advance of the Southwest monsoon is expected into some more parts of Rajasthan and remaining parts of Punjab and Haryana during next two days, as per the India Meteorological Department (IMD). In a statement, it said that northwest India is expected to experience light to moderate fairly widespread to widespread rainfall over the next five days, bringing relief to the parched lands. "West Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttarakhand are likely to witness rainfall, with isolated heavy downpours. Himachal Pradesh can expect rainfall from June 27 to 29, while east Uttar Pradesh will likely experience rainfall from June 29 to July 1," the IMD said. Specifically, east Rajasthan is anticipated to receive isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall on June 29 and 30, while Uttarakhand can expect similar conditions on June 28 and 30. "These weather patterns are expected to provide respite from the prevailing dry spell in the region," said the IMD. Central India is expected to experience light to moderate fairly widespread to widespread rainfall in the coming days. The IMD also predicted that west India is expected to witness light to moderate fairly widespread to widespread rainfall in the coming days, bringing relief from the prevailing dry conditions. East and adjoining Northeast India are likely to experience fairly widespread to widespread light to moderate rainfall in the upcoming days, providing relief from the prevailing dry spell. Meanwhile, south India is expected to witness light to moderate scattered to fairly widespread rainfall in the coming days, bringing relief from the prevailing dry conditions.

NOTWITHSTANDING GROWING TIES WITH INDIA, US WILL NOT JUNK PAKISTAN

R.C. GANJOO

It was a bold and clear message from the US and India statement that has thrown an open challenge to counter global terrorism and unequivocally condemn terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations. The statement has unnerved Pakistan as well as China.

A South Asia expert at the Hudson Institute describes US-India as a boon to President Biden to declare to the world that the US has got India as ally on his side. The US considers China the most serious long-term challenger to the United States, despite renewed efforts to manage tensions.

The joint statement by US-India has also insisted Pakistan take immediate action "against all terrorist groups", leaving an option of asking the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to further tighten its anti-money-laundering and terrorism financing standards.

Both India and Pakistan are relevant to the US for different reasons.

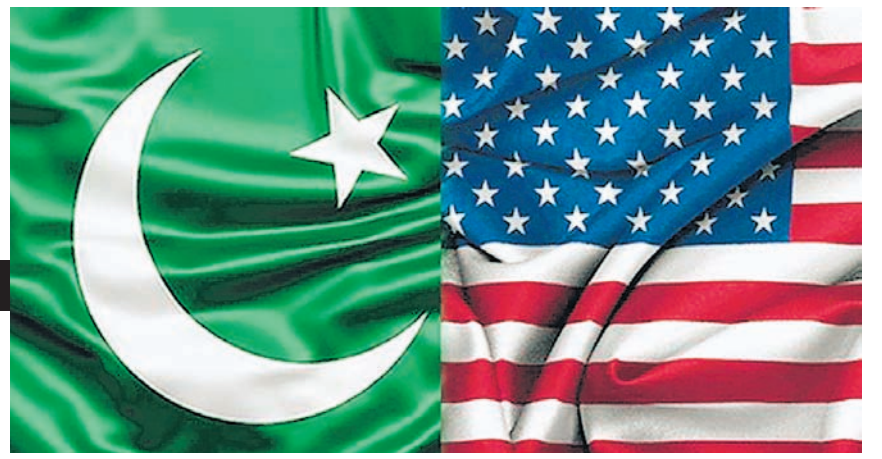
India is on the geopolitical centre stage. Its strategic value for the West is increasing. Thus, after the US-India joint declaration, US Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome moved his pawn diplomatically on June 23, keeping Pakistan under US wings and saying "Our people-to-people ties have taken forward the US-Pakistan relationship for 75 years. Perhaps the most meaningful result of our diplomatic engagement is the network of personal and professional connections made by tens of thousands of Pakistanis who have gone to the US on US-funded academic programmes and exchanges and those Americans who come to study in Pakistan".

The US's top priority for Pakistan is to eliminate terrorism, counter emerging terrorist threats, and address the causes of instability. The US has supported 120,000 Pakistani police officers' training programmes and encouraged female officers' recruitment and

professional development. Not only these more than 2,000 Pakistani officers have gone on US-funded military education and training programmes, Pakistan is among the top two countries in the world for participation in US military exchanges.

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar in an interview to the Washington Post said "Pakistan can no longer try to maintain a middle ground between China and the United States". US-Pakistan relations have served vital interests for over six decades, but it has not been a 'normal' bilateral relationship. In Pakistan, the US connection strengthened the army and enhanced its political profile. Washington was not happy with Pakistan's relations with China, the 1965 war, its nuclear programme, and Pakistan's contribution to the failure of the Afghanistan war.

It is widely believed by political



observers that incidents of instability in Pakistan are Washington's hidden 'agenda' to destabilise Pakistan so as to take out its nuclear assets. Washington wants to punish Pakistan for being an ally of China. In 2002 Richard Armitage, then-deputy secretary of state admitted that Pakistan was never important to the United States in its own right. It was important, because of third parties. The implication was that Pakistan had no permanent value for the US, and its importance for Washington derived from the importance of South Asia more broadly. In the given economic and politically wreck situation, Pakistan is left with no option but to seek US support for an IMF loan. The US is taking advantage of Pakistan's precarious financial situation, pressuring Islamabad to keep a distance

from Beijing. The IMF has recently raised serious objections over the budget for the fiscal year 2023-24, which has further narrowed the chances of revival of the Extended Fund Facility programme. Donald Blome expressed confidence in the policies and programmes of the Pakistan government for economic sustainability and socio-economic uplift of the masses. He extended his support to further promote bilateral economic, investment, and trade relations between both countries. Pakistan is the only regional country that has not thrown its weight behind any single global power. Islamabad seems to be seeking good ties with Moscow and Washington. It does not want to harm American interests but at the same time, it will not go against Beijing.

COVID ORIGINS PROBE: NEW REPORT SHOWS US INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY DIVIDED

New declassified intelligence report by the US government on the origins of Covid-19 has not confirmed whether the pandemic, which has infected over 768 million people and claimed more than 6.9 million deaths globally, was the result of a lab leak or the virus jumped into people from an infected animal.

More than two years after the pandemic, the origins of Covid-19 remain unclear. It has been the subject of a political and scientific debate with scientists and politicians globally contending that the source of the coronavirus was exposure to an infected animal or an event at a laboratory.

"All agencies continue to assess that both a natural and laboratory-associated origin remain plausible hypotheses to explain the first human infection," said the long-anticipated declassified report from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, released Friday evening.

In May 2021, President Joe Biden instructed US intelligence agencies to examine the virus's origins, based partly on their own classified sources of information, including about the Chinese government's response to the outbreak.

In the previous such report, the intelligence did not reach consensus, though most of them tended to favour the natural origins scenario.

The new report adds little to those earlier assessments.

In the new report the National Intelligence Council and four other unnamed agencies said that the initial human infection with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, most likely was caused by natural exposure to an infected animal that carried the virus or a close progenitor, a virus that probably would be more than 99 per cent similar to SARSCoV-2.

On the contrary, the Department of Energy

and the Federal Bureau of Investigation assess that a laboratory-associated incident was the most likely cause of the first human infection with SARS-CoV-2, although for different reasons.

The Central Intelligence Agency and another unnamed agency remain unable to determine the precise origin of the Covid pandemic, as both hypotheses rely on significant assumptions or face challenges with conflicting reporting.

Importantly, almost all intelligence agencies "assess that SARS-CoV-2 was not genetically engineered", the report said.

"Most agencies assess that SARS-CoV-2 was not laboratory-adapted; some are unable to make a determination. All intelligence community agencies assess that SARS-CoV-2 was not developed as a biological weapon," it added.

Meanwhile, the report said the intelligence agencies

found that "some of the research conducted by the People's Liberation Army (PLA; China's military) and the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) included work with several viruses, including coronaviruses, but no known viruses that could plausibly be a progenitor of SARS-CoV-2".

While acknowledging the research conducted at the lab, including on animal sampling and genetic analysis, "We continue to have no indication that the WIV's pre-pandemic research holdings included SARS-CoV-2 or a close progenitor, nor any direct evidence that a specific research-related incident occurred involving WIV personnel before the pandemic that could have caused the Covid pandemic," the report said.

international

EXTREME HEAT WAVE SPREADS ACROSS US, OVER 55 MN PEOPLE UNDER ALERTS

Los Angeles | Agencies

The extreme heat wave that has baked much of the southern US continues to spread to other regions of the country this week, with over 55 million people now under heat alerts.

The heat wave has scorched Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, among other southern parts over the past week, setting or challenging all-time records, Xinhua news agency reported.

The life-threatening "oppressive" heat dome was producing "dangerous heat and humidity in Texas and spread into the lower Mississippi River Valley", according to the US National Weather Service (NWS).

San Angelo in West Texas registered 114 degrees Fahrenheit twice in June, the highest ever recorded there. The border town of Del Rio hit 115 degrees Fahrenheit for the first time.

A reading of 119 degrees Fahrenheit on Friday in the Big Bend area of southwest Texas came within



one degree of tying the state's previous all-time high of 120 recorded in 1994, according to meteorologists for the NWS in Midland.

The heat wave is continuing to bake Texas, and will expand in the coming days across much of the southern Plains, the Deep South, the Lower Mississippi Valley and the Gulf Coast, according to the NWS.

More of the Gulf region will see dangerous heat on Tuesday, lasting in some places through the Fourth of July, according to weather forecasts.

Excessive heat warnings are plastered across much of Texas, parts of New Mexico and Arizona and along the Gulf Coasts of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, while heat advisories stretch from northern

Florida to southern New Mexico.

Meanwhile, with a high-pressure system building over Southern California, the first heat wave of the summer is expected to hit the western region later this week into the holiday weekend, focused across interior areas.

Triple-digit temperatures are expected across the hottest interior areas of Southern California, according to the NWS.

The oppressive heat has been caused by a stagnant upper-level ridge over the south-central portion of the country, according to the NWS. The dome of high pressure is expanding and will blast heat over much of the southern band of the country in the coming days.

As of Tuesday morning, more than 55 million people in the US were under some form of heat advisory, watch or warning, according to New York Times estimates using NWS advisories and LandScan population data.

A handful of heat-related deaths have been reported across the South.

Heavy fighting erupts in Sudanese capital ahead of Eid

Khartoum | Agencies

Heavy fighting erupted between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in the capital of Khartoum ahead of the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha.

According to witnesses, heavy artillery fire and gunshots were heard in parts of Khartoum late Tuesday after RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo had announced a two-day "unilateral ceasefire" the previous day, reports Xinhua news agency.

The armed conflict in Sudan has so far shown no sign of abating since it began on April 15, despite several ceasefire agreements reached intermittently between the warring sides over the past 10 weeks.

In addition to causing significant property damage and looting in Khartoum, where foreign diplomatic missions have also been targeted, the conflict has also caused turmoil in other parts of Sudan, particularly in the conflict-hit Darfur, a vast western region that borders Chad.

In a statement issued on June 24, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) called for immediate actions to stop the killing of civilians who



were fleeing El Geneina, the capital city of West Darfur State.

The Sudanese Doctors Syndicate said that more than 1,000 people had been killed in El Geneina by armed militias.

Since the conflict began, the number of overall fatalities has increased to more than 3,000, while over 6,000 people have also been injured, according to the Sudanese Health Ministry.

About 2.5 million people have been displaced inside and outside of Sudan, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs last week.

Air quality in Chicago among world's worst due to Canadian wildfires

Chicago | Agencies

Smoke drifting from the raging wildfires in Canada has caused the air quality level in Chicago to rank among the worst in the world.

As of 4 p.m. on Tuesday, AirNow.gov listed Chicago's air quality at 258, under the "very unhealthy" category, reports Xinhua news agency.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency issued an air quality alert in effect until midnight Wednesday and encouraged Chicago residents to limit their time outdoors.

Air Quality Alerts were also in effect for the states of Wisconsin and Indiana.

The Chicago Park District has moved programs, including summer camps, indoors,



while all beaches in Evanston have been closed, local media reported.

AirNow.gov recommends people who must be outside wear an N95 mask and those with heart or lung disease, older adults, children and teens to reduce exposure.

Mayor Brandon Johnson stated the air quality, saying the City of Chicago is carefully monitoring and taking precautions.

The US Environmental Protection Agency has categorised Chicago's Air Quality

Index as "unhealthy" due to Canadian wildfire smoke.

"We recommend children, teens, seniors, people with heart or lung disease, and individuals who are pregnant avoid strenuous activities and limit their time outdoors," Brandon said in the statement.

"Anyone who needs immediate medical attention should dial 911," the statement added.

Detroit had the second-worst air quality in the world Tuesday.

Indian-American jailed for smuggling Indian nationals into US using Uber

New York | Agencies

A 49-year-old Indian-American man was sentenced to more than three years in prison for illegally bringing hundreds of Indian nationals across the border from Canada and then to locations in the midwest and beyond, using ride-hailing major Uber.

Rajinder Pal Singh, aka Jaspal Gill of Elk Grove in California, was sentenced on Tuesday at the District Court in Seattle for Conspiracy to Transport and Harbor Certain Aliens for Profit and Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering.

Singh pleaded guilty in February, admitting that he took in more than \$500,000 as a key member of a smuggling ring that used Uber to transport people illegally.

"Over a four-year period, Mr Singh arranged for more than 800 people to be smuggled into the US across the northern border and into Washington State," said Acting US Attorney Tessa M Gorman.

She said that Singh's participation in the conspiracy saddled those smuggled with crushing



debt of as much as \$70,000.

According to records filed in the case, as early as July 2018, Singh and his co-conspirators used Uber

to transport people who had illegally crossed the border from Canada to the Seattle area.

Those records detail how trips beginning near the border in the early hours of the morning, would be split between different rides.

For example, one Uber trip would be from the border to Sea-Tac airport, and then minutes later the second trip would be from a nearby airport hotel to an address in Lacey, Washington, owned by Singh's spouse, the Attorney's office, Western District of Washington, said.

From mid-2018 to May 2022, Singh arranged more than 600 trips involving the transportation of Indian nationals who had been illegally smuggled into the US.

Once the non-citizens had been smuggled into the US, Singh coordinated with other co-conspirators who, using one-way vehicle rentals, would transport these individuals to their ultimate destinations outside Washington state.

Singh and his co-conspirators used sophisticated means to launder the organisation's illicit proceeds.



# 1 KILLED IN MUMBAI DUE TO HEAVY RAINFALL, WATERLOGGING SEEN IN MANY AREAS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Heavy rains led to waterlogging in many areas of Mumbai on Wednesday, forcing the closure of the busy Andheri subway, civic officials said.

A tree collapse incident claimed a man's life in suburban Malad, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said in a release.

The local train traffic on the Central and Western Railway routes was mostly normal though the trains were running a few minutes late, railway officials said.

"Due to accumulation of 1.5 to 2 feet of water, Andheri Subway is closed for vehicular movement. Traffic is diverted towards SV Road," Mumbai Traffic Police tweeted in the afternoon.

The civic-run Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport or 'BEST' buses on three routes were diverted at Ketti pada in Dahisar East.

In the 24 hours since previous morning, there were 26 incidents of tree fall, 15 incidents of short-circuit and five incidents of collapse or partial collapse of houses, the BMC said.



Rains also pounded neighbouring Thane city, leading to waterlogging and incidents of wall and house collapse.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted more showers in Mumbai, with moderate to intense rain spells in isolated places. Kaushal Doshi, 38, was severely injured in a tree fall at Mamledarwadi junction in the west-

ern suburb of Malad. He was rushed to the civic-run Shatabdi Hospital where the doctors declared him "brought dead", a BMC official said.

The island city (south Mumbai), eastern and western suburbs received 12.44 mm, 42.41 mm and 40.46 mm of rainfall, respectively, between 8 am to 12 noon on Wednesday, as per civic officials. IMD Mumbai issued a 'nowcast'

# Vegetable prices soar in Mumbai retail outlets, but score on e-markets

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

Mumbai and other major cities have been rattled by a sudden and steep spurt in the prices of most daily consumption vegetables, with the tomato commanding almost a king's ransom, in the past few days, and the situation may continue to be grim until at least August.

In contrast, the prices of the same daily use, popular vegetables are between 20-40 per cent cheaper in e-markets or on most major online portals like Jio Fresh, Amazon, Reliance Smart, Amazon, BigBasket, Natures Basket.

A perusal of several of these sites showed that not only are the prices lower compared with the markets, the fresh vegetables are in great demand and so some companies promise delivery only after 24-48 hours.

For instance, the prices of tomato on the online portals range between Rs 70-90, compared with Rs 100-130 in the open markets, plus there are gaping differences in the rates of most other veggies online and offline.

Other popular but smaller online retailers or departmental stores in the city have either dropped the pricey veggies off their lists or quote near-similar rates veggies, thus giving a tough competition to the friendly neighbourhood streetcorner 'bhajiwala' or the mobile 'feriwalla' roaming the Mumbai streets.

Experts and market players claim that the



recent steep hike in prices since mid-May -- from double to triple to quadruple, depending on the vegetable -- is due to an array of reasons.

Prime among these are the delayed onset of monsoon in most parts of India, coupled with unexpected shortages, changes in cropping patterns and scalding fuel prices.

Market expert and Vashi APMC Director, Ashok Walunj said what the market is getting in the past few days is old stock, due to the delay in rains, that has led to an unusual shortage, fuelling the price hikes.

Plus, huge quantities of onions and potatoes were spoiled and there are no takers for the stocks which are now going for Rs 10-12/kg in the APMCs, and around Rs 20-25/kg in the retail markets, but these will shoot up to Rs 35-45/kg by August, he cautioned.

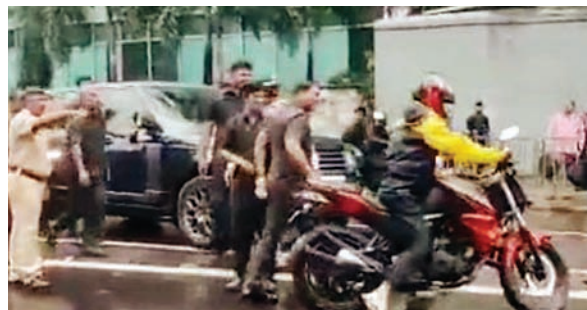
# Flutter as speeding motorbike rams Aditya Thackeray's car, no injuries

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A speeding motorcyclist banged into the slow-moving SUV of Shiv Sena-UBT leader Aditya Thackeray outside the Shiv Sena Bhavan in Dadar on Wednesday afternoon, creating a minor security flutter, party leaders said.

The incident occurred when Thackeray junior was proceeding to the party headquarters for a meeting when the motorcycle, apparently out of control, rammed into the right side of his vehicle and the rider fell down. He again got up with the bike even as Thackeray's police and security detail rushed towards him to help.

From viral videos, it appears that the motorcyclist apprehended a collision and



attempted to slow and control his vehicle but it still hit the SUV. Scared of the consequences, the unidentified man attempted to start his motorcycle and escape, but a security personnel hopped after him, took him aside and removed the ignition key before taking him away for questioning.

On reaching the Shiv Sena Bhavan, Thackeray, who was sitting in the front seat beside

the driver, enquired after the condition of the motorcyclist and was told that "he's fine, all normal".

Meanwhile, the incident - coming days after his security cover was reportedly trimmed - sparked concerns in various quarters.

Thackeray was barraged with phone calls and messages prompting him to tweet that "all are safe and nobody was injured" in the accident.

# GOATS FOR EID TRIGGER POLICE CASE AGAINST 11 AT MUMBAI APARTMENTS

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The arrival of two goats at a private housing colony near Mumbai sparked tensions, prompted slogans of Jai Shri Ram and recitals of the Hanuman Chalisa on Tuesday before police intervention managed to bring matters under control.

A police case has now been filed against 11 individuals in connection with the incident, news agency ANI reported.

The incident took place in the Thane district's Mira Road, next to Mumbai, where resident Mohsin Sheikh had brought the animals into his home ahead of the Muslim festival of Bakrid, traditionally marked by the sacrifice of livestock.

The move sparked uproar among many society members, who subsequently gathered to protest. Protesters chanted religious slogans and recited the Hanuman Chalisa, a Hindu devotional hymn.

"Our society had passed a rule that no livestock would be allowed inside



the society, but they violated it and brought two goats inside. We are opposing it and will not allow it."

Police were called to the scene to manage the escalating tensions and encountered a heated exchange with

the residents. "We appeal to all to maintain communal harmony and follow the rules of the society," another resident said. Despite the police's intervention, there was a brief clash between the officers and some of the

society's members.

Sheikh stated that in previous years, the building's owner had provided space for Muslim families to keep livestock for the festival. This year, however, he was told that there was no space available. He also claimed that he had requested a place within the society to keep his goats but was denied.

With no other option, Sheikh brought the two goats into his home early Tuesday morning. He maintained that the animals were not intended for sacrifice within the society, stating, "We always get the slaughter done elsewhere."

The police informed society members that according to the rules, no sacrifices were permitted within the society, and urged Sheikh to remove the animals in consideration of the sentiments of other residents.

The incident has set off a fierce debate on social media, with a video of the event circulating on multiple platforms. The video shows residents shouting and preventing Sheikh from taking the goats into his home.

# WhatsApp Pink scam on rise, Mumbai Police issues red alert for Android users

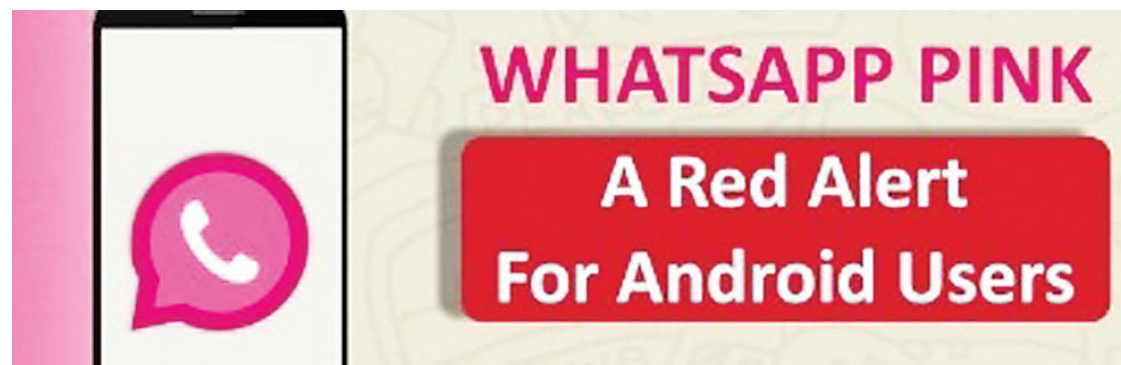
Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai Police have issued a red alert for Android users who have downloaded WhatsApp in Pink.

In a Twitter post, the Mumbai Police said, "WHATSAPP PINK - A Red Alert For Android Users", along with a picture explaining the consequences as well as the measures to protect yourself from the scam.

"The news about 'New Pink Look WhatsApp with extra features' which is recently doing rounds among the WhatsApp users is a hoax which can lead to hacking of your mobile through malicious software," the picture reads.

"It is not an uncommon instance, to see the fraudsters come up with variety of new tricks and ways to lure gullible users into falling into their trap to commit cyber frauds. It is for the users to be Aware, Alert, and



Attentive to these kinds of frauds and remain safe and secure in the digital world." Downloading WhatsApp in Pink can lead to misuse of contact numbers and pictures saved on mobile phones, financial loss, misuse of your credentials, spam messages, and more.

People are advised to immediately uninstall the fake app downloaded on

their mobile by navigating to settings> apps> WhatsApp (pink logo) and uninstall it.

You should never click on links received from unknown sources without proper verification or authentication. Also, you should always install applications through the official app store of Google or iOS or a legitimate website. Always keep in mind to

never share your personal details or financial information like login credentials, passwords, credit or debit card details and other such information online with anyone, as it can be misused. aware and alert about such attempts of cyber criminals by keeping track of the latest news and updates on the activities of cyber fraudsters.

# After National Award, makers of '72 Hoorain' are upset over CBFC rejecting its trailer

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The makers of the National Award winning movie '72 Hoorain', at the movie's trailer launch, expressed disagreement with the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) for their decision to reject the trailer.

Labeling the decision as regressive to the artistic spirit, Ashoke Pandit who is the co-producer of the movie, said: "We are extremely hurt and disturbed because of CBFC's unfair decision of rejecting the trailer without any reason."

This action raises a big concern about creativity, freedom and realistic filmmaking. We will not take this lightly and will knock on the doors of the high court too, if needed."



"Further, we will also be requesting the I&B ministry to intervene and question the authority at CBFC for rejecting the trailer."

The director of the movie, Sanjay Puri Singh Chauhan, a two-time National Award Winner, who seemed visibly unhappy with CBFC's decision, added: "The movie has won the National Award by the gov-

ernment and has received a censor certificate already. The trailer carries the same essence of the movie."

"So on what basis has CBFC rejected the trailer!" He added: "We would request everybody to watch the movie and then jump to any conclusion. The movie only states facts and certainly does not target any religion or hurt religious sentiments."

# OLD MAN KILLED BY SPEEDING CAR; DRIVER ARRESTED

Mumbai: A 76-year-old man was killed in a hit-and-run case after a speeding car rammed into him in Mumbai's Mulund on Tuesday night, police said. The car's driver has been arrested, they added.

According to Mulund police, the accident took place at 8.45 pm when 22-year-old Amresh Yadav hit Tukaram Sawant, who was walking on the side of a road, and scooter driver nearby with his car. The driver then abandoned his car and fled.

While Sawant died on the spot, the scooter driver was badly injured and is receiving treatment at a hospital.

A case has been registered against Yadav for rash driving, causing hurt and death by negligence under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code and Motor Vehicles Act.

# "BJP's Team B": Team Uddhav 's dig at KCR's party

'Saamna', the official newspaper of the Uddhav Thackeray faction took a dig at the Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao in its editorial calling Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) the 'B' team of BJP.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Telangana CM is on a two-day trip to Maharashtra from Tuesday.

"KCR is making an emotional appeal to the farmers of Maharashtra, seeking votes in the name of farmers. But the overall picture is that his party will pave the way for BJP to divide votes. BJP's politics has always been like this. In Maharashtra, BJP has already kept many horses and mules as the 'B' team. Another party from Telangana has joined it," it said.

"KCR has decided to enter national politics by establishing a party called the Bharat Rashtra Samithi. However, there was no need for this. He had a regional party and it was doing well, but the worm of national politics had entered Rao's mind," it added.

The mouthpiece of the Uddhav Thackeray faction said that although Rao has contributed a lot to the establishment of Telangana and has successfully implemented various schemes to improve the standard of living of the farmers, even then it's not sure whether he'll remain in power in 2024 or not.

"In the establishment of the state of Telangana, K.



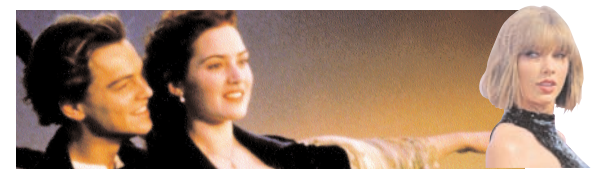
Chandrasekhar Rao's struggle is big. It is equally true that if Rao had not fought, the Telangana state would not have been formed. Rao became the Chief Minister of Telangana twice. Although he has successfully implemented many such schemes to improve the standard of living of the farmers there but still no one can guarantee whether KCR's party will remain in power in 2024," it stated.

Pointing out the relationship between All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief Asaduddin Owaisi and BJP, the mouthpiece said that earlier BJP used Owaisi for dividing votes but now after understanding Owaisi's ploy, it is clear that Muslims and Dalits will not go with him. So is BJP trying to field KCR instead of Owaisi?

"Since 2019 the AIMIM's Owaisi is being used by the BJP for the purpose of dividing votes. Owaisi moved to Maharashtra and other states to divide votes.

They did their job well, but after understanding Owaisi's ploy, it is clear that Muslims and Dalits will not fall for him. So is that why BJP has now fielded KCR instead of Owaisi? Are KCR and his party acting as the 'B' team of the BJP?" it said.

Sanjay Raut said that KCR came to Maharashtra fearing loss in Telangana where, he said, the fight is between KCR and Congress.



# 'I would've turned down 'Barbie'

**MARGOT ROBBIE PERFECTED BARBIE'S ARCHED FEET IN EIGHT TAKES**

Los Angeles | Agencies

The official trailer for 'Barbie' begins with a now-iconic shot of actress Margot Robbie stepping out of her high-heeled slippers to reveal her bare feet are still arched and it took the Hollywood star eight takes to ace that. As revealed in a new Time magazine cover story on the making of 'Barbie': "The shot took eight takes. (Margot Robbie) had to hold onto a bar to keep her feet flexed," reports 'Variety'. Robbie also told Time that she would've turned down 'Barbie' had Greta Gerwig and Noah

Baumbach's script not incorporated many different Barbie characters.

"If (Mattel) hadn't made that change to have a multiplicity of Barbies, I don't think I would have wanted to attempt to make a Barbie film," Robbie said.

"I don't think you should say, 'This is the one version of what Barbie is and that's what women should aspire to be and look like and act like.'"

Robbie told Vogue last month that she also courted Gal Gadot to star as a Barbie in the movie since she feels like the Wonder Woman actor embodies "Barbie energy."

In playing the main Barbie charac-

ter herself, Robbie also had to sort through questions regarding beauty and sexiness. After all, Barbie is a children's doll.

"I'm like, 'Okay, she's a doll. She's a plastic doll. She doesn't have organs. If she doesn't have organs, she doesn't have reproductive organs. If she doesn't have reproductive organs, would she even feel sexual desire?' No, I don't think she could," Robbie said.

"She is sexualised. But she should never be sexy. People can project sex onto her. Yes, she can wear a short skirt, but because it's fun and pink. Not because she wanted you to see her butt."



**JENNIFER LAWRENCE HIRES 'BABY NURSE' TO HELP DE NIRO AFTER HE WELCOMED 7TH CHILD**

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Jennifer Lawrence arranged a "baby nurse" for veteran star Robert De Niro after he welcomed his seventh child into the world.

The 32-year-old actress offered her "Silver Linings Playbook" co-star and his partner Tiffany Chen the "ultimate present" when their daughter Gia was born in April, reports [aceshowbiz.com](https://www.aceshowbiz.com).

"I did one better I sent over a baby nurse. I did. I'm really happy for him," she told a caller on "Watch What Happens Live" when asked if she had sent a baby gift to De Niro.

Host Andy Cohen - who is dad to Ben, four, and 17-month-old Lucy - praised Jennifer for the gesture, saying a "night's sleep" would be the best gift for someone.

The 'No Hard Feelings' star was also asked how her own son is doing. She smiled, "He's good."

Meanwhile, Robert introduced his daughter to the world on 'CBS Mornings' in May, where he revealed the tot's full name and confirmed she weighed 8lbs 6oz when she was born on April 6 as he showed off a photo of her.

When host Gayle King asked Robert if the baby was planned, he replied, "Yes, this baby was planned. We are over the moon. She was brought here by love."

The 'Meet the Parents' star originally let slip the news about his seventh child during an interview with ET Canada. Reporter Brittnee Blair said, "I know you have six kids..." prompting Robert to reply, "Seven, actually. I just had a baby."

## Idris Elba refused to play James Bond after being put off by racism

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Idris Elba was one of the biggest contenders for portraying James Bond after Daniel Craig left the franchise. However, he shared that he refused to play the famous MI6 spy-killer due to high racist backlash.

According to Deadline, the actor told the 'Smartless' podcast:

"Essentially, it was a huge compliment that every corner of the world except from some corners, which we will not talk about, were really happy about the idea that I could be considered."

He said: "Those that weren't happy about the idea made the whole thing disgusting and off-putting because it became about race. It became about nonsense, and I got the brunt of it."

"The truth is, I was super complimented for a long time about this. I was like, 'This is crazy!' Because James Bond... We're all actors and we understand that role. It's one of those coveted (roles)," Elba said.

He added: "Being asked to be James Bond was like, 'Okay, you've sort of reached the pinnacle.'"

As per Deadline, the actor had earlier told Esquire UK this year that he was no longer describing himself as a black actor, saying "when I realised it put me in a box. We've got to grow. We've got to. Our skin is no more than that: it's just skin. Rant over."



**David Corenswet, Rachel Brosnahan cast for 'Superman: Legacy'**



Los Angeles | Agencies

Actors David Corenswet and Rachel Brosnahan will play the new Clark Kent and Lois Lane in James Gunn's film 'Superman: Legacy'.

The latest on-screen iteration of the iconic comic book hero will largely be a workplace origin story, Gunn said when he and fellow DC steward Peter Safran laid out their narrative plans in January, reports 'Variety'.

Corenswet, who broke out in Ryan Murphy's Netflix series 'Hollywood', will play cub reporter Kent at the fictional newspaper 'The Daily Planet'. Brosnahan will be his coworker and co-lead.

Gunn is directing the project from his own screenplay, based on the character created by Jerry

Siegel and Joe Shuster. Safran ('Aquaman', the upcoming 'Aquaman 2', and 'The Conjuring' franchise) will produce. The project is set for release on July 11, 2025.

"It focuses on Superman balancing his Kryptonian heritage with his human upbringing," Safran said earlier this year when he and Gunn unveiled a lengthy block of planned DC films and series.

"He is the embodiment of truth, justice and the American way. He is kind in a world that thinks of kindness as old-fashioned."

He also wrote, directed and starred in the web sketch comedy series 'Moe & Jerryweather'. He will next be seen opposite Natalie Portman in 'The Lady In The Lake'.

## Nicole Scherzinger engaged to boyfriend Thom Evans



Los Angeles | Agencies

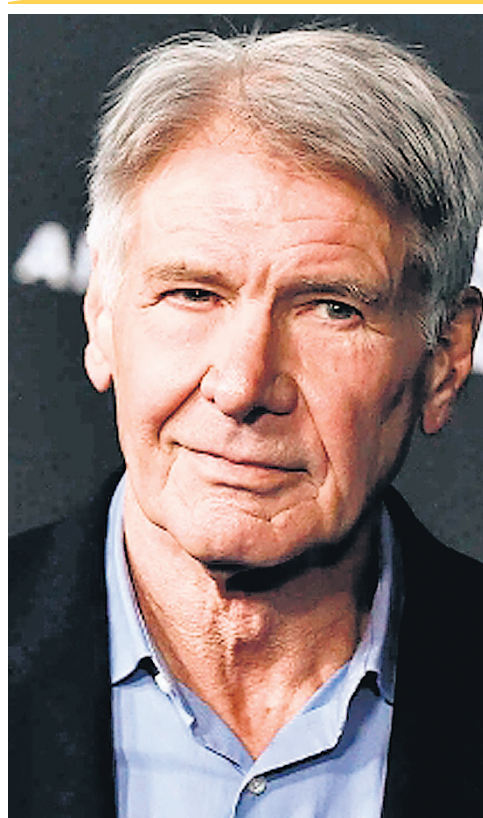
The popular American dance-pop group Pussycat Dolls lead singer Nicole Scherzinger has announced her engagement to her rugby player boyfriend Thom Evans. Scherzinger, (44), took to Instagram to share snaps of the moment her Scottish boyfriend Evans, (38), popped the question during a trip to Vila Nova de Gaia in Portugal. Nicole aptly captioned her post: "I said yes," along with a ring emoji.

Evans also posted the same pictures on his Instagram account, captioning them, "My Ever After". As per People, the couple made their red carpet debut at the 21st Annual InStyle and Warner Bros. Pictures Golden

Globe Afterparty in Beverly Hills in January 2020. Since then, the couple has shared glimpses of their relationship on social media.

In May, Scherzinger shared photos on Instagram from their trip to Portugal. Scherzinger and Evans first met in 2019 when the rugby player appeared as a contestant on "X Factor: Celebrity", where Scherzinger was serving as a judge, as per reports. Evans previously dated model and actress Kelly Brook, whom he split from in 2013. Scherzinger previously dated Bulgarian tennis player Grigor Dimitrov from 2016 to early 2019.

In 2015, she split from Formula One racing driver Lewis Hamilton after a seven-year on-and-off relationship.



**Harrison Ford doesn't see himself as a legend: 'It sounds old'**

London | Agencies

Hollywood star Harrison Ford doesn't see himself as a legend and thinks the tag makes him "sound old".

The 80-year-old star has portrayed some of cinema's most iconic characters over the course of his six-decade career, including Indiana Jones, 'Star Wars' Han Solo, and Jack Ryan, but he doesn't think what he's done is particularly special and sees himself as just a "working actor", reports [femalefirst.co.uk](https://www.femalefirst.co.uk).

He told Entertainment Weekly magazine of the 'Legend' tag: "I don't connect

the dots myself. I mean, I do not know what a legend does for a living. I know that I consider myself to be a working actor, and I'll settle for that."

The 'Shrinking' star said the accolade just "sounds old", though he knows it is meant to be a compliment. He added: "I suppose legend means that you've been around for a long time. And I think it's meant to be, uh, gracious, but it just, uh... sounds old."

"I'm clever enough to figure out that it's meant to be a nice thing to say, and so it must be. But I'm just telling you what my gut reaction to it is."

Harrison could never sin-

gle out one of his characters as his favourite from over the years.

He said: "I'm a 'love the one you're with' guy - I don't have favourites."

He said ahead of the release of the fifth and final movie in the series: "There is an audience loyalty that is exceptional. I guess it has to do with rinse and repeat, perhaps, but it is gratifying."

"And what's more gratifying even than that is the fact that these movies have been passed on from generation to generation in families. And that really has introduced me to new generations of filmgoers."



**Anna Ermakova**



## Ashes 2023

# NATHAN LYON BECOMES FIRST SPECIALIST BOWLER TO PLAY 100 CONSECUTIVE TEST MATCHES

London | Agencies

After taking the field for the second Test of Ashes 2023 against England at Lord's, veteran Australian off-spinner Nathan Lyon on Wednesday became the first specialist bowler to play 100 consecutive matches in the longest format of the game.

Lyon, who made his Test debut in July 2011, has also become only the sixth player in the history of cricket to feature in 100 consecutive Tests. Other players in the list are Alastair Cook (159), Allan Border (153), Mark Waugh (107), Sunil Gavaskar (106) and Brendon McCullum (101).

Coincidentally, Lyon has achieved this rare landmark at Lord's, the same venue where he was dropped in the format for the last time. This was almost a decade ago during Australia's tour of England for the 2013 Ashes series.



"That's something I'm really proud of. To be able to tick off 100 consecutive Test matches, that's a proper stat in my head. That's a lot of Test cricket, a lot of ups and downs. No wonder I've got no hair," Lyon had told cricket.com.au, ahead

of his 100th consecutive Test appearance.

Lyon also credited former New South Wales Waratahs rugby representative and Australia women's rugby sevens' head of athletic performance Tom Carter for keeping

him in prime physical shape throughout his 12-year Test career, apart from acknowledging support from family and friends.

We have really good conversations, so it's probably having those really good people around you and I dare say a lot of athletes would feel the same, being able to do it for a long period of time," he added.

Australia were pushed into batting first under overcast skies at Lord's by England, who won the toss and elected to bowl first.

For Australia, left-arm pacer Mitchell Starc replaced right-arm seamer Scott Boland in the playing while England have brought in pacer Josh Tongue in place of off-spin all-rounder Moeen Ali.

Australia are currently leading five-match Ashes series 1-0, after winning the opening match at Edgbaston by two wickets in a thrilling fashion.

# Indian boxer Sumit advances to semifinals, confirms medal at 2nd Elorda Cup

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Indian boxer Sumit secured a resounding victory to confirm the bronze medal in the 86kg category on the second day of Elorda cup in Astana, Kazakhstan on Wednesday.

Sumit dominated his quarter-final bout against Bekzat Tangatar of Kazakhstan from the get go and showcased his power and precision to win 5-0 in a one-sided affair.

In the 51kg pre-quarterfinal bout, Zoram Muana displayed his prowess to emerge victorious in 4-1 split verdict against Daryan Kulzhabayev of Kazakhstan.

He will face Tokyo Olympics bronze medalist Saken Bibossinov of Kazakhstan, in the quarter-final on Thursday.

In the other quarter-final bouts, Shivender Kaur (50kg) fought valiantly but lost 1-4



against Gulnar Tarapbay of Kazakhstan. Sonia Lather (57kg) faced a unanimous 0-5 loss against Grafeyeva Viktoriya of Kazakhstan. Poonam (60kg) was engaged in a closely contested match but ultimately lost by a narrow 2-3 margin against Issayeva Shakhnaz of Kazakhstan. Sanjay (80kg) faced a formidable opponent in Khabibullaev Turabek of Uzbekistan and endured a 0-5 loss in the quarter-finals.

On Thursday, four Indians will take to the ring to contest

their respective quarter finals bouts.

Amongst male pugilists, Pukharam Kishan Singh (54kg) will square off against Daulet Moldashev of Kazakhstan while Ashish Kumar (57kg) will take on Sukhth Sarawat of Thailand. Hemant Yadav (71kg) will go head-to-head against Talgat Shaikenov of Kazakhstan.

In the women's category, Shiksha (54kg) will face off against Zhaina Shekerbekova of Kazakhstan in her last-8 bout.

## Asian Kabaddi Championship

# India beat Japan 62-17 to continue unbeaten run

Busan (South Korea) | Agencies

The Indian men's kabaddi team beat Japan 62-17 to register its third straight win at the Asian Kabaddi Championship 2023, here on Wednesday.

Aslam Inamdar, who made an impressive debut against Korea on Tuesday, got his second super 10 of the tournament and was once again the top-scorer in the match. Parvesh Bhainswal led India's charge in defence.

Both India and Japan came into the game on the back of two wins each.

Japan, who were ruthless in their 85-11 victory over Hong Kong on Tuesday and beat Korea 45-18 earlier in the day, failed to find answers against the Indian kabaddi team.

India inflicted six all-outs on Japan with three in each half. The defending champions scored their first all-out in the fourth minute and raced to an 18-0 lead before Japan opened their account in the eighth minute, an olympics.com report said.

The first half ended with a score of 32-6 in India's favour. Captain Pawan Sehrawat was



India's top raider in the first half with six points. Japan had a better showing in the second half and scored quick points at the end. India, however, won the kabaddi match with a margin of 45 points. Earlier in the tournament, India dominated Korea 76-13 followed by a 53-19 win over Chinese Taipei on Tuesday. The Indian kabaddi team will take on Iran on Thursday. Iran are also unbeaten in the tournament so far.

Six teams -- India, Iran, Japan, Korea, Chinese Taipei and Hong Kong -- are participating in the Asian Championships. The top two teams after the single-legged round-robin league will meet in the final on Friday.

## SAFF Championship

# LEBANON SET UP A PENULTIMATE ROUND BATTLE WITH INDIA

Bengaluru | Agencies

Skipper Hassan Maatouk 24th minute strike steered Lebanon to a 1-0 victory over the Maldives in a Group B match of the SAFF Championship 2023, at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium on Wednesday.

Lebanon have topped the group with an all-win record in the four-team group. With this win, Lebanon set up a semi-final clash with India to be played on July 1. The two teams met recently in the final of the Intercontinental Cup in Bhubaneswar, where India emerged the winners.

The Maldives, ranked 154 in the FIFA Men's rankings were hoping to punch above its weight by winning against Lebanon, whom they have never beaten in previously. However, the solitary goal from Hassan Maatouk dashed their hopes.

Since Lebanon had already ensured a place in the semi-finals, it prompted their Head Coach Aleksandar Ilic to rest a few of his regular players, including Karim



Darwich.

Lebanon started the match on a positive note, keeping plenty of possession and trying to stretch the Maldives defence.

The deadlock was finally broken in the 24th minute when Lebanon was awarded a free kick a few metres outside the penalty box. Skipper, Hassan

Maatouk stepped up to curl in a right-footed shot past Maldives custodian Hussain Shareef. Hussain was left wrong-footed after Hassan's shot took a deflection and went in.

The Maldives defence were struggling to cope with Lebanon's constant surge during this spell. Hassan Maatouk combined well with

Mohamad Sadek and Zein Al Abidine Farran to create havoc in the rival area. Moments after the first goal, Lebanon squandered a golden opportunity to extend their lead when Mohamad Sadek missed from a close range. He shot well over the crossbar following Zein Al Abidine Farran's brilliant pass from the right.

Farran created another opportunity for Lebanon as he chipped in a cross from the right to find Hassan Maatouk but his header lacked power to beat Hussain Shareef in goal. Maldives, on the other hand, failed to have a shot on target and Lebanon goalkeeper Mehdi Khalil was never tested.

Lebanon tried to extend their lead in the second half and had it not been for Hussain Shareef under the bar, the Maldives would have conceded a few more goals. He saved two brilliant attempts from Ali Al Haj in the second half to keep the Maldives in the game.

The Maldives finished their SAFF Championship campaign with only one win in three matches.

# Aliandro, Borja send River Plate into Copa Libertadores last 16

Buenos Aires | Agencies

Rodrigo Aliandro and Miguel Borja scored either side of half-time as River Plate eased into the Copa Libertadores last 16 with a 2-0 home win over The Strongest.

Aliandro put the hosts ahead by rifling a long-range effort into the bottom right corner and Colombian striker Borja doubled the lead with a 90th-minute tap-in on Tuesday.

The result at the Monumental stadium left River second in Group D with 10 points from six games, behind Brazil's Fluminense on goal difference. The Strongest finished fourth with six points, a Xinhua report said. Meanwhile, Vitor Roque netted two second-



half goals as Atletico Paranaense cruised to a 3-0 home victory over Alianza Lima.

Vitor Bueno was also on the scoresheet for the Brazilian side, who secured the Group G leadership with 13 points, three points ahead of Atletico Mineiro.

In other Copa Libertadores fixtures on Tuesday, Atletico Mineiro drew 1-1 at Libertad, Olimpia won 4-1 at home to Melgar, Patronato prevailed 1-0 at Atletico Nacional and Fluminense were held to a 1-1 home draw by Sporting Cristal.

## Women's Ashes

# England got their tactics badly wrong, allowed Australia to get off to a flier

London | Agencies

Former England cricketer Mark Butcher feels that the Heather Knight-led side got their tactics so wrong on day three's play in the one-off Women's Ashes Test that they allowed Australia to get off to a flier and eventually win the game by 89 runs.

During the day three's play, England gave a 10-run lead to Australia and then they allowed the visitors to increase the lead to 92 runs by stumps, without the loss of a wicket. Moreover, effective bowlers like Lauren Filer and Sophie Ecclestone were overlooked for bowling duties in favour of Kate Cross and Lauren Bell with the new



ball. Similar thing happened early on day four till the 25th over of the first session, also including two dropped catches, when Australia's first wicket fell. By then, England were pushed firmly on the backfoot and subsequently lost the match to be 4-0 behind on points in the multi-format series.

## Ashes 2023

# Protesters briefly disrupt play during second Eng vs Aus Test at Lord's

London | Agencies

A group of protesters from the 'Just Stop Oil' activist group on Wednesday briefly interrupted the proceedings on the first morning of the second Ashes 2023 Test between England and Australia at Lord's.

Ahead of the second over of the match, protesters wearing 'Just Stop Oil' t-shirts and holding bags of orange powder, ran onto the ground but neither made it onto the playing strip.

While captain Ben Stokes stopped one protestor and a steward took care of another protestor, England wicketkeeper Jonny Bairstow sprung into action by lifting and carrying one protestor off the field, all by himself.

The ground staff then arrived to sweep and remove the orange powder paint which had spilled on the outfield. Bairstow, meanwhile, ran to the dressing room to change his white shirt and wicket-keeping gloves, which was made dirty by orange powder paint. In all, play was delayed for nearly six minutes before action resumed. It is the second time in the recent few months that the England team



have been interrupted by a 'Just Stop Oil' protest. On day one of the one-off Test against Ireland at Lord's, their team bus suffered a brief halt after leaving the hotel for Lord's by the protestors for five minutes.

# San Lorenzo reach Copa Sudamericana knockout stage



Buenos Aires | Agencies

Paraguayan forward Adam Bareiro scored twice as San Lorenzo came from behind to advance to the Copa Sudamericana knockout stage with a 4-1 home win over Estudiantes Merida.

The Venezuelan outfit took the lead in the third minute when Luis Arenas capitalized on a defensive error to slide a first-time effort past goalkeeper Beycker Velasquez on Tuesday, Xinhua reported. Adam Bareiro scored either side of halftime to

hand San Lorenzo the advantage before goals from Malcolm Braida and Nahuel Barrios put the victory beyond doubt for the Argentine side.

The result left San Lorenzo second in Group H with eight points from six matches, ahead of third-placed Palestino on goal difference. Estudiantes Merida finished last in the group with just three points from six games.

Earlier, Fortaleza secured a 2-1 win at Palestino to finish top of the group, seven points clear of San Lorenzo.

## Duleep Trophy

# Murasingh shines for East Zone, Shorey stars with century for North Zone

Bengaluru | Agencies

Tripura seamer Manisankar Murasingh picked a five-wicket haul to shine for East Zone in their Duleep Trophy quarterfinal match against Central Zone at Alur Cricket Ground on Wednesday.

In the second quarterfinal, Delhi batter Dhruv Shorey starred with a fine 135 for North Zone to push North East Zone on backfoot at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium. At Alur, Murasingh picked his 13th five-wicket haul in first-class cricket and was the driving force behind East Zone bowling out Central Zone for just 182. By the end of day's play, East Zone lost opening pair of captain Abhimanyu Easwaran for a golden duck and Shantanu Mishra for six.

Sudip Gharami and Shahbaz Nadeem, coming in as nightwatchman, took East Zone to 32/2 at stumps, trailing Central Zone by 150 runs. Central Zone opens Vivek Singh and



Himanshu Mantri had a 39-run opening partnership, before Murasingh castled the former. Pacer Ishan Porel joined in by trapping Kunal Chandela lbw, followed by Mantri being run-out in a mix-up and Shubham Sharma being caught out off Shahbaz. Rinku Singh and Upendra Yadav tried to resurrect the inning with a 61-run stand for the fifth

wicket, but the duo and Saransh Jain fell before tea.

Post tea, Murasingh took two more scalps to complete his five-wicket haul while Shahbaz took out last man Yash Thakur to end Central Zone's innings on 182. Avesh Khan came out and trapped Easwaran as well as Mishra lbw to bring East Zone back in the game till stumps came. At the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, Shorey hit his 11th century first-class cricket, aided by 22 fours against the North East Zone bowling line-up. He was also supported by young wicket-keeper-batter Nishant Sindhu, a member of India's 2022 U19 Men's Cricket World Cup winning team.

## Brief scores

North Zone 306/6 in 87 overs (Dhruv Shorey 135, Nishant Sindhu not out) against North East Zone  
East Zone 32/2 in 12 overs (Sudip Kumar Gharami 19 not out; Avesh Khan 2/13) trail Central Zone 182 all out in 71.4 overs (Rinku Singh 38; Manisankar Murasingh 5/42) by 150 runs

## 6th Youth Women's National Boxing

# Asian junior champion Kirti storms into quarters

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Showcasing a remarkable display of talent and exuberance, pugilists Kirti and Nikita recorded contrasting victories and progressed to the quarters of the 6th Youth Women's National Boxing Championship, here.

In a gripping match held on the second day of the tournament, Kirti (+81kg) showcased her exceptional skills and secured a 5:0 victory against Manisha Giri from Punjab. The reigning Asian Junior Champion's precision and agility were on full display throughout the bout as she left no room for doubt about her superiority in the ring.

Kirti will take to the ring against Keerthana Lakshmi of Telangana in her quarters bout. Two-time Asian junior



champion Nikita (60kg) had to grind hard to secure a hard-fought 5:2 win on points after her bout against Anamika Yadav from Uttar Pradesh was reviewed. The Uttarakhand-born pugilist utilized her quick movement and swift punches to emerge victorious in the fiercely contested bout. Following her triumph, Nikita will square off against Sakshi of Haryana in the quarter finals.



# 'Sau Takka'

## Kartik, Kiara enacted their iconic dialogue at concert

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**K**artik Aaryan and Kiara Advani enacted their iconic 'sau takka' dialogue from their upcoming film 'Satyaprem Ki Katha' during a musical concert in Navi Mumbai. Ahead of its release on June 29, Kartik and Kiara joined Meet Bros to enthrall the audience with their performances at the concert, and on the insistence of fans, they enacted the dialogue on stage.

Kartik and Kiara also greeted their fans who gave them an overwhelming response at the event and posed for pictures.

The musical romantic family drama features an ensemble cast consisting of Kartik, Kiara, Supriya Pathak, Gajraj Rao, Shikha Talsania, Siddharth Randeria and Anuradha Patel.

Helmed by Sameer Vidwans, 'Satyaprem Ki Katha' has been jointly produced by Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment and Namah Pictures.

Kartik will later be seen in Hansal Mehta's next, 'Captain India', and in Kabir Khan's forthcoming untitled project. Kiara, meanwhile, will be seen in Shankar's next, 'Game Changer', opposite Ram Charan.



## PALAK JAIN SAYS SHE FEELS SIMILARITIES TO HER CHARACTER SEERAT

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**A**ctress Palak Jain who is known for her roles in serials such as 'Veer Shivaji' and 'Sunaina - Mera Sapna Sach Hua', has now entered Ravi Dubey and Sargun Mehta's Hindi-Punjabi romantic drama series 'Junooniyat'.

Essaying the role of Seerat in the show, the actress said that she can relate to the character quite well as she feels that she shares a level of similarity to her own self.

Elaborating on this, she said "While portraying Seerat, I have noticed some similarities, such as creating humour and spreading smiles around me, which is something I do in real life. I always listen to what my mom

says, just like Seerat. Whatever she says to me, I never question it; it's final. She means everything to me."

"Just like Seerat, I also take a stand for what is right and wrong. In my very first scene, if someone was making a phone call in a hospital queue, I would also fight against it, just like Seerat did," she added.

Describing her character, she said "Seerat is full of life, blunt, straightforward, yet soft-hearted. She fights against what is wrong, and she doesn't tolerate anything that is unjust. She is vulnerable, like today's girl, who knows how to take a stand. She is free-spirited and returned from Canada after studying abroad."

Talking about her first experience on working with the show creators, she said "This is the first time I'm working with Sargun ma'am and Ravie sir and Dreamiyata, and they always create magic when they are onscreen. I haven't had the chance to meet them yet, but I really want to." "I'm incredibly happy to be a part of this passionate show, filled with love and intensity. After performing my very first scene, I was so happy and overwhelmed that I cried in my green room. It was a moment of pure joy to portray Seerat."

## Falaq opens up about brother Sheezan going to jail after Tunisha's suicide

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**A**ctress Falaq Naaz was seen opening up about her brother Sheezan Khan's troubled life of going to jail after his co-actress Tunisha Sharma's death. In the latest episode of the show, Falaq was seen getting emotional and talking about her brother. She was heard saying: "I never take credit for standing and defending my family. My younger brother Shabi only kept asking about Sheezan when he was behind bars."

Falaq shared how she and her family couldn't tell Shabi when Sheezan would return.

"Once, Shabi went to jail to see Sheezan... Shabi spoke to Sheezan on the phone by being on the other side of the window, and while crying, he asked Sheezan, 'When are you coming home?' Only I know how I have managed the situation."

All teared up, Falaq then revealed the reason behind her being scared of attachments.

"People keep saying 'Karma is a b\*\*\*h'... This is the reason I'm scared of attachment. Now we are even scared to suggest a physician to someone. Humanity is not left. Some even say that I'm here to polish my family's image." She expressed that she does not need to do that.



## Rashmika begins shooting for her sequel movie

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**R**ashmika Mandanna has started shooting for the upcoming film 'Pushpa: The Rule', starring Allu Arjun. She shared a sneak peek from the film sets on her Instagram. She will reprise the role of Srivalli in the sequel. She shared a picture and captioned it: "#nightsheet"

Rashmika has wrapped up shooting for her upcoming film 'Animal', which stars Ranbir Kapoor. The film is directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga

On the work front, Rashmika will also be seen in Rainbow and VNR Trio

## Avika Gor to have a busy working birthday this year

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**A**ctress Avika Gor, who will be turning 26 on Friday, will be having a working birthday on two different sets. "I am shooting for two projects, so two different sets, two different celebrations with my units. It's going to be exciting and constructive unlike other birthdays where I just chill and have fun with family and friends. This time I am going to be focusing on my work and give my best with every shot," she said.

A birthday ritual that she follows every year is to spend as much time as possible with her family.

"I try to do that every year. If I am not with my family, I am on one hour-long video calls with them. Other ritual is very lame but I am obsessed with two minute instant noodles so my cake is never a chocolate or black forest cake, my cake is always a maggie cake so that's what I do since many years now," she shared, adding that age is just a number. Sharing one of her most memorable birthdays, she added: "Everybody is always very special and every birthday is always different from the last time. I cannot choose one. I am looking forward to this as it is going to be a more special one especially after the hit announcement of 1920: Horrors of the Hearts." "I am definitely feeling more amazing about my work and that celebration is going to be carried forward for a very long time." And a memorable birthday gift, according to her, is doing a hit in Hindi. "This is going to be the biggest gift ever that I have got from my audience and I am really grateful for that and it's always going to be special," she



## Love songs are always challenging: KJo

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**T**he first track titled 'Tum Kya Mile' from Karan Johar's upcoming film 'Rocky aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani' is out and the filmmaker feels that love songs are always challenging.

After 'Ae Dil Hai Mushkil', Karan has teamed up with Pritam and Arijit Singh yet again. Released on Saregama Music's YouTube channel, Tum Kya Mile captures the essence of love and the soothing chemistry between Ranveer Singh and Alia Bhatt on-screen.

Arijit Singh and Shreya Ghoshal's mesmerising vocal prowess coupled with the soul-stirring lyrics penned by Amitabh Bhattacharya, this romantic melody evokes an array of emotions. Adding to the magical experience is the musical genius of Pritam, whose composition sets the perfect backdrop for this romantic masterpiece.

Karan said: "Love songs are always challenging, especially when one has a legacy to live up to. Love songs of Dharma Productions have always connected with audiences across the world. I remember we kept the recording of the love song of Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani at the end because Pritam Dada, Amitabh, and I were so nervous about how the song will be. He added: "We always met at our Bandra office because Dada considers it very lucky for him. I remember at one of our sessions, he made us hear just the melody of Tum Kya Mile and it immediately resonated with me. The simplicity of the tune connected with me."

Singer Arijit Singh shared that it has been an absolute joy to lend his voice to "Tum Kya Mile."

"I hope that this rendition connects with the listeners and evokes the same emotions that we felt while bringing this song to life." Shreya Ghoshal said that "Tum Kya Mile" is a song that will truly resonate on a deep level.

"The lyrics and music weave together to create a magical atmosphere of love. I hope that it touches the hearts of the audience, just as it touched mine. It's always humbling to collaborate with such talented artists."



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Sonam Kapoor