

# absolute india

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## Indian stocks hold on to all-time highs when market breadth is healthy



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Indian stocks have been able to hold on to all-time highs when market breadth is healthy. Readings of over 15 per cent NSE 500 Index member stocks touching a new 52-week high is positive, said a report by DSP Mutual Fund. A strong advance-decline market breadth where the number of advancing stocks significantly outweighs the declining stocks is a positive signal for the market, the report said. It suggested broad participation and indicated a healthy market trend. Market Guru Bob Farell has said: "Markets are strongest when they are broad and weakest when they narrow to a handful of blue-chip names."

Historically, NSE 500 has sustained new highs when at least 15 per cent of its member stocks make a new 52-week high. This reading should occur within two weeks of the index making a new lifetime high. Hence it is important to watch this indicator as market breadth continued to improve over the last one week, the report said. Over the last decade and a half, small becoming smaller and weak becoming weaker have been better reflections than big becoming bigger. The larger firms have enjoyed better profitability, market shares, and premium valuations versus the smaller firms, largely due to their ability to withstand multiple shocks and utilise their large

balance sheets to spend on technology, the report said. But the underperformance of smaller firms is likely to be extreme. Small-cap and emerging-market equities are now trading at better valuations than large-caps. Currently, emerging markets are trading at a PE ratio of 11 times, while US stocks are trading at 19 times, and tech stocks are trading at 27 times, the report said. US small-caps are trading at 14 times earnings, while European small-caps are trading at 13 times earnings. From a cyclical and valuation perspective, smaller firms are placed much better than larger ones, both in terms of market capitalization and geographical split, the report said.

## CITIES, VILLAGES SEE DECLINE IN AIR POLLUTION BUT STILL HAZARDOUS: REPORT

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India's air pollution mitigation action is hugely concentrated in cities and often ignores the rural parts of the country, a new report said on Wednesday. The report, 'Status of urban and rural air quality exposure at a national scale: A comparative analysis', by Climate Trends revealed that air pollution continues to be a significant problem affecting both rural and urban populations. According to the analysis, PM 2.5 levels in the rural and urban regions across India are not very different. While these have witnessed a similar trend of decline over the last few years, levels continue to be higher than safe limits in most states. The analysis also showed that with a reduction of 37.8 per cent and 38.1 per



cent in urban and rural PM 2.5 levels, respectively, Uttar Pradesh has recorded the best progress from 2017 to 2022. Maharashtra was the worst performing state, with only a dip of 7.7 per cent in its urban PM 2.5 levels, while with a decrease of 8.2 per cent in its rural PM 2.5 levels, Gujarat made the

least progress. The Union Territories (UTs) of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, too, made little progress, with approximately a 4-7 per cent decrease in PM 2.5 from 2017 to 2022. With urban PM 2.5 levels up by 0.3 per cent, Chandigarh was the only union territory or state to see an increase. The analysis also highlights the value of satellite data in tracking the air pollution problem in the country. While satellite data has some limitations since it is retrieved from aerosol optical depth (AOD) and not the direct PM2.5 monitoring, this 1 km by 1 km data set provides a holistic spread across the country, which the expensive ground-based monitoring network of Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Stations (CAAQMS) stations currently do not cover.

## UP GOVT EMPLOYEES DRIVING 2-WHEELERS WITHOUT HELMETS TO BE MARKED ABSENT

Lucknow: Government employees who drive two-wheelers and arrive for work without a helmet for the second time in a department will not be allowed entry and marked as absent. The initiative is a part of the statewide campaign for road safety that is being held from July 17 to 31. A meeting of the district road safety committee will also be organised as part of the road safety fortnight. In this regard, a district road safety action plan will be prepared and sent to the transport commissioner by the end of the fortnight. The aim of the campaign is to reduce the number of road accidents and resultant deaths by raising public awareness of traffic rules in the state. It is noteworthy that as compared to last year, there has been an increase of 5.5 per cent in road accidents and 4.2 per cent in the number of deaths caused by it.

## Ajit Pawar approaches EC to stake claim over NCP

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The rebel faction of the Nationalist Congress Party removed Sharad Pawar from the top post of the party he founded and led for over two decades, just two days before their mutiny. Ajit Pawar was elected the party chief by around 40 MLAs, MLCs and MPs -- a step calculated to negate any legal hurdle -- and the Election Commission has been informed. Sources in the Election Commission said according to the rebels' letter, they had named Ajit Pawar as party president on June 30 -- days before his shock move of crossing over to the ruling alliance and taking oath as Maharashtra's Deputy Chief Minister. Around 40 MLAs, MPs and MLCs had signed affidavits that day supporting the rebels, sources said. In the Shiv Sena split case, the Supreme Court had said a legislative party cannot function independently of the political party. This means a group of MLAs cannot claim to have taken a decision on their own and seek shelter under



the Anti-Defection law just by proving majority. Unseating Sharad Pawar and placing Ajit Pawar in the driving seat give the effect that his camp is the political party. The rebel faction has repeatedly claimed that they are the real NCP and have claimed the party name and symbol from the Election Commission. Sources in the Election Commission said they have also received a letter from Sharad Pawar loyalist Jayant Patil, informing them about the disqualification proceedings against some of the MPs and MLAs. The rebel faction today paraded 29 MLAs and only 17 turned up to support Sharad Pawar. But some MLAs appeared for both sides and some did not show up at all.

## Three former Hry MLAs, municipality Chairman join Congress

Chandigarh | Agencies

The Congress in Haryana on Wednesday got a major shot in the arm as three former legislators, a municipality Chairman, at least 12 sitting and former councillors joined the party, giving a strong blow to the BJP-JJP and the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD). These leaders joined the party here in the presence of Leader of Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda, state President Udaibhan and MP Deepender Hooda. Welcoming everyone to the party, Bhupinder Hooda said the coalition govern-



ment "is now a guest for a few months". Former Union Minister Jai Prakash, former minister Ashok Arora and former MP Sushil Indora were present on the occasion. Hooda said only eight months have been left for the

## Lightning strikes in Bihar kill 23 people in a day, 6 in UP

Patna | Agencies

At least 23 people were killed due to lightning strikes across Bihar in the last 24 hours, an official said on Wednesday. Rohtas district reported six deaths, the highest number, followed by three each in Jahanabad, Buxar and Jamui; two each in Gaya, Banka and Bhagalpur; and one each in Aurangabad and Katihar. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has expressed condolences and has announced an ex-gratia of Rs 4 lakhs to the family members of the deceased. The SDMA has been appealing to people, especially those living in rural areas, to avoid going to



agricultural fields or stand under the trees, electric poles or temporary houses made of clay, during heavy rain. The SDMA has also warned people to avoid going to the rooftop of buildings. Simultaneously, Six people died in the last 24 hours after being struck by lightning in Uttar Pradesh's Azamgarh district. In the first incident, five people who had gone to the fields along with their cattle, were struck by lightning in Niyamatpur village of Mehnagar police circle.

## Lawyers clash, shots fired at Delhi's Tis Hazari Court, Bar Council suspends Senior VP

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Two groups of lawyers clashed and opened fire at the Tis Hazari Court in the national capital on Wednesday, an official said. Deputy Commissioner of Police (North), Sagar Singh Kalsi said at around 1.35 p.m., a firing incident was reported at Subzi Mandi police station in Tis Hazari court complex area. In a swift suo moto action, the Bar Council of Delhi on Wednesday suspended the enrollment of Delhi Bar Association Tis Hazari Courts' Senior Vice President,



Manish Sharma, the Senior Vice President of the bar association, is clearly identifiable in the video and "identification of other advocates involved is being carried out for taking appropriate action". The BCD has asked Sharma to submit his written explanation and appear before it on July 7, failing which ex-parte action will be initiated against him. According to the police, a clash broke out between two groups of lawyers following which some of them allegedly fired in the air. No one was injured in the incident, the police clarified.

## Manipur schools reopen for classes 1-8 after over two months of violence

Imphal | Agencies

After more than two months since the violence erupted in Manipur on May 3, a total of 4,521 schools for classes 1 to 8 reopened on Wednesday, officials said. According to the officials, only 20 per cent students were in attendance on an average. An education department official attributed the low attendance rate to violence-related issues, transportation and fear among parents and children. Meanwhile, 96 schools have remained closed as relief camps for the displaced people have been set up in the premises. Of these, the highest number of schools at 41 are in Churachandpur district, followed by 17 in Bishnupur; 10 in Kakching; eight each in Kangpokpi and Imphal East; four each in Ukhrul and Tengnoupal; and two each in Imphal West and Thoubal. Chief Minister N. Biren Singh said



that classes 9-12 will resume once the construction of pre-fabricated houses for the displaced people are completed. The Manipur government had earlier decided to reopen the schools on June 21 and July 1, but it could not. Over 50,000 people of different communities are taking shelter in over 350 relief camps across the state after the ethnic violence broke out. The conflict has so far killed some 150 people and injured over 500 others, while a large number of properties, including houses, shops, vehicles have also been destroyed.

## WHEAT'S ALTERNATIVE JOWAR MORE RESILIENT TO CLIMATE CHANGE, REQUIRES LESS WATER

India is the world's second-largest producer of wheat, with a whopping 40 per cent increase in production since the early 2000s. But, increasing temperatures owing to climate change have raised concerns about wheat's sensitivity to heat, leading to a greater requirement of water and thus a higher water footprint.

The trend of increasing wheat production in India began with the Green Revolution in the 1960s and continues till date. The production of jowar, on the other hand, declined by 5 per cent in the same time period. This decline is despite a 37 per cent increase in yields and is attributed to a 21 per cent loss in the area under production. Focusing on these two main rabi cereals in India -- wheat and jowar, this research highlights the need for climate-smart agriculture interventions, specifically in the rabi season.

Chandigarh | Agencies

A new study has now revealed that there is an alternative to wheat -- the traditionally grown sorghum or jowar. Jowar is not only far more resilient to projected climate changes but also requires much less water. The latest research paper titled, "Climate resilience of dry season cereals in India", published in Nature's Scientific Reports, examined the sensitivity of wheat and jowar yields to increases in temperature and compared water requirements under different scenarios. The study was carried out by researchers from Columbia University, US; Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, China; Indian School of Business, India; University of Delaware, US; Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, India; Yale University, US; and Washington State University, US. The research revealed that wheat is highly sensitive to increases in maximum daily temperature in its multiple stages of growth during the post-monsoon, dry winter season. In comparison, jowar is able to handle increases in temperature with far less impact on yields. In addition, wheat requires 1.4 times more water than



jowar owing to the extension of its growth cycle into summer. With future climate projections, this study argues that without pragmatic changes in managing how wheat is cultivated in India, it is likely that the yields are likely to decrease by five per cent coupled with a significant increase in water footprint by 2040. Jowar, in that case, is India's best bet with its meagre 4 per cent increase in water footprint with the same climatic projections.



# INDIA, FRANCE MAY CO-DEVELOP, CO-PRODUCE COMBAT AIRCRAFT ENGINES

Team Absolute | New Delhi

India and its trusted strategic partner France may usher in a new era in defence partnership that could boost the military industrial complex in India through co-development and co-production. This complex could bring in a new age of defence exports to third countries.

It is believed that the French government has given a nod to defence major Safran to jointly design, develop, test, manufacture and finally certify an engine that will power India's twin engine Advanced Multi-role Combat Aircraft (AMCA) and the twin engine deck-based fighter for Indian aircraft carriers.

Sources have confirmed the Hindustan Times that the 100 per cent transfer of technology offered by the French Safran is free from US International Trade in Arms Regulation (ITAR) and the proposed 110 kilo newton engine will be fully 'Made in India'.

DRDO chief Dr Samir V Kamat paid a special visit to the Safran engine factory and the R&D centre near Paris on the sidelines of the recently concluded 2023 Paris Air Show. The engine proposal has been under discussion under the defence minister and NSA-led strategic dialogue with France, the newspaper reported.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be visiting France on July 13 and he will take part in the



Bastille Day Parade on July 14 as the Guest of Honour.

He is expected to hold bilateral talks with President Macron on July 13. The Indian Air force's Rafale fighter will be participating in the Bastille Day fly-past on July 14.

The year 2023 marks 25 years of the Indo-French Strategic Partnership. Launched by France and India on January 26, 1998, on the occasion of President Jacques Chirac's visit to India, it embodies the will of both nations to develop their respective strategic independence by drawing on concrete bilateral cooperation in order to maintain peace

and global security.

According to reports, the French offers include a completely new engine, new materials, new architecture, with full supply chains, and ancillary manufacturing based in India. Besides, the offer also includes Safran setting up a centre of excellence in gas turbine technology in India with full design and metallurgical precision software tools.

The French offer is synchronised with Safran's facility coming up in Hyderabad to maintain repair and overhaul (MRO) LEAP engines for the A320 and Boeing 737 aircraft. The French company is already working on a 125 KN engine for the next-generation fighter jet.

According to the reports, the cost of the jet engine contract is set to be very competitive per engine in US dollars. It is said that it will take 10 years from the date of signing for the entire process to be completed, from designing to certifying the constructed engine. Reportedly, a centre of excellence in gas turbine technology with comprehensive design and metallurgical precision software tools will also be established by Safran in India as part of the offer.

The Kaveri jet engine has been out of reach for the DRDO since 1996 because of problems with metallurgical equipment, rotating components, single crystal blade technology, and the high-pressure engine core.

## 'Anything can happen in politics', ex-CM Bommai's remark triggers debate

Davanagere (Karnataka) | Agencies

Former Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai has stated on Wednesday that anything can happen in politics in the backdrop of development of Ajit Pawar joining BJP in Maharashtra.

Speaking to reporters he stated that "we will have to wait and watch on what is going to happen. Anything can happen in politics," he reiterated. The statements have assumed importance in state politics and have become a topic of hot discussion on who will become Ajit Pawar in Karnataka politics.

Former CM H.D. Kumaraswamy also issued a similar statement and said he doesn't know who will become the Ajit Pawar in the state. Sources explained that the statements of Bommai are hinting at the plan of operation lotus in the state.

The ruling Congress government has two power centers. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and DyCM D.K. Shivakumar vied with each other for the coveted post before elections and Shivakumar is unhappy over missing the chance to become the CM.

Bommai maintained that the leader of the opposition would be elected in a few days. The central leaders were busy with the matters of other states. Now, they will take a call for the Karnataka state, he added.



Commenting on the Bitcoin scandal and 40 per cent commission charges against the BJP leaders, Bommai said that all the cases from 2013 to the present day must be handed over to a commission for investigation. Only one case should not be given for investigation, he said.

Bommai also stated that the Congress has been making false allegations for one and half years. If they are investigated, justice will be served to us as they will prove to be false allegations. The present decision for ordering probes is just political, he maintained.

## Rahul says Manipur needs peace to heal, peace is the only way forward

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As violence continues in Manipur, former Congress President Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday expressed that the northeastern state needs peace to heal, and that peace is the only way forward.

In a tweet, Rahul Gandhi said: "Manipur needs peace to heal. During my 2-day visit to the state, it broke my heart to see our brothers and sisters in pain. Peace is the only way forward, and we must all work towards it."

He also attached a video of his 2-day visit to the strife hit with his tweet.

Rahul Gandhi had visited Manipur on June 29 and 30 and met the affected families at the relief camps in Churachandpur and west Imphal. After visit to relief camps, he also met Governor and demanded for proper attention to affected families living there. He also asked the Governor to ensure peace returns to Manipur and also the supply of essential items.



## OVER 13,000 PERFORM AMARANTH YATRA ON DAY 4

Srinagar | Agencies

Over 13,000 have performed the ongoing Amarnath Yatra on its 4th day while another batch of 6,107 pilgrims left Jammu for Kashmir on Wednesday.

Officials said over 13,000 Yatrins had 'Darshan' inside the Amarnath cave shrine on Tuesday, and since the Yatra started on July 1 a total of over 50,000 had performed the pilgrimage so far.

"Another batch of 6,107 Yatrins including 4,680 males, 1203 females, 31 children, 154 Sadhus and 39 Sadhvis left Bhagwati Nagar Yatri Niwas in an escorted convoy of 244 vehicles for the Valley this morning," officials said. Yatrins approach the Himalayan cave shrine either from the traditional south Kashmir Pahalgam trek which involves an uphill trek of 43 Kms from Pahalgam base camp or from the north Kashmir



Baltal base camp which involves 13 Kms uphill trek.

Those using the traditional Pahalgam route take 3-4 days to reach

the cave shrine while those using the Baltal route return to the base camp the same day after having 'Darshan' inside the cave shrine situated 3888

metres above the sea-level.

Helicopter services are also available for Yatrins on both routes.

## Amul's entry in Andhra Pradesh sparks row, TDP calls it attack on Telugu pride

Amaravati | Agencies

The revival of the Chittoor Cooperative Dairy by YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) government and the proposed investment by Amul Dairy has sparked a political row in Andhra Pradesh with the opposition Telugu Desam Party (TDP) lashing out at the government for hitting the Telugu pride by surrendering the cooperative to Amul in the name of revival.

The TDP questioned the Jagan Mohan Reddy-led government over allowing Amul to enter Andhra Pradesh when all other southern states had refused to allow the Gujarat-based dairy cooperative.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday laid foundation stone for revival of the Chittoor Cooperative Dairy and exchanged MoU with the representatives of Amul Dairy, which would invest Rs 385 crore.

While the Chief Minister alleged that his predecessor N. Chandrababu Naidu closed down the Chittoor



Dairy to benefit his family-run company Heritage, the main opposition party has accused him of surrendering to the Gujarat-based Amul.

During his padyatra ahead of the 2019 elections, Jagan Mohan Reddy had promised milk farmers to revive the sick unit. As part of this move, the state government entered into a MoU

with Amul, which will invest up to Rs 385 crore to set up an ice-cream plant and produce and market various dairy products.

Jagan Mohan Reddy came down heavily on Chandrababu Naidu stating that the former Chief Minister had "orchestrated the destruction" of the Chittoor Dairy and finally closed it

down in August 2002 to develop his family-owned Heritage.

Chittoor Dairy, which was started as a chilling unit, had grown to process 2.5 to 3 lakh litres of milk daily by 1993 but during the 10 years between 1992 and 2002, it was systematically pushed into losses by Chandrababu Naidu who started Heritage in 1992, he said.

The conspiracy to rundown Chittoor Dairy was so visible that while it suffered losses during the 10 years, Heritage continued to grow with huge profits every year.

"The dairy was closed abruptly leaving lakhs of farmers in the lurch as the management kept pending huge amounts as arrears. The Government repaid the dues of Rs 182 crore and Amul will invest Rs 385 crore for its revival," he said, adding that it would invest Rs150 crore in the first phase. The Chief Minister said that the unit would provide direct employment to 5,000 people and indirect employment to 2 lakh people besides benefiting 20 lakh dairy farmers in Rayalaseema.

## Former Japanese PM Suga Yoshihide visits Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail Project site

Ahmedabad | Agencies

A Japanese delegation, headed by Suga Yoshihide, Chairman of The Japan India Association and Former Prime Minister of Japan, made a visit today to the Sabarmati Multimodal Transport Hub & SBS launching site of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail (MAHSR) Project.

The delegation's visit aimed to strengthen bilateral ties and promote Japanese investments in India.

The Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail Project, often referred to as the "bullet train" project, is a flagship initiative between the two nations. It aims to revolutionise transportation in the region by establishing a high-speed rail corridor between Mumbai and Ahmedabad. The project will not only enhance connectivity but also foster economic growth and technological advance-



ments in both countries.

The Japanese delegation's visit to the Sabarmati Multimodal Transport Hub &

SBS launching site signifies Japan's commitment to the successful implementation of the MAHSR Project.

## Assam : BJP leader among six arrested on charges of human trafficking

Guwahati | Agencies

Six people, including a BJP leader, have been arrested on the charges of human trafficking in Murajhar in Assam's Hojai district, officials said on Wednesday.

The arrested persons have been identified as Parbina Begum, the primary suspect, Bilal Uddin, Afzal Uddin, Nasir Hussain, BJP leader Abdul Karim, and Ajmal Hussain.

The arrested were produced in the Sankardev Nagar district court in Hojai and then sent to jail.

Begum and her brother Ajmal Hussain were sent to two days police custody while the other four were sent to judicial custody for further questioning.

A senior police officer said that the human trafficking group lured a minor girl in Murajhar area promising employment and afterwards



sold her to a Delhi prostitution ring.

However, the victim was able to escape and travel to Dehradun. Using the child helpline number, the police turned her over to the One Step Centre there.

On Tuesday, the victim's family was assisted by the All Assam Minority Students' Union (AAMSU) in bringing the victim back to Hojai.

The victim's statement was recorded by police in Hojai, and a case under several sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act was registered.

## Three kids among 4 killed after truck rams into parked car in Gurugram

Gurugram | Agencies

Four, including three children, were killed when a truck rams into a parked car from behind on the Jharsa flyover on Delhi-Jaipur Expressway, police said.

The accident happened late at night on Tuesday.

The complainant, Umesh Pal, a resident of Sahibabad district in Uttar Pradesh, told the police that he along with his family members was going to Bhiwadi from Ghaziabad in a Santro Car. On the way, one of the tyres of his car got punctured on the Delhi-Jaipur Expressway. The car was driven by his relative Jonipal.

They parked the car on the roadside and started changing the tyre.

"During this, a Tata 407 Canter coming from behind hit the car and also Pushpa Devi (50), Satakshi (32), Pari (2), Renu (27), Charu (11), Aarohi, Yashika, Prisa (2) and Vidansh (3), who were standing on the side. The truck dragged them for a few meters," the complainant told the police.



The accused canter driver later fled from the spot leaving the vehicle behind.

"In the accident, I and Jonipal, the car driver, received minor injuries... We took the injured persons to a private hospital for treatment there. Satakshi, Pari, Vidansh and Prisa died during treatment while the remaining are still criti-

cal and undergoing treatment," he said.

"A case of negligent driving has been registered against the absconding canter driver at Sector-40 police station of Gurugram. Police are on their task to identify the errant driver on the basis of the canter registration number," said Varun Dahiya, ACP, (crime).

## SC extends interim protection to activist Teesta Setalvad, issues notice

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday extended the interim protection to activist Teesta Setalvad in connection with a case relating to alleged fabrication of evidence in 2002 Gujarat riots.

Issuing notice, a bench of Justices B.R. Gavai, A.S. Bopanna, and Dipankar Datta posted Setalvad's bail plea for further hearing on July 19 at 2 p.m. after the state of Gujarat requested for an adjournment.

Additional Solicitor General S.V. Raju, who appeared with Solicitor General Tushar Mehta for Gujarat, submitted that some more time is needed to file additional documents and their translation before the court. The top court was hearing appeal of the activist Setalvad against Gujarat High Court's order denying her regular bail and requir-



ing her to "surrender immediately" in connection with an FIR lodged by the state police alleging fabrication of documents by her to implicate high government functionaries in 2002 Gujarat riots.



# AJIT PAWAR SEEKS SHARAD PAWAR'S BLESSINGS, 30 MLAS ATTEND RIVAL NCP MEET

**▶ BREAKAWY NATIONALIST CONGRESS PARTY LEADER AND MAHARASHTRA DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER AJIT PAWAR SOUGHT HIS UNCLE AND NCP FOUNDER-PRESIDENT SHARAD PAWAR'S "BLESSINGS" FOR HIS REBELLIOUS MOVE EVEN AS AROUND 30 MLAS ATTENDED HIS FIRST MEETING HERE THIS AFTERNOON.**

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The meet at MET Auditorium in Bandra was addressed with strong speeches by the rival NCP stalwarts like Praful Patel, Chhagan Bhujbal, Dhananjay Munde, Rupali Chakankar and others, even as the party's Whip Anil Patil claimed the support of at least 40 MLAs. In a simultaneous show of strength, Sharad Pawar held his meeting at the Y.B. Chavan Auditorium where around a dozen MLAs attended besides a large number of party leaders from across the state. The claims-counterclaims notwithstanding, senior leaders put the figures at 35 on Ajit Pawar side and 18 in Sharad Pawar's camp, though the real picture has yet to emerge. The NCP has 53 MLAs and Ajit Pawar would require the support of two-thirds - at least 36 legislators - without attracting the provisions of



the anti-defection laws. Ajit Pawar has declared that in the 2024 elections, there's "no alternative" to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while addressing his party's maiden meeting here on Wednesday. "There is no alternative to Modi in the 2024 elections... that's the reality. Even Sharad Pawar Saheb has said this," Ajit Pawar said. He advised his uncle and NCP Founder-President Sharad Pawar, 83, not to remain adamant and given his senior age, should take rest and guide the party, as "he is our mentor

and inspiration". Justifying his group's decision to revolt from the NCP and join the Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party alliance government, he said that all his supporters will benefit in various ways. The rival NCP will be able to contest around 90 seats, many Lok Sabha seats, all the works stuck in the MLAs constituencies shall be now taken forward in full steam, other workers will be given other positions, and vowed that development backlogs in different regions would be taken up, without discrimination.

# BJP is the 'most corrupt party in India': Supriya Sule

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Nationalist Congress Party leader and MP Supriya Sule on Wednesday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party of being 'the most corrupt party in India'. In a stinging reaction to her cousin, rival NCP leader and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar's praise of the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Sule said that it was the same Modi who had alleged that the NCP stands for 'Naturally Corrupt Party'. Now, the same BJP leaders -- who had loftily claimed 'na khaunga, na khaunga' have joined hands with the Naturally Corrupt Party (faction) of Ajit Pawar -- and have gulped down all its corruption. "That's why today, I am levelling this charge -- that the BJP is the country's 'Most Corrupt Party' as they have sided with the party they had denigrated on various occasions," thundered Sule, citing examples of the alleged scams the PM had accused the NCP of in the past. On Ajit Pawar's advice to his uncle Sharad Pawar to 'sit at home' considering his age and guide the youngsters, Sule shot back, giving the examples of several octogenarian personalities who are still going strong in their respective fields. She named industrialist



Ratan Tata, 85, who is guiding the fortunes of the Tata empire, Amitabh Bachchan, 82, still the highest-rated superstar, former Jammu & Kashmir Farooq Abdullah, 85, to prove her point that her father (Sharad Pawar) has miles to go... Sule declared that come what may, the NCP name and symbol 'Clock' will remain with the original party founded and developed by Sharad Pawar and all those coveting it shall be shown their place. She said that the party has fought many wars in the past and will weather even the current intra-party storm to emerge stronger, more united and march ahead with renewed vigour.

## Why Sena and not BJP? Sharad Pawar's point-by-point rebuttal to rebels

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Sharad Pawar, ridiculed for being in the driving seat at the age of 83 by his nephew Ajit Pawar, today gave a point-by-point rebuttal to the rebels, fielding subjects ranging Nagaland and his past decisions. For the rebels, there was a warning too. Suggesting that the rebels would have done better to consult him before going ahead with their plans, Mr Pawar said, "People who went with the BJP -- look at their history. Akali Dal formed government in Punjab. They are not in government now". "Similar things have happened in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh. Nitish Kumar had to take a decision in Bihar... The BJP destroys parties that formed government with them," Pawar added. Responding to Ajit Pawar and Praful Patel's argument that if the NCP could ally with Shiv Sena, why not the BJP, Pawar said there was a difference between the two. "Yes, Shiv Sena also follows Hindutva. They take everyone together, that's their Hindutva. BJP's Hindutva is about dividing people, poisonous, Manuwadi and dangerous... People who divide on the basis of religion and caste, they can't be the one who love the country. That's why we can't go with someone who



believes in this," Sharad Pawar said. He also clarified the issue of NCP support to BJP in Nagaland - another big argument of the rebels - pointing to the big picture. "In Nagaland, our seven MLAs are with the BJP. Nagaland is the bordering state with another country. In states which share the border with China and Pakistan - we have to think a lot. The other country could take some benefit, that's why we gave support from outside. Here they formed the government and gave this example, I cannot agree with this example," said Pawar. The Sena veteran only managed to gather 17 MLAs under his banner today, despite a whip and an appeal about "an 83-year-old fighting alone". The Ajit Pawar camp, who had urged the leaders to be "practical", paraded 29 MLAs.

## Once Sharad Pawar enters the ring, rebels will be shown their place: Jayant Patil

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Once Nationalist Congress Party founder-President Sharad Pawar steps into the field, the rebels who broke away on Sunday won't know what has hit them, party state chief Jayant Patil warned on Wednesday. "A small trailer of this was already shown to the people of the state earlier this week in Kolhapur and Pune... They are forgetting that the ordinary workers of the NCP are still with Saheb. Whatever Pawar Saheb says is the final word for us," he said. Slamming the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Patil said that it is indulging in the politics of stealing and splitting parties in the state and elsewhere for their own benefit. "When they don't like the questions or issues we raise, then they rob us and break us. First they did it with the Shiv Sena (of ex-CM Uddhav Thackeray), now it's happening to the NCP," he said. Training guns on the rebels led by Pawar's nephew Ajit Pawar who have quit the NCP to join the ruling Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party government, Patil demanded how they could join hands with those who had insulted icons like Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, Dr. B. R.



Ambedkar and others. "First you had criticised them for abusing these great personalities. But now you have joined those very people, so how will you face the masses..." he asked. Referring to the BJP for lampooning the Maha Vikas Aghadi government of Congress-NCP-Shiv Sena as an 'autorickshaw' government, Patil quipped that since the (MVA) three-wheeler was running very well, now even they are forced to sit in an 'autorickshaw' to run their regime properly

(with Ajit Pawar's NCP faction joining the government). "For 25 years, Pawar Saheb has grappled with all challenges, he fought when the NCP was sought to be broken many times in the past. We feel bad for all those who grew with the party and have left us now," he said. He contended that of the claimed 40 MLAs who have joined Ajit Pawar, "many are calling up Pawar Saheb and say they want to return soon, they are at sea without Pawar", and ditto is the situation with the Shiv Sena MLAs who left with Eknath Shinde, who want to return to the Shiv Sena-UBT. Referring to Ajit Pawar finger-pointing that he (Patil) had been the state NCP President for over five years, Patil said that if he had expressed his desire privately, "I would have immediately stepped down in his favour". Raising the historic slogan of 'Sarfaroshi ki Tamanna ab hamare dil me hain, Dekhna hai zor kitna bazu-e-qatil me hain', Patil asked the enthusiastic gathering to take an oath. The assembly took the oath in the name of god and under the leadership and Presidentship of Sharad Pawar, all would work the NCP till their last breath, they would not support the deserters, will not do anything that will sully Pawar Saheb's ideology and remain loyal to him and the party for their entire life.

## SRK SEEN IN MUMBAI AIRPORT AFTER REPORTS OF ACCIDENT IN US

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan has come back to India and was spotted in the Mumbai airport after reports of his accident in the US started doing the rounds on the Internet. Celebrity paparazzi Viral Bhayani shared a video of Shah Rukh exiting the airport with his entourage. Shutterbugs were seen asking him about his health. The superstar was seen in denim paired with navy blue sweatshirt, sneakers, baseball cap and sunglasses. He walked from the airport to his car. On Tuesday, reports of Shah Rukh's accident started doing the rounds. He recently got injured in the US and had to undergo a minor surgery. The actor was shooting for an undisclosed project in Los Angeles, California where he sustained an injury to his nose. As per media reports, SRK was immediately rushed to the hospital where his team was



informed that the injury will require a minor surgical intervention to stop the bleeding. After the surgery, the 'Pathaan' actor was spotted with a bandage on his nose. SRK is currently in Mumbai back at his home and is recovering.

## Raj Thackeray claims Sharad Pawar behind Maharashtra developments

Team Absolute | Pune

Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) President Raj Thackeray has claimed that the political developments in Maharashtra could have the blessings of NCP supremo Sharad Pawar himself. He was talking to reporters here about NCP leader Ajit Pawar and eight other MLAs joining the Shiv Sena-BJP government in the state on Sunday, splitting the Sharad Pawar-led party. "What has happened in the state is very disgusting... This is nothing but an insult to the voters of the state," Raj Thackeray said. "Sharad Pawar started



all these things in Maharashtra. He first experimented with 'Pulod' (Purogami Lokshahi Dal) government back in 1978. Maharashtra had never witnessed such political scenarios ever. All these things started with Pawar, and ended with Pawar," he added. The MNS chief then claimed that Sharad Pawar himself could be behind the recent developments. "Praful Patel, Dilip Walse-Patil and Chhagan Bhujbal are not the ones who will go with Ajit Pawar (on their own and without Pawar senior's blessings)," he said.

## TWO HELD FOR RUNNING SEX RACKET IN THANE

Mumbai: Two persons have been arrested from a village near Bhiwandi in Thane district of Maharashtra for allegedly pushing women into flesh trade, police said on Wednesday. The duo - an autorickshaw driver and a woman pimp - was arrested on Tuesday after police raided a lodge in Ranjoli village and rescued two women. Police have registered a case under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act. Meanwhile, in another incident in May, the MIDC police in Andheri east area of Mumbai had conducted a raid at a residential building and allegedly busted a sex racket which was run by a 35-year-old woman inside a flat. The police arrested the woman and a customer and rescued a 17-year-old minor girl. The police sources had then said that the sex racket was allegedly running inside one BHK flat of a SRA building located in the MIDC Kanakia locality area. Receiving prominent information, with the help of an NG, under the guidance of DCP Datta Nalawade and senior inspector Satish Gaikwad, API Rohit Jadhav, Shobha Kharat and PSI Sunil Gaikwad, along with a police team raided the house by sending a bogus customer and rescued a 17-year old, an official had said.

# 100s killed on Mumbai-Nagpur E'way, MSRDC finally wakes up to create amenities

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

Nearly seven months after the inauguration of the Mumbai-Nagpur Expressway and three days after the worst accident (July 1) that snuffed out 26 lives, the state government has finally woken up to provide public amenities and facilities on the monotonous road. The Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) has invited e-tenders for construction of "wayside amenities" with a minimum investment of Rs 50-crore each. According to the MSRDC notice of Tuesday (July 4), interested parties must submit their bids by July 18, and the e-bids shall be opened on July 19. Surprisingly, the MSRDC has given a five-year-long construction time for the successful bidders to build the amenities/facilities. The development comes after the state government came under fire from all parties including Congress, Nationalist Congress Party, Shiv Sena (UBT), social groups and NGOs for the utter lack of any public amenities on the 'Hindu Hriday Samrat Balasaheb Thackeray Maharashtra Samruddhi Expressway. When fully completed, the 701-kms long HHTMSE will connect the state capital Mumbai with the second capital Nagpur, slashing the travel time from the existing 16 to around 8 hours. The Rs 55,000-crore expressway is currently



operational for 600-kms from Nagpur to Nashik, and the 101-kms Nashik-Mumbai stretch is under construction. Since inauguration of the first phase (Nagpur-Nashik) by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Dec. 11, 2022, the expressway has been plagued with over 200 big and small accidents, claiming more than an estimated 300 lives. The worst road disaster took place near Buldhana on July 1, when a deluxe sleeper-bus lost control, caught fire and killed 26 people sleeping

inside, sparking a massive furore. The VNIT report of its Traffic Engineering Department students said that after long hours of driving without break, drivers tend to develop 'highway hypnosis', a condition in which he/she zones out while driving, unable to remember what occurred in that specific period, just driving without absolute control over the steering and paying no attention to anything around. Even NCP President Sharad Pawar indirectly referred to this malady last week - which is the outcome of long hours of driving, tiredness of the drivers, monotonous highway, drowsiness with an inattentive brain, etc. - a cocktail for crashes. A Pune activist Praful Sarde recalls seeing trucks and other vehicles parked haphazardly at many spots, women compelled to relieve themselves in the bushes beside the road, shielded by their family or friends, and truckers stopping to cook food at night. As per an official, the facilities that are envisioned are big and small hotels/restaurants, toilets, drinking water kiosks, ATMs, shopping plazas, entertainment arcades, fuel stations, garages, puncture repairs, etc. The MSRDC has invited bids for the Nagpur (Mumbai-Nagpur) Corridor and Mumbai (Nagpur-Mumbai) Corridor on both sides at 400-410 kms and at 500-620 kms, on 10-12 hectares of land.



EDITOR'S SPECS

**BJP list with organisational changes awaited for poll-bound states**

In wake of the BJP appointing new party chiefs in four states, political sources say that there will be flurry of lists coming out from BJP headquarters on organisational changes, especially in poll-bound states and all eyes are on what changes will be made in the organisation in Rajasthan. As per the sources, the election campaign committee chief's post is vacant as of now and it remains to be seen who is chosen to fill it. As of now, all senior leaders have been given some role except former CM Vasundhara Raje, so she might be given this position. There are chances that former state President Satish Poonia might be sent to Delhi but veteran leaders from the state are not very keen. These initiatives include bringing up core issues the state's youth are facing, working on social engineering, and finding out right faces who can assure victory to the saffron party cutting across the rising popularity of Ashok Gehlot-led Congress government and its schemes like Chiranjeevi, pensions and LPG cylinders at Rs 500. Sources said that a senior party leader might be brought in to head the operations in Rajasthan and will play a role in the selection of eligible candidates by finding out the possible candidates in time, and ascertaining the ethnic equations of each Assembly seat to the impact of local issues on the ground. Further an assessment will be made to the damage caused to the party due to the disputes between bvarious leaders on various seats. Efforts are being made to analyse the caste equations in every Assembly seat and determine as to opposition or favour of which caste class, the BJP won or lost, and which castes or classes should be focussed upon for improving the caste equation.

**Who will speak on human rights violations in India's neighbourhood?**

Vinod Kumar Shukla

A cry with heightened pitch is being made about human rights violations and atrocities on minorities in India from the time of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent US visit but the same is neglected in the Indian neighborhoods which rather have a long checked history on the issue. Especially Pakistan which is embroiled in the problems created by its own but there are certain issues for that Indian leadership is equally responsible and accountable and there are certain issues that are still impacting India.

What are those issues that are very grave and affect India too? Every day when news reports reach India about Hindu, Sikh girls being abducted and forced to convert from Pakistan's Sindh province where 94 per cent of the total one per cent of the Hindu population of the country live, Indian leadership is equally blamed for it. Atrocities on minorities in Pakistan did not stop after partition and even after the Nehru-Liaquat Pact of 1950. Recently around 50 members of 10 families converted to Islam to rid themselves free from the hardship of being Hindus in Pakistan. This is pertinent to mention that civilizational expansion of India goes beyond Afghanistan and Kazakhstan but India conceded over 1000 kilometres of land to the aggressor and also suffered a great deal of harm to Indian culture. The process accelerated after Pakistan was carved out of India on the ground of religion. Interestingly, the date of partition was decided later but boundaries were fixed well before and an inorganic nation-state as Pakistan was created by the British to protect their own interest. Once Pakistan became a reality, interests of various groups like



Sindhies, Baluchs, Pashto and Bengalis were suppressed by imposing Urdu and religious persecution of Shias, Ahmadias, Hindu, Christians, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists started bringing 10 per cent Hindu population in West Pakistan to somewhere 1 per cent today. World Sindh Conference General Secretary Dr Lakhu Luhan blames Liyakat Ali Khan for their miseries which were gradually magnified by the military rules in the country. So much so that speaking Sindh has become a treacherous act in Pakistan but there is stoic silence on this. Sindhies and Baluchs are actively protesting for their rights within the country and outside the country as well. East Pakistan is now Bangladesh, a separate Bangla speaking nation, but Baluchs and Sindhies are fighting to get rid of the yoke they were forced to carry as communities like Sindh, Baluch, people from Khaiber Pakhtunwa and even a section of Punjabies say that they did not vote for or demanded Pakistan. Dr Lakhu says that Muslims from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madras presidency demanded Pakistan but stayed put where they were. But the lives of people from these areas were ruined. Dreaming like Alice in Wonderland, Architect and Qaide

Azam of Pakistan M A Jinnah wanted Pakistan and planned vacation at his Malabar Hills residence in Mumbai possibly having a free movement between the two countries but his dream turned out to be a nightmare when Army with the help of tribals attacked Jammu and Kashmir. Subsequently, the hold of the Army over the government became a norm in Pakistan with several Army coups and failed state Pakistan where PM Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was hanged and his daughter assassinated. Blasphemy laws by General Zia Ul Haq was the last nail in coffin of the dream of Jinnah who at least talked about Pakistan for everyone however it could not protect its first Law Minister Jogendra Nath Mandal who ran away from Pakistan and his pain and misery can well be fathomed from his resignation. Coming back to Sindh which faced the first Islamic onslaught and repulsed their attack but later it fell to Arab aggressors when King Dahir was killed. But despite facing constant aggressions, relations between Hindu and Muslims were relatively peaceful as Dr Lakhu claimed still a big number of Sindh had come to India as refugees after partition. Over 50 per cent Hindus of Sindh who used to control a big share of the Economy of Pakistan

are now just 6 per cent of the population of Sindh and 94 per cent of the total Hindu population of Pakistan. Lakhu claims that bonhomie between Hindu-Muslim continues in Sindh but the Army is behind every mischief in the region. Pakistan's Army is unique in the world as besides defending the boundaries of Pakistan, it is a business entity, farmer, software developer and manufactures that even manufactures sanitary napkins. It is also a facilitator of the larger game of ummah that forces every Rinkal Kumari to accept Islam and subsequent Nikah thrust upon her with AK rifle wielding men having their way with the connivance of Pakistan judiciary. The Sindh region that has thousands of years old History with linkages of Sindh-Saraswati civilization is being destroyed by people who are on the verge of completing the task of minority free Pakistan. Demography of Sindh has already been altered and whatever is left is being done by bringing people from different parts of Pakistan including people from Afghan origin. Economy of Pakistan is majorly dependent on the Sindh region with rich natural resources in the region. The Sindh movement started by venerable G M Sayeed AKA Sai Syeed and later on formed the World Sindh Congress which wants an independent Sindh with secular and democratic nation. A peaceful movement is continuing there with Sindh diaspora supporting it. They are in touch with Baluch leaders who too are demanding a separate nation. Whether Pakistan will crumble due to its own inherent contradictions and disintegration that many journalists and experts on Pakistan predict to see in their lifetime but the moment any issue reaches

international forum India haters try to hijack it as if the RSS has been serving the cause of Sindhies in Pakistan even now. A three-day Sindh Darshan Festival is organised in Leh, Ladakh every year on Guru Purnima which falls in June-July when devotees gather near the banks of Sindh River in India. Former Deputy PM Lal Krishna Advani and editor of RSS' Hindi mouthpiece Panchjanya Tarun Vijay conceived the idea of a festival on its banks as the river is the source of identity for India as the names India, Indian, Hindu and Hindustan are derived from Indus and Sindh. Advani, in 1996, himself a Sindh, visited Choglamsar (8 km from Leh) and started the Sindh Darshan Abhiyan, with a handful of other Sindhies. The first time this event was held in the form of Sindh Darshan Festival was in October, 1997. The government released a postage stamp to recognise the importance of Sindh to every Indian. Sindhies were never with Jinnah. Owaidullah Sindhie opposed partition in 1942 but his assassination had removed the hurdle on the path of such people who were disciples of Sir Syed Ahmed who was of the first exponent of the theory that Hindu-Muslims are two nations. Sindh World Congress general Secretary acknowledges that bonhomie still prevails and Sindhie wants freedom from military imperialism of Pakistan. Sindhies and Baluchs are fighting for their cultural and civilisation rights and Pakistan is under pressure from all across including extremists who want these Sindhies and Baluchs to forgo their culture and identity to merge with what Pakistan made for. And the world is silent!

international

**SNAKES IN OUR BACKYARD RAISING THEIR HEADS: INDO-CANADIAN MP ON KHALISTANIS**

Toronto | Agencies

Slamming the recent pro-Khalistan poster labelling Indian diplomats as 'killers', Indian-origin MP Chandra Arya warned on Wednesday that snakes in Canada's backyard are 'raising their heads and hissing', in an apparent reference to the rising Khalistani menace in the country. "Khalistanis in Canada continue to reach new low in abusing our Charter of Rights and Freedom by promoting violence and hate," Arya tweeted. "While it is good to see Canadian authorities are noticing, we should note the snakes in our backyard are raising their heads and hissing. It is only a question of time when they bite to kill," the MP, who originally hails from Karnataka, said. The poster, announcing the Khalistan Freedom Rally on July 8, sparked outrage across India by calling India's High Commissioner to Ottawa Sanjay Kumar Verma and Consul General in Toronto Apoorva Srivastava as "killers" of Khalistan Tiger Force chief Hardeep Singh Nijjar.



It came a month after Khalistanis, marking the 39th anniversary of Operation Blue Star, put up a tableau of late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi with blood on her clothes and a poster that read, 'Revenge of attack on Shri Darbar Sahib'. "Emboldened by non-criticism from elected officials of a recent Brampton parade portraying and celebrating the assassination of Indian

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her bodyguards, they are now openly calling for violence against India diplomats," Arya said. After India raised the issue at the highest level in Canada, with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar warning that the ties will be hit, Foreign Minister Melanie Joly issued a statement on Tuesday saying the "promotional material" is "unacceptable". Joly said her country takes its "obligations under the Vienna Conventions regarding the safety of diplomats very seriously" and that the "actions of a few do not speak for an entire community or Canada". India also summoned the Canadian High Commissioner Cameron MacKay on Tuesday to discuss the issue. Nijjar, 45, was gunned down outside a gurdwara in the parking area in Surrey. He had links with the banned Sikhs For Justice, led by a US-based designated terrorist. Similar pro-Khalistan posters have emerged in Australia, targeting the High Commissioner of India in Australia, Manpreet Vohra and the Consul General of India in Melbourne, Sushil Kumar.

**Iran says recent nuclear talks with Europe 'explicit, constructive'**

Tehran | Agencies

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has said that the recent talks with the European parties on the revival of a 2015 nuclear deal were "explicit and constructive". Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks on Tuesday in a phone call with the European Union Foreign Policy chief Josep Borrell, when commenting on the talks to salvage the nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Xinhua news agency reported, citing a statement released by the Iranian Foreign Ministry. He highlighted the importance of continuing dialogue between Iran and Europe with the aim of achieving a common understanding, saying Borrell and the EU deputy foreign policy chief Enrique Mora have played "constructive" roles in the nuclear talks while the new EU special representative for the Gulf region Luigi Di Maio has "constructive" relations with Iran. Speaking of the possible solutions to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, Amir-Abdollahian said Iran has always supported global peace and stability and maintains that stopping the conflict is only possible through political initiatives. Borrell, for his part, said the ongoing cooperation



and negotiations between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency will be "fruitful and positive". Iran signed the JCPOA with world powers in July 2015, agreeing to put some curbs on its nuclear program in return for the removal of the sanctions on the country. The US, however, pulled out of the deal in May 2018 and reimposed sanctions on Tehran. The negotiations for the revival of the JCPOA commenced in April 2021 in Austria's capital Vienna. Despite several rounds of talks, no significant breakthrough has been achieved since the end of the last round in August 2022.

**China renews yellow alert for high temperatures**

Beijing | Agencies

China's National Meteorological Centre on Wednesday renewed a yellow alert for high temperatures as parts of the country are still under heat waves. During daylight hours on Wednesday, temperatures in parts of Hebei, Beijing, Tianjin, Shandong, Henan, Hunan, Jiangxi, Fujian, Guangdong, and Xinjiang are forecast to exceed 35 degrees Celsius. Xinhua news agency quoted the Centre as saying. In some areas of Hebei, Beijing, Tianjin, Shandong, and Henan, temperatures may surpass 40 degrees Celsius, according to the forecast. The Centre has advised people to avoid outdoor activities and drink water regularly to prevent a stroke. China has a three-tier weather warning system for



high temperatures, with red representing the most severe warning, followed by orange and yellow. On June 25, the country had issued this year's first orange alert amid the ongoing heat waves. The temperature at a meteorological station in southern Beijing soared to 41.1 degrees Celsius on June 22 -- the second-highest reading since reliable records began, according to the Beijing Meteorological Service. The highest temperature ever recorded at the Nanjiao station was 41.9 degrees Celsius on July 24, 1999.

**Key Joe Biden officials barred from contacting social media platforms**

San Francisco | Agencies

In a far-reaching ruling that has implications for other countries too, a judge in the US has barred key officials at the Joe Biden administration from contacting social media platforms about moderating posts and censoring conservative viewpoints protected by the First Amendment. The ruling by judge Terry A. Dougherty at US District Court for the Western District of Louisiana bars Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) leader Jen Easterly, and FBI Foreign Influence Task Force leader Laura DeHmlow, as well as employees of those agencies "from contacting, working with, or asking social media companies about posts protected by the First Amendment". The judge wrote that plaintiffs are likely to prove that federal government officials are targeting and suppressing "millions of protected free speech postings by American citizens", reports The Verge. "The explosion of social media platforms has resulted in unique free speech



issues -- this is especially true in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. If the allegations made by Plaintiffs are true, the present case arguably involves the most massive attack against free speech in United States' history," the ruling said. "In their attempts to suppress alleged disinformation, the Federal government... is alleged to have blatantly ignored the First Amendment's right to free speech,"

it added. A White House official told the media that "our consistent view remains that social media platforms have a critical responsibility to take account of the effects their platforms are having on the American people, but make independent choices about the information they present". The Justice Department was reviewing the ruling while evaluating its next steps.

**Missile strike in Ukraine's Kharkiv region injured 43 people**

Kiev: At least 43 people were injured after a missile struck the parking lot of a residential building in Ukraine's Kharkiv region, according to officials. In a statement, Ukrainian Prosecutor General Andriy Kostin said an alleged Russian Iskander missile struck the building in the town of Pervomaiskyi at about 1.30 p.m. on Tuesday, the BBC reported. Pervomaiskyi is located about 90 kmsouth of the major city of Kharkiv and relatively far from the current fighting hotspots. Kostin said that the injured included a one-year-old toddler and a 10-month-old infant. He added that targeting residential buildings amounted to another war crime from Russia. Kharkiv Governor Oleg Sinegubov posted several pictures of the damaged building on Telegram, showing smashed windows, dark smoke clouds and an overturned car. "At least half of the neighbourhood is in an uninhabitable state," the BBC quoted Anton Orekhov, the chairman of Pervomaiskyi, as saying to local media. President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russia will be held responsible for Tuesday missile strike, Ukrayinska Pravda reported. "Russian terrorists want to become exemplary in the way they destroy life. We will become exemplary in the way we protect life and in the way life then responds -- justly and inevitably -- to every blow inflicted to every terrorist," he said. "And the enemy will be held accountable for this strike, as well as for all their other strikes."



# URINATING INCIDENT SPARKS POLITICAL CONTROVERSY IN POLL-BOUND MP



Team Absolute | Bhopal

A political controversy has erupted in poll-bound Madhya Pradesh after the shocking incident, in which a local BJP person allegedly urinated on a tribal person, came to light on Tuesday.

The act of PraveshShukla, who is said to be associated with the ruling BJP, has given ample opportunity to the Congress to hit out at saffron party.

As merely five months are left for the assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, and the main rivals - BJP and Congress are attempting all possible attempts to woo crucial tribal vote, the issue is turning out to be more politically.

The Congress has launched a scathing attack on the Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led BJP government accusing the latter of atrocities against the tribal.

On Wednesday, MP Congress head Kamal Nath issued a video message stating that the "urinating on tribal" was shocking and disheartening.

## INHUMAN CRIME OF BJP LEADER IN MP HAS BROUGHT REAL CHARACTER OF PARTY AGAINST TRIBALS: RAHUL

New Delhi: Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday targeted the BJP for atrocities against tribals, saying that the inhuman crime of a BJP leader in Madhya Pradesh has brought the real character of the BJP rule. The entire humanity has been put to shame by the inhuman crime of a BJP leader in Madhya Pradesh. This is the disgusting face and real character of BJP's hatred towards tribals and Dalits.

In a tweet, Rahul Gandhi said, "Atrocities on tribal are increasing in the BJP rule. The entire humanity has been put to shame by the inhuman crime of a BJP leader in Madhya Pradesh. This is the disgusting face and real character of BJP's hatred towards tribals and Dalits."

His remarks came a day after the shocking video of a person urinating over a tribal man, who is said to be a labourer, in Madhya Pradesh's Sidhi district, surfaced on social media on Tuesday.

In the viral video, a person, who is said to be from Beba tribal is seen sitting on a footpath, while the other man, identified as PraveshShukla, was seen urinating over him.

Madhya Pradesh Congress spokesperson Abbas Hafeez attacked the BJP and said that PraveshShukla is the representative of BJP MLA KedarnathShukla, who is a senior BJP leader and two-time MLA from Sidhi. Shukla has been arrested by the Madhya Pradesh Police in connection with the case.



Kamal Nath said the incident has humiliated the entire tribal population and has exposed the BJP's thinking about the downtrodden committee. "My heart is deeply saddened by the incidents of humiliation of the tribal brothers and sisters of Madhya Pradesh. The soul trembles after seeing the video of a BJP leader urinating on a tribal youth in Sidhi district," Kamal Nath said in a video message.

## DALITS, TRIBALS STAGE PROTEST IN INDORE OVER SIDHI URINATION INCIDENT

Indore: Dalits and tribals staged a protest at Indore in Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday to condemn the incident in which a man allegedly urinated on a tribal youth in Sidhi district of the state.

The protesters, under the banner of AkhilBharatiyaBalaiMahasangh, raised slogans and waved placards alleging increasing atrocities on members of Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities in the state.

Police on Wednesday arrested PraveshShukla, who is accused of urinating on a tribal youth in Sidhi district. Action under the stringent National Security Act (NSA) was also initiated. A video of the incident went viral on social media platforms on Tuesday, following which the police registered a case against the accused. Talking to reporters during the protest, Mahasangh president Manoj Parmar said, "PraveshShukla has brought shame to the entire country by urinating on a tribal youth in Sidhi district. Shukla should be punished severely. If possible, he should be hanged." People belonging to SC and ST communities in the state are still facing atrocities due to caste discrimination, he alleged.

"We are saddened not due to the citizens of Syria, Pakistan and Afghanistan, but by the perverted mentality and atrocities of people in our own country who consider themselves superior because of their birth in the so-called upper caste," he said.

Strictest action should be taken against all such people so that there is a sense of harmony in the Hindu community, he demanded.

## BULLDOZERS RUN OVER HER PRAVESHSHUKLA'S HOME, MOTHER FELL UNCONSCIOUS

Accused BJP leader PraveshShukla's mother fell unconscious as bulldozer ran over her son's illegal properties and home in Sidhi on Wednesday evening. A few hours ago, on Wednesday morning, Madhya Pradesh Home minister Narottam Mishra had ordered demolition following a huge public outcry over a viral video showing Shukla urinating on a tribal man's face in Sidhi.



The video drew severe criticism from across the political parties. Netizens termed the incident 'shameful' and 'disgusting', demanding stringent punishment against the accused.

Seeing strong reactions from the public, CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan had ordered immediate arrest under National Security Act. Within hours of the CM's order, Sidhi Police nabbed PraveshShukla on Tuesday night.

He further said, "The incident is an attack on tribal identity. This incident is an insult to great men like Tanya Mama and Birsamunda. This incident is an insult to crores of tribal brothers and sisters of Madhya Pradesh. I warn the Shivraj government to stop giving government protection to the atrocities on the tribal society. The Congress party stands completely with the tribal society and will continue to provide justice to them."

Notably, the accused PraveshShukla was arrested from his home town in Sidhi late on Tuesday and he was being interrogated, according to the police. Shukla has been booked under the provision of the National Security Act (NSA), as well as the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

Police have also booked him under Section 294 (obscene act) and 504 (intentional insult to provoke breach of peace) of the IPC. "Accused PraveshShukla has been arrested and NSA has been invoked against him. Further, investigations

including circulation of video of the incident are underway," RavindraVerma, Superintendent of Police (SP) Sidhi district, said over phone on Wednesday.

Earlier, Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra said the Sidhi district administration has been directed to take action on illegal properties of Shukla. "The act was inhumane and condemnable and the accused would face stringent action. Bulldozer drive would be initiated against illegal encroachment," Mishra added

## MP CONGRESS BURNS EFFIGY OF SHIVRAJ TO PROTEST ATROCITIES AGAINST TRIBALS



Bhopal: Enraged over Sidhi's viral video, Congress workers burnt the effigy of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan outside PCC Office, in Bhopal on Wednesday. The video gained momentum after Congress spokesperson Abbas Hafeez posted it on Twitter. Strong reactions from across political parties poured in. Congress' former MP Rahul Gandhi, Congress state president Kamal Nath, BSP chief Mayawati and Delhi AAP MLA NareshBalyan slammed the BJP govt, raising questions over humanity and treatment given to tribals in Madhya Pradesh. Former Congress MP Rahul Gandhi took to Twitter to express the deep resentment over the incident. "The entire humanity has been put to shame by the inhuman crime of a BJP leader in Madhya Pradesh," he tweeted. Kamal Nath called it a 'soul-trembling' incident and said it seems "Shivraj-govt is high on power." MP Congress committee general secretary Gurmeet Singh Mangu, too, condemned the incident. He questioned of what the future holds for tribals in the BJP government.

## AAP Stages Protest Against BJP MLA Yashpal Singh Sisodia, Accuses Him Of Slapping Their Worker In Mandasaur

Team Absolute | Mandasaur

Members of AamAdami Party (AAP) from Mandasaur district staged protest against BJP MLA Yashpal Singh Sisodia, accusing him of slapping and threatening AAP youth wing district president ArunParmar. The AAP members raised slogans against Sisodia and submitted an application at Daloda police station, demanding an FIR against his alleged misbehaviour. As per the information, the matter was reported on Monday afternoon at Daloda Rail village when MLA Sisodia was on a visit to the village.

During a visit to his assembly constituency, the ongoing conversation between the villagers and Mandasaur MLA Yashpal Singh Sisodia in the village turned into a heated argument when the AAP party's ArunParmar expressed his displeasure over the non-construction culvert. AAP's Parmar Reminds BJP MLA His Poll Promise



The MLA said that the process will be done at the government-level. Dissatisfied with his reply, Parmar and others reminded him of the promise that he made at the time of the election and said that even after so many years, the culvert had not been constructed. Parmar said that this is your responsibility. Some resentment was visible, and there was an exchange of words as well on the spot. Other people were also present on the spot and tried to pacify the situation.

Even the video of the entire incident went viral, in which AAP member Parmar was seen shouting while expressing his displeasure with the MLA and saying he (MLA) will have to answer, slapping won't work, you are the MLA, and we have voted for the people's representative.

On Wednesday, AAP party members submitted an application at Daloda police station. In the application, Parmar and others demanded an FIR against the MLA. Parmar

claimed that his life was in danger after an incident.

On the other hand, Mandasaur MLA Yashpal Singh Sisodia said that he went to visit a village that falls under his constituency on Monday. During the visit, he interacted with the villagers and discussed the solution to the problems.

ArunParmar of the AAP is making a mountain out of a mole as they are trying to hog the limelight by exaggerating the issue. Sisodia said that we had a good discussion with the villagers, and there are some villagers who had some problems, and I'd assured them to redress all their grievances soon, but misbehavior or slapping by me is being exaggerated.

For political interests, the AAP party may make any allegation, but what difference does it make, Sisodia added. Meanwhile, Daloda police station in-charge Sanjeev Singh Parihar informed that a written application has been received and a detailed investigation of the matter is going on.

## Delegation of Election Commission of India holds meeting with Chief Secretary, Director General of Police and Enforcement Agencies

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A delegation of the Election Commission of India held meeting with Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains and Director General of Police SudhirSaxena on the last day of the ongoing review meeting with Collectors and District Election Officers, Superintendents of Police, at the KushabhauThakre International Convention Centre, Bhopal, regarding the preparations for the upcoming assembly elections-2023 in Madhya Pradesh. Discussion was held in detail regarding the upcoming assembly elections-2023 in Madhya Pradesh to be held free and fair. Principal secretaries of various departments participated in it. A presentation was given on the election related preparations through power point. In the meeting, Senior Deputy Election



Commissioner, Election Commission of India, Dharmendra Sharma, Senior Deputy Election Commissioner, Election Commission of India, NiteshVyas, Deputy Election Commissioner, Election Commission of India, Ajay Bhadoo, Senior Principal Secretary, Election Commission of India, NN Butoliya, Director, Director General Media Election Commission of India B. Narayanan, Director SVEEP SantoshAjmera, Director Election Commission of India PankajSrivastava, Secretary Election Commission of India Amit Kumar, Chief Electoral Officer Madhya Pradesh

AnupamRajan, Additional Chief Electoral Officer Rajesh Kumar Kaul, Joint Chief Electoral Officer Rakesh Singh and BasantKurru were present along with other officials.

The delegation of the Election Commission of India also held a meeting with the nodal officers of the enforcement agencies regarding the monitoring of election expenditure. Instructions to work by preparing an effective action plan to stop money power, illegal liquor and drugs during elections, intensive checking on the border area, coordination of all agencies and compulsorily following all the instructions of the commission were given.

## ADIPURUSH FAME HANUMAN, VIKRAMMASTAL JOINS CONGRESS



Team Absolute | Bhopal

The film Adipurush fame actor, Hanuman VikramMastal joined Congress in presence of PCC chief Kamal Nath and Member of Parliament NakulNath in Chhindwara on Tuesday. The actor VikarmMastal, who played the role of Hanuman in the movie, had registered his objection to the dialogues of the film Adipurush. The

actor has been on the target of people over the objectionable dialogues. After joining the party, Vikarm said he was impressed with the works of ex-CM Nath and felt that he should join the Congress to serve the nation. Nath said that people join the party, but the BJP has made the issue of Vikarm's joining hands with Congress, which is not a good politics.

## VAN MAHOTSAV TO CREATE AWARENESS AMONG PUBLIC ABOUT TREE PLANTATION: FOREST MINISTER DR. VIJAY SHAH

Forest Minister Dr. Vijay Shah said that Van Mahotsav 2023 is being organised in the entire state in the month of July. Van Mahotsav is celebrated every year to create awareness among the general public about tree plantation. He said that taking new initiative this year, 4 cultural forests are being developed in the state. Ujjain, Bhopal, Satna and Jabalpur districts have been selected for this. Mainly Navagraha, Nakshatra and Panchavati forests will be developed in these forests.

Minister Dr. Shah said that under the efficient leadership of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, special emphasis is being laid on sustainable development of forests in the state and providing new employment opportunities to the forest dwellers based on forest produce. Many schemes are being run for this.

On the occasion of HariyaliMahotsav, Minister Dr. Shah has appealed to the people of the state to actively participate in forest development schemes. Saplings for plantation can be obtained from the nearest forest nursery. Dr. Shah has asked Panchayat, educational and voluntary organisations to play a significant role in making Van Mahotsav 2023 a success.

## KHELO MP YOUTH GAMES-2023 WILL BEGIN FROM SEPTEMBER

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Sports and Youth Welfare Minister YashodharaRajeScindia said that as per the wish of Chief Minister Chouhan, 'Khelo MP Youth Games-2023' will be organised in the month of September. Scindia was reviewing the preparations for the Khelo MP Youth Games with the departmental officers on Tuesday. It is noteworthy that after the success of Khelo India Youth Games held for the first time in Bhopal, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had announced that now 'Khelo MP Youth Games-2023' will be organised.

Sports Minister inspected NathuBarkheda construction site despite rain and slush. Sports and Youth Welfare Minister Scindia inspected the International Sports Complex taking shape at NathuBarkheda in Bhopal on Tuesday. Despite rain and



slush, Scindia took stock of the progress of the first phase of works under construction. She inspected the East-West Pavilion, Athletic Track, Hockey Turf, Hockey Practice Turf etc. and instructed the officers and concerned project heads to complete the works in a quality and time-bound manner.

Sports Minister Scindia said that 'Khelo MP Youth Games' will be held in all 52 districts. Youths under the age of 18 will showcase their talents in 24 sports athletics, basketball, badminton, box-

ing, football, hockey, judo, kabaddi, kho-kho, malkhamb, shooting, swimming, weightlifting, wrestling, table-tennis, yogan, taekwondo, volleyball, kayaking-canoing, rowing, fencing, archery, chess and tennis at district, divisional and state level in three phases. State level athletics and shooting competitions will be held at Sports Complex, TT Nagar. Boxing, Taekwondo, Judo, Fencing, Tennis competitions will be held Bhopal's TT Nagar Stadium, Kayaking Canoeing and Rowing in

Upper Lake and Swimming competitions in TaranPushkar Bhopal. Sports Minister Scindia said that men's football will be held at Mulna Stadium in Balaghat, basketball and weightlifting at Indore's Basketball Complex, volleyball at AbhayPrashal, women's football competitions will be held at Emerald Heights School. In Gwalior badminton competitions will be held at the MP Badminton Academy Camp in Gwalior and hockey at the MP Women's Hockey Academy. Mallakhamb and Yoganana competitions will be held at Sports Complex Ujjain, Kho-Kho and Archery at Ranital Sports Complex (Cricket Stadium) of Jabalpur. Kabaddi competitions will be held at Sports Complex Rewa, table-tennis and chess at Indoor Hall Madhav Nagar, Katni and wrestling at Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Stadium, Khandwa.



# Adele calls out fans who throw things at artistes on stage

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Adele has some strong words for fans who are thinking of throwing things at artistes on stage. Don't do it. Armed with t-shirt cannon, the Grammy-winning singer shot out T-shirts to concertgoers in the audience at a recent 'Weekends with Adele' concert in Las Vegas, and railed against those who may be tempted to throw something at performers, reports 'Deadline'. "Have you noticed how people are like forgetting f\*\*\*ing show etiquette in America, they're just throwing s\*\*\* on stage. Have you seen that?"

she asked as she walked the stage with the T-shirt gun, occasionally shooting out t-shirts to fans in the audience. "I f\*\*\*ing dare you," she said. "Dare you to throw something at me." There has been a recent, odd spate of concertgoers throwing things onstage at performers, raising concerns about the safety of artistes as well as audience members. Bebe Rexha was recently hit in the eye with a fan's cellphone and required stitches. A couple of days later, singer Ava Max was slapped by a fan. She briefly left the stage, then returned and addressed the audience, saying, "All I care about is keeping everyone safe. Don't throw things... I want it to be a safe place for everyone. We have little kids here, and can you help me do that tonight?" In late 2022, Harry Styles was hit with Skittles while performing in L.A. and also was hit by a flying object during a concert in Chicago.



**Benedict Cumberbatch hints at Doctor Strange's return in new MCU film 'Next Year'**

London | Agencies

Hollywood star Benedict Cumberbatch is not done playing Doctor Strange in the Marvel Cinematic Universe as he recently hinted at his return in a new movie next year. "There are some Marvel capers in the making next year," Cumberbatch said while being a guest in the 'JW3 Speaker Series', reports

'Deadline'. It's not clear if Cumberbatch is referring to a standalone 'Doctor Strange' sequel or if he's making an appearance in another film of the MCU like 'Avengers: The Kang Dynasty', which was recently delayed. Cumberbatch first played Dr. Stephen Strange in the 2016 film 'Doctor Strange'. The actor would reprise his role in 'Thor: Ragnarok' (2017), 'Avengers: Infinity War' (2018), 'Avengers: Endgame' (2019), 'Spider-Man: No Way Home' (2021) and 'Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness' (2022). It was in 'Multiverse of Madness', that a post-credit scene hinted at a possible future for 'Doctor Strange'. In one of the scenes, Charlize Theron plays a character named Clea and tells Doctor Strange that "he caused an incursion and we're going to fix it." When Clea asks Strange if he's afraid he says, "Not in the least."

# Julian Sands had spoken of dangers surrounding hiking in last interview

London | Agencies

British actor Julian Sands, who was confirmed dead after his disappearance during a mountain hike near Mt. Baldy in Southern California on January 13, had confirmed the dangers of hiking in his last interview. As per 'Variety', he was quoted telling 'Radio Time UK' during his last interview, "I've found spooky things on mountains, when you know you're in a place where many people have lost their lives, whether it be on the Eiger or in the Andes." He further added: "You may be confronted with human remains and that can be chilling. It's not necessarily supernatural, it's possibly all too natural - what I would call hypernatural." "You're in the presence of big nature and big nature is revealing itself in all its power. It can take us over a threshold of hypersensitivity into a realm of natural forces." According to 'Variety', "In his last UK interview with the Radio Time, conducted six months before he was discovered, Sands described climbing as 'solace and a sort of existential self-negation, but equally a self-affirmation'," adding "if you can deal with dangerous mountains, you can certainly deal with life as an actor - the two are quite complementary." The actor who made his mark with films such as 'A Room with a View', 'Arachnophobia', 'Warlock' and 'The Killing Fields' was a keen hiker and an adventurous spirit. The actor was one of seven people who've died in the Mt. Baldy area since 2020. The actor was aged 65 during his death.



# Tom Cruise all set to watch 'Oppenheimer' and 'Barbie' on opening day

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Tom Cruise is all set to watch 'Barbie' and 'Oppenheimer' on their opening day, which will be two of the biggest movies of July this year. According to Deadline, "I want to see both Barbie and Oppenheimer. I'll see them opening weekend," he said as per 'The Sydney Morning Herald'. "Friday I'll see 'Oppenheimer' first and then 'Barbie' on Saturday." "Both films are set to hit theatres on July 21 and will compete for audiences at the box office. Cruise is a big proponent of watching movies in the theatres as that's the way he grew up." The 'Top Gun: Maverick' star further added: "I grew up seeing movies on the big screen. That's how I make them, and I like that experience; it's immersive, and to have that as a community and an industry, it's important." "I still go the movies." The actor has made no secret watching these exciting cinematic ventures on the big screen on their first day. Back in June, the actor had tweeted his excitement about the two upcoming films. He had tweeted: "I love a double feature, and it doesn't get more explosive (or more pink) than one with 'Oppenheimer' and 'Barbie'." After breaking box office records with his military action film with 'Top Gun: Maverick' last year, the actor is all geared to up the ante with the highly anticipated seventh installment of his upcoming spy-thriller-action franchise Mission Impossible with 'Mission Impossible: Dead Reckoning Part One'.



# Sabrina Impacciatore joins Italian adaptation of 'Call My Agent' Season 2'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Sabrina Impacciatore, known for her work in 'White Lotus', has joined the adaptation of 'Call My Agent' Season 2. Sky Italia celebrated its 20-year anniversary on Tuesday by announcing a rich slate of upcoming originals, including a second season of the Italian adaptation of 'Call My Agent', reports 'Variety'. The Sky Italia originals slate comprises previously announced high-end drama 'M. Son of the Century' by British director Joe Wright, alongside less lavish shows in various stages - most of which have international potential. It underscores how the Italian unit of the Comcast-owned pay-TV service continues to be a major Italian industry driver. While Sky's German unit, which is believed to be up for sale, has put production on pause, Sky Italia is cranking out Italian originals through the platform's Sky Studios unit at a steady pace, showing no signs of a slowdown. "We are at the level of eight Sky originals a year, which I think puts us among Italy's top scripted content producers in terms of volume," Nils Hartmann, EVP Sky Studios Italy and Germany, told Variety. He declined to comment on Sky Germany. Hartmann added that "more than volume, what counts is the continuous growth of our ambition," noting that 'M', which will air in 2024, takes Sky Italia originals to the next level, both "in terms of creative vision and in terms of production [budget] expenditure", which he declined to share.



# Daniel Radcliffe is 'definitely not seeking out' involvement in Harry Potter TV series

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Daniel Radcliffe is alright sitting out the next round of 'Harry Potter' projects. Warner Bros. Discovery recently ordered a new adaptation of J.K. Rowling's best-selling series of novels, conceived this time as a television series for its streaming service Max. The project will feature an entirely new cast - a decision that Radcliffe is at peace with, reports 'Variety'. In a new interview with ComicBook to promote his TBS comedy series 'Miracle Workers: End Times', Radcliffe expressed his support for whatever comes for 'Harry Potter', but that he doesn't feel he needs to be there. "My understanding is that they're trying to very much start fresh and I'm sure whoever is making them will want to make their own mark on it and probably not want to have to figure out how to get old Harry to cameo in this somewhere," Radcliffe stated. "I'm definitely not seeking it out in any way. But I do wish them, obviously, all the luck in the world and I'm very excited to have that torch passed. But I don't think it needs me to physically pass it." Warner Bros. Discovery announced the new 'Harry Potter' series during a press and investors presentation on April 12, with plans for each of Rowling's seven novels to be adapted into one season of television. 'Variety' first reported WarnerMedia's plans to develop a 'Potter' TV show in 2021, ahead of the company's acquisition by Discovery. The project has had no public developments since its announcement three months ago, with no writers, directors or actors currently attached and no timeline for production disclosed.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY

Molly Marsh



## 'WHEN PEOPLE DON'T LIKE A DISMISSAL UNDER LAWS OF CRICKET, THEY CITE SPIRIT OF CRICKET': SIMON TAUFEL



Sydney | Agencies

Former ICC Elite Panel umpire Simon Taufel has slammed hypocrisy of many people criticising third umpire Marais Erasmus' decision to give Jonny Bairstow out after wandering out of crease in second Ashes Test at Lord's, stating that

people cite Spirit of Cricket to support their view when they don't like a dismissal under Laws of Cricket.

On day five's play in the second Ashes Test at Lord's, Bairstow was on 10 in the 52nd over when he ducked under a bouncer from Cameron Green and inadvertently walked out of his crease.

Australia wicketkeeper Alex Carey immediately directed an underarm throw after catching the delivery, and jumped in joy after firing an accurate underarm throw towards the stumps. On-field umpires Ahsan Raza and Chris Gaffaney sent the decision upstairs, where TV umpire Marais Erasmus confirmed Bairstow's dismissal.

The dismissal drew a furious reaction from the fans, who started to chant "same old Aussies, always cheating", and booed the visitors for the rest of the day, with some players also facing verbal abuse from MCC members in the long room.

"Was Jonny Bairstow's dismissal at

Lord's a breach of the Spirit of Cricket? This is a question I have been inundated with, so I thought it best to share my thoughts publicly by asking everyone a question or eight to consider... Have you seen any umpire tell a fielding side that the keeper standing back is not allowed to attempt a stumping?

Was there a complaint from anyone when Bairstow tried to stump Marnus exactly the same way in the first innings? What has Jonny Bairstow said about his dismissal? He has been very quiet. Why? My experience is when people don't like a dismissal under the Laws of Cricket, they cite the Spirit of Cricket to support their view," wrote Taufel in a post on LinkedIn.

Carey's stumping of Bairstow has made huge headlines in the cricketing world even England and Australia now gear up for the third Ashes Test at Leeds from Thursday, with the respective nations Prime Ministers Rishi Sunak and Anthony Albanese

defending their teams.

Taufel, who sits on the MCC Laws sub-committee, further wrote, "Which part of the codified Preamble (the Spirit of Cricket) was breached by the fielding side? What did the fielding side do in effecting a legitimate dismissal that unfairly impacted the ability of the batter in their attempt not to be dismissed? (Did they run into him or distract him or prevent him making good his ground?)"

"Should a batter be immune from dismissal as per the Laws by simply being negligent (and leaving his ground too early)? Did England retire Ben Duckett when they disagreed with the Starc catch decision as per the Laws and umpires' decision?"

The hypocrisy and lack of consistency from some people and groups is quite interesting and concerning for the future of our game. Maybe I am the odd one out here? The good news is that we are actively engaged with Test cricket, the best form of the game," he concluded.

## Root loses no.1 spot to Williamson in ICC Test rankings

Dubais | Agencies

A major shake-up witnessed in the latest ICC Men's Test Player Rankings as England star Joe Root lost the top spot to New Zealand's Kane Williamson while Australia batter Steve Smith has made rapid progress towards the top after the second Ashes Test at Lord's.

Root, who could only manage scores 10 and 18, slipped to fifth position, allowing injured New Zealand veteran slid up one place to claim the top ranking just one rating point ahead of Smith.

This is the sixth stint at the top for Williamson, who first attained number one position in November 2015 and was last at the top in August 2021.

Smith's 'Player of the Match' effort of 110 and 34 has lifted him four places to second position with 882 rat-



ing points. He was last at the top in June 2021, when he had replaced Williamson for a couple of weeks before being overtaken again by the New Zealand batter.

Australia batters now occupy four of the top ten places on the Test batter rankings, with Marnus Labuschagne (third), Travis

Head (fourth) and Usman Khawaja (seventh).

England batter Ben Duckett has shot up 24 places to reach the top 20 for the first time in his career after scores of 98 and 83 in the second Ashes Test while his captain Ben Stokes is up nine places to 23rd after a valiant 155 in the second innings.

Australia captain Pat Cummins, closes in on India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, moving up to second position among bowlers after grabbing four wickets in the match while left-arm fast bowler Mitchell Starc is up two places to 14th with six scalps.

India duo Ravindra Jadeja (first) and Ashwin (second) are maintaining the premier positions in all-rounders rankings with Stokes (up one place to fourth) and Root (up one spot to seventh) make some ground on the list for Test all-rounders.

## 'I was little bit jealous'

### Alcaraz wishes Federer was watching his Wimbledon watch

London | Agencies

World no.1 men's tennis player Carlos Alcaraz playfully expressed his "jealousy" that Roger Federer wasn't watching him as he dominated the first round at Wimbledon and hopes the Swiss legend will watch one of his matches.

Alcaraz completed his first-round victory against Jeremy Chardy on Tuesday at Wimbledon. The Spaniard emerged victorious on No. 1 Court, while Federer, who was in attendance at the All England Club for a special ceremony to celebrate his achievements, was sitting in the Royal Box on Centre Court watching defending champion Elena Rybakina.

"After the match, I was on the phone checking everything I have, all the stories, all the posts. I saw that Roger Federer was here. I was a little bit jealous," Alcaraz said, cracking a smile. "Honestly, I want Roger Federer to watch one of my matches obviously. I wish to talk a little bit with him. For me, that would be amazing. I hope to see him around more than once."



Alcaraz has now won six consecutive matches, having claimed his first grass-court title two weeks ago at The Queen's Championship. The 20-year-old Spaniard has only played 12 tour-level matches on grass in his career and is gaining confidence with every victory.

## Focus on youngsters as Indian women's team gears up for Asian Games on a tour of Germany, Spain

Mumbai | Agencies

With a mixture of some junior and senior players in the squad, the Indian women's hockey team takes off for Germany and Spain for a series of matches that will help assess its preparations for the upcoming Asian Games in September.

The next few months are quite crucial for the Indian women's hockey team as it embarks on a make-or-break period leading up to the Asian Games in China. Winning the Asian Games will clinch the team a direct berth in next year's Olympic Games, but more importantly, it will boost the team's confidence leading up to the mega event in Paris.

So, the next few months will involve rigorous training, sporadic periods of rest, testing test matches, fixing combinations and more strenuous training -- all as per a plan devised to ensure that the players are at their best physically and mentally at the time of the Asian Games.



The team will take the first step on this journey leading up to the Asian Games, to be held from September 23 to October 8, with a three-week tour of Europe during which it will play bilateral matches in Germany against China and the host nation and a four-

nation international tournament in Spain in which Great Britain and South Africa besides the hosts will be the other teams.

The team has gone through a strenuous camp in Bengaluru to prepare for the Spain and Germany tour

and both coach Janneke Schopman and captain Savita Punia feel the players are ready for the challenging period ahead.

For the upcoming tour of Germany and Spain, Schopman has picked some junior players to work out some new combinations ahead of Hangzhou Asian Games. On the German leg of the tour, to be played from July 16 to 19, India will take on China in the first match and then meet the hosts in two matches. In Spain, India will participate in a four-nation hockey tournament from July 25 to 30 in Terrassa to mark the 100th Anniversary of the Spanish Hockey Federation. On this tour, the focus will be on young midfielder Jyoti Chhatri, who was part of the Junior World Cup team and is hoping to cement a permanent spot in the playing XI. Schopman said Jyoti Chhatri will make her senior national debut on this tour but clarified that there is no guarantee that players that are part of the Spain and Germany tour will be there in the Asian Games.

## Wanindu Hasaranga, Travis Head and Sean Williams nominated for ICC Men's Player of the Month award

Dubai | Agencies

Sri Lanka leg-spin all-rounder Wanindu Hasaranga, Australian left-handed batter Travis Head and veteran Zimbabwe all-rounder Sean Williams have been nominated for ICC Men's Player of the Month award for June 2023.

Hasaranga enjoyed a prolific spell in June, picking 26 wickets at an average of just 10. He found massive success during the ongoing ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Qualifier in Zimbabwe, becoming the first spinner to take three consecutive five-wicket hauls in ODI cricket.



On the other hand, Head sits in fourth position in the ICC Men's Test batting rankings and he demonstrated his growing influence in the Australian batting attack on the biggest

Test stage -- the ICC World Test Championship Final at The Oval.

Williams, meanwhile, lit up the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Qualifier for hosts Zimbabwe with a supreme display of run-scoring throughout June. The left-handed batter amassed 532 runs at an average of 133 in his five ODIs, including three centuries against Nepal, USA and Oman, and all of it coming at a staggering strike rate of 148.60. With this nomination, Williams aims to become the first Men's Player of the Month from Zimbabwe since Sikandar Raza was honoured in August 2022.

### TAMMY BEAUMONT, GARDNER AND MATTHEWS EARN NOMINATIONS FOR ICC WOMEN'S PLAYER OF THE MONTH AWARD

Dubai: England opener Tammy Beaumont, Australia off-spin

all-rounder Ashleigh Gardner and West Indies skipper Haylee Matthews have earned nominations for the ICC Women's Player of the Month award for June 2023.

Tammy last won an ICC Player of the Month crown in February 2021 and the right-handed batter lit up the June 2023 with her record-breaking innings of 208 in the one-off women's Ashes Test in Nottingham. She was the shining light for England as they fell to defeat at the hands of an Ashleigh-inspired Australia.

Ashleigh again finds herself among the candidates for the prize after previously winning the award in December 2022 and February 2023. She earned a nomination for her excellence in the longest format, clinching a valuable victory over England with a ruthless spell of bowling across both innings.

Hayley, a previous winner of the ICC Women's Player of the Month in November 2021, was at the heart of the action for the West Indies in the rain-affected series against Ireland at Gros



## Jason Holder, Alzarri Joseph leave World Cup qualifier to manage workload ahead of Test series vs India

Harare (Zimbabwe) | Agencies

West Indies cricketers Jason Holder and Alzarri Joseph will leave the ODI World Cup qualifier in Zimbabwe early to manage the workload ahead of the home Test series against India.

West Indies' aspirations of securing a spot in the ODI World Cup, scheduled to be held in India in October-November, were shattered following their defeat to Scotland in a Super Six match of the Qualifiers in Harare on July 1.

The Caribbean side still have upcoming matches against Oman, a team that is already out of the ODI World Cup qualification race, and



Sri Lanka, who have already

secured their qualification, scheduled for July 5 and July 7, respectively.

"Jason Holder and Alzarri Joseph will depart early from the ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifiers. They will miss the last two Super Six matches as they return to the Caribbean. This is with the view of managing their workloads ahead of the Test Series vs India," Cricket West Indies said in a statement on Twitter.

The series against India starts with the first of two Tests in Roseau on July 12, followed by the second Test in Port of Spain from July 20. The two sides will then play three ODIs on July 27, 29 and August 1 before squaring off in five T20Is between August 3 to 13, with the last two played in Florida.

## Paris Saint-Germain part ways with manager Christophe Galtier after one season

Paris | Agencies

Ligue 1 champions Paris Saint-Germain on Wednesday confirmed the exit of manager Christophe Galtier after a drawn-out process to reach a contract termination agreement.

When Galtier arrived at PSG ahead of the 2022-23 season, he had signed a two-year deal. However, the 56-year-old only spent one season in the dugout at Parc des Princes and still had one year left on his deal.

The Club would like to pay tribute to his professionalism and commitment, which helped the Rouge et Bleu win a historic eleventh French Championship title and a Trophée des Champions," the Ligue 1 club said in a statement.



Under Galtier's guidance, PSG won their 11th Ligue 1 title, becoming the most successful club in the history of

the French Championship but he came under criticism after another early Champions League exit.

## Anderson rested as Woakes, Wood and Ali included in England playing XI for third Test

Leeds | Agencies

England on Wednesday included Chris Woakes, Mark Wood, and Moeen Ali in their playing eleven for the third Ashes 2023 Test, which will be played at Headingley from Thursday. The trio replace James Anderson, Josh Tongue and an injured Ollie Pope as England look to come up from being 2-0 behind in the five-game Ashes series.

As per England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) media release, the fast-bowling duo of Anderson (three wickets in Lord's Test) and Tongue (five wickets in Lord's Test) are rested while Pope is out of the rest of the series after dislocating his right shoulder in the second Test at Lord's, where England lost by 43 runs.

In Pope's absence, Harry Brook has been promoted to number three while Jonny Bairstow will bat at number five. The presence of Woakes and Ali means the England lower-order



batting gets a big boost.

The Headingley Test will be Woakes' first appearance in the

longest format of the game under Brendon McCullum's coaching. Woakes' last Test outing came against

West Indies in March 2022, while his last home Test match came in September 2021.

On the other hand, Wood played two Tests on a victorious 3-0 tour of Pakistan in December 2022, but hasn't played a first-class match since then. Wood was in consideration for playing at Lord's, but concerns over his bowling workload meant he didn't feature in the match.

Wood's last competitive cricket outing came in April, where he turned out for Lucknow Super Giants in IPL 2023. Ali, meanwhile, is back in action after blisters on his right index finger saw him miss out on playing the second Test at Lord's. The off-spin all-rounder needs two more scalps to reach 200 wickets in Tests.

England playing XI: Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Harry Brook, Joe Root, Jonny Bairstow (wicketkeeper), Ben Stokes (captain) Moeen Ali, Chris Woakes, Mark Wood, Ollie Robinson and Stuart Broad.



## Janhvi, Varun's love story gets tested with WWII backdrop

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The makers of 'Bawaal' starring Janhvi Kapoor and Varun Dhawan unveiled the heart-touching teaser on Wednesday. The over-a-minute long trailer showcases love, romance and war in love between the characters.

It also shows a heart-wrenching scene in monochrome in the concentration camp during World War II. Producer Sajid Nadiadwala said, "I am so proud of Bawaal, a film that I believe will forever be one of my most special and memorable projects... Working with a visionary like Nitesh, and talented actors like Varun and Janhvi, makes the job of a producer that much easier, as we've managed to supersede our own ambitions for the film. Come July 21, the audience will witness a love story that will be remembered for the ages."

Transcending each moment with the serenade - 'Tumhe Kitna Pyaar Karte', composed by Mithoon, with lyrics by Manoj Muntashir, in the soulful voice of Arijit Singh, the teaser of 'Bawaal' gives a window to the endearing and budding romance between Ajay (Varun Dhawan) and Nisha (Janhvi Kapoor), as they discover love in this etching and timeless romantic ballad. Manish Menghani, director of content licensing at Prime Video, India, said, "A powerhouse collaboration between the critically acclaimed combination of Nitesh and Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari with the much-celebrated filmmaker - Sajid Nadiadwala, along with Varun Dhawan and Janhvi Kapoor as the lead pair is assured to give audience a romantic tale they'd never forget when it premieres day-and-date, on Prime Video on July 21."

Shot in India and multiple international locales, 'Bawaal' has a meaningful message, which is sure to resonate with audiences worldwide.



## Vidya plays 'not so classic detective' in classic murder mystery

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Vidya Balan, who is gearing up for her theatrical release 'Neeeyat', has shed light on her character in the film, saying that she is unlike any other detective, in fact not a classic detective.

In the film, which stars an ensemble starcast, Vidya plays the role of Mira Rao, a CBI officer, who investigates the suicide of billionaire Ashish Kapoor (played by Ram Kapoor) and breaks the news to his family, assembled for a gala, saying it's rather a murder and not a suicide.

Talking about her part in the film, Vidya told the media, "Mira Rao is not a classic detective in a classic murder mystery. She has her own quirks and a very different perspective to things".

Ram, her co-actor, even compared her character to 'Sherlock Holmes'. The actress also shared that the ensemble cast had the time of their lives shooting for the film and the energy was truly insane on the sets so much so that the film's director Anu Menon had to regularly intervene to keep them quiet like a "class monitor" and focus on the narrative.

"We had a great time on the sets owing to such an amazing cast. Anu had to literally scream 'QUIET!' while we were shooting", the actress added.

## I WOULD LOVE TO DO A ROMANTIC FILM OPPOSITE NEENA GUPTA: ANGAD BEDI

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Angad Bedi says he would love to do a romantic film opposite veteran actress Neena Gupta. Angad's latest release is 'Lust Stories 2', where he was paired opposite Mrunal Thakur in the 'Made For Each Other' segment, directed by R. Balki.

The segment also shows veteran actor Neena Gupta in an important role. Having spent a lot of time with Neena, Angad is totally impressed by the way the veteran actor takes to her roles. Angad said: "Neena Gupta is an amazing actor. She has this effortless way of playing her characters, which is a lesson for many actors. In 'Lust Stories 2', we have a different relationship, but someday I would love to romance her onscreen for any project."

He added: "I am sure it won't be your regular romantic story so I am looking forward to any such project. I have watched many of her older projects and I feel she is one of the very underrated actors we have in the industry who is slowly getting her due credit."

Angad's segment in the anthology shows Neena, who plays the role of a grandmother, suggests a young couple, played by Angad and Mrunal, to go on a 'test drive' for sexual compatibility.



## My recent music video was shot for 40 hours inside world's largest nightclub: Ali

Team Absolute | Mumbai



Actor Ali Merchant is a big name in the Indian TV industry, having been a part of multiple projects. Recently, collaborating with legendary singer Kumar Sanu, the actor released a new single titled 'Dhuan' which has already gained massive traction. Talking about the shoot for the music video for 'Dhuan' he said it was shot within 40 hours in the world's biggest nightclub in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Elaborating on the same, he said:

"The music video was shot in the world's biggest nightclub in Baku, Azerbaijan, and it took me 15 hours to travel there, and then I shot for 40 hours and then took my flight back for another show in India."

He continued: "This was definitely one of the shortest and also the longest travel work trips for me, for which I flew for 15 hours to shoot for 40 hours, so yes, and everything is worth it when I get good feedback for my work, which I am getting for this one."

Speaking of what made him agree to do 'Dhuan', Ali said: "The reason I said yes to this music video was when the director, Dhanashree, called me and gave me a reference of playing the character like Michele Morrone in '365 days', an effortless Hot Don, so it attracted me, and I immediately Locked this one and started working on myself."

"I have no doubt after giving so much effort and hard work, the video turned out fantastic, and I am looking forward to it. As it's a Hindi house mix genre, which will surely make the audience fall in love with it," he added.

Ali went on to share an interesting on-set story during the shoot: "This is the first time I worked with opposite an international actress opposite where both of us didn't know each other's languages as well as she didn't know English, so it was the translator explaining to her, and it was super funny, but yeah, I am happy with the outcome."



## 'Even after 22 years, the love Tara and Sakina are getting, warms my heart'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Ameesha Patel, who will be seen reprising her role of Sakina in 'Gadar 2', says the kind of love and appreciation that comes her way makes her teary-eyed and warms her heart. Ameesha was interacting with the media on the sidelines of Fabric Expo 2023 in Mumbai. The talk centred on 'Gadar 2'. The much-anticipated movie's release is around the corner and the chatter about it has gained momentum.

Talking about the reception that the original 'Gadar' received, Ameesha said: "It is one of the biggest hit movies of India. Even after 22 years, the kind of love Tara and Sakina are getting, it just warms my heart and I tear up as well."

"It is such a warm feeling, the character has sort of entered everyone's heart and mind. The film is still getting the same kind of response after the release of the 'Gadar 2' teaser and song release." Ameesha urged the audiences to keep "the kind of love and apprecia-

tion you showered" on 'Gadar' going for 'Gadar 2'. She added: "I hope the audiences like the film, as they are the ultimate deciders." On a personal note, Ameesha said that before venturing into films, she had aspired to be an interior designer. She said: "If I wouldn't have entered films, my interest was interior design. Making the house beautiful, keeping good things for the house, choosing the right combinations for the house, I enjoy these things. I am about to start renovating my house in July."

## Gippy Grewal's upcoming movie to show challenges of modern parenting

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Punjabi star Gippy Grewal is coming up with his new film titled 'Shinda Shinda No Papa', and its production kick-started in Chandigarh on Wednesday. Gippy shared that the film will showcase the dilemmas of modern parenting. The film is a heart-warming family comedy, helmed by well-known director Amarpreet GS Chhabra, and is headlined by multi-faceted star Gippy Grewal and his son Shinda Grewal. The film outlines the challenges of raising children in a fast-changing modern milieu. Talking about the film, Gippy said, "This is a film after my own heart and 'Shinda Shinda No Papa' is a very entertaining but authentic take on the dilemmas of modern

parenting. I am happy with the increasing interest in Punjabi cinema and its new wave of storytellers and hope to see the industry grow both in terms of quality content and positive synergies."

Director Amarpreet Chhabra shared that working on this project has been very interesting and such plots are good for the overall growth of Punjabi cinema. This film and its story will show the audience the "new direction" that storytelling is taking in the industry, the director said. "This film will open new opportunities for Punjabi industry in terms of scale as well as content. We really hope the audience will appreciate our efforts on enhancing the Punjabi entertainment industry," Ravneet Kaur Grewal, producer from Humble Motion Pictures, said in a statement.



Khushi Kapoor