







# MERITORIOUS STUDENTS OF BOTH MP BOARD AND CBSE WILL GET LAPTOPS: CM CHOUHAN

# Government schemes aim to uplift the necessitous: Governor Patel

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan told the students that he loves them a lot and will never let their dreams die. Our government endeavours to ensure that the students' progress paces and their future is secure. The topper students will be given scooters from next year. The scheme of giving laptops will be applicable in MP board and CBSE board as well. Chief Minister Chouhan said this during an interaction with the students at Lal Parade Ground under the Talented Students Promotion Scheme. Chief Minister Chouhan transferred Rs 25 thousand each with a single click to the students who obtained 75 percent or more marks in class 12th to buy laptops. He symbolically presented cheques to the topper students of the division. An amount of Rs 196 crore was transferred to the accounts of 78 thousand 641 meritori-



ous students in the programme. The Chief Minister welcomed the students by showering flowers at the programme venue. Chief Minister Chouhan inaugurated the programme with kanya-pujan and lighting the lamp along with Saraswati Vandana. School Education Minister Inder Singh Parmar, MLA Krishna Gaur, other public representatives, officers and a large number of students were present. Students won't be compelled to leave studies midway

Chief Minister Chouhan said that the state government has made efforts to improve the educational system up to the village level. It is our endeavour to provide excellent school buildings, free textbooks, uniforms, cycles etc. along with continuous power supply, good roads and standard infrastructure for better education to the students, so that they can improve their future by focusing on their studies and help in building self-reliant Madhya Pradesh and a progressive nation. Students are an asset to the state, their progress will lead to state's progress, therefore the state government endeavours to support the students. Arrangements have also been made to pay the fees of students for higher education. Students will not be allowed to leave their studies midway under compulsion. Students desirous of going into the fields of engineering, medical and other special studies sectors prepare for the examinations, they will be given all possible support from the

MukhyamantriMedhaviVidyarthiYojana a along with other programmes and schemes. It is crucial to emphasise on health and sports along with education

Chief Minister Chouhan advised the students to concentrate and study. He mentioned the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda with a view to inspire them to build their future with enthusiasm and positivity. The Chief Minister said that along with studies, it is also necessary to pay attention to your health and participate in activities related to sports and exercise.

SammanYojanaarises the competitive spirit among students for studies - Minister Parmar

Minister of State for School Education Inder Singh Parmar said that as a result of VidyarthiPratibhaSammanYojana started by Chief Minister Chouhan, students are moving ahead in studies with a competitive spirit. Started in the year 2009, this scheme has helped students in higher studies by providing them with laptops after class 12th.



Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel reviewed the departmental activities of Forest and Animal Husbandry Department. The meeting was organised in the meeting hall of Sandipani Auditorium at Raj Bhavan. Forest Minister Kunwar Vijay Shah, President of Tribal Cell Deepak Khandekar, Additional Chief Secretary J.N. Kansotiya, Additional Chief Secretary Malay Srivastava, Principal Secretary to Governor DP Ahuja, Member Secretary of Tribal Cell BS Jamod and senior officers of concerned departments were present in the meeting.

Governor Mangubhai Patel said that the schemes of the government aim to uplift the necessitous. They should be implemented with the same intention. Disadvantaged and poor families of the target community and area are of utmost priority. Officers

should work to fulfill the goals of the scheme with this feeling and spirit. This should also be the foundation for monitoring the work. The experience of joy and self-satisfaction obtained by helping the deprived gives a divine feeling.

742 families benefitted under MukhyamantriDudharuPashuYojana The Governor apprised himself about the productivity of the milk animals distributed under the MukhyamantriDudharuPashuYojana (Chief Minister Dairy Cattle Scheme). He was told that cattle giving 10 to 12 liters of milk per day have been provided to the cattle herders.

MukhyamantriDudharuPashuYojana is being implemented in 14 districts of the state for sustainable livelihood of special backward tribes Baiga, Saharia and Bhabra. A total of 742 families have been benefited. The Madhya Pradesh Gausamvardhan Board has 86 non-govern-

ment charitable Gaushalas in 14 tribal districts of the state, with 28,555 cows and 198 government Gaushalas, which have 14,495 cows.

268 gram sabhas sold more than 7 crore tendu leaves Governor Mangubhai Patel said that the information about the successful exercise of the rights given to the gram sabhas under the PESA act should be widely publicised in other gram sabhas. The benefits of using the rights should be explained, so that other Gram Sabhas get motivated to use the rights under the PESA Act.

Forest Minister Kunwar Vijay Shah said that Madhya Pradesh is pioneering in the country to provide 20 percent dividend on the sale value of timber extracted by the Forest Department to the Forest Committee. Similarly, it is also the initiating state in the country to plant 50 percent forest produce species in the plantation for biodiversity conservation.

### 'YOU CAN RULE THE UNIVERSE IF YOU WANT'

While inspiring the students, Chief Minister Chouhan said that God has given equal intelligence to everyone. If he maximizes the use of his abilities, he can do the toughest work. 'You can even rule the universe if you want.' Work hard with full concentration, Mama will provide you all necessary facilities for study. Utilise your abilities and make a name in the state, country and the world.

## Priyanka to lead in urban areas, Rahul &Kharge to focus on tribal, Dalit voters in MP



In the poll-bound Madhya Pradesh, Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will lead the party's poll campaign in urban areas, Rahul Gandhi will focus on the tribal areas, and party chief Mallikarjun Kharge will concentrate on Dalit voters, a senior party leader said. The Congress leader informed that Rahul Gandhi will address his maiden poll rally in Shahdol in August. Party leaders said the date for Rahul Gandhi and Kharge rallies are yet to be finalised, however, the two are scheduled to visit the poll-bound state next month. Priyanka Gandhi, kick-started the party's campaign during her visit to Jabalpur in

June. She is scheduled to address a mega poll rally in Gwalior on July 21, the bastion of the Union Minister JyotiradityaScindia, whose rebellion had toppled the party's state government in 2020. She would be the first Gandhi family member to address a rally at Mela Ground in Gwalior after the coup. The Assembly elections slated for November-December are the first for the Congress since the scion of the erstwhile Scindia royal family rebelled and left with 22 MLAs, including ministers, forcing the then Congress Chief Minister Kamal Nath to resign from office. Priyanka Gandhi's rally is expected to energise the party cadres in 30

Assembly segments across seven districts. Former Chief Minister Digvijaya Singh alongwith Congress' state in-charge J. P. Aggarwalhave prepared an elaborate plan for Priyanka Gandhi's rally in Gwalior. Sources in the Congress said the party is planning to promise monetary incentives to the unemployed youth in MP, which Priyanka is likely to announce during her Gwalior rally. In her first rally in Jabalpur in June, Priyanka Gandhi had announced five poll promises -- introduction of the old pension scheme, farm loan waiver, 100 units of electricity free and 200 units at half the tariff, Rs 1,500 pension for women and LPG cylinder at Rs 500.

## Now Onwards, Nagda Will Be 54th District



Nagda: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan declared the industrial town Nagda as the 54th district of the state. The new district will be carved out of Ujjain district. Chouhan made an announcement on Thursday while addressing the public gathering at MukteswarMahadev temple in the town after his road show. Besides this, Chouhan said that Narmada water will also be brought to Ujjain and Unhel will get tehsil status soon. Chief Minister said that those tehsils who would like to be included in the newly formed district will be included. He also announced the opening of Community Hall and CM Rise School in Unhel. Chief Minister said

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## CM CHOUHAN PLANTS MANGO, KHIRNI AND GULMOHAR SAPLINGS



Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, girl TanishkaPatidar, Anuj Mittal, Chief Minister Press Cell's Sanjeev Kumar Gaur and Dr.Rohit Jain also planted saplings on their birthday. Sachin Patidar, Sunil Patidar, Meena and ShradhaPatidar, Dr. PK Jain, Neelam Jain, Sambhav and Rakesh Jain and Akshat Jain participated in plantation.

## Minor girl's marriage bid foiled in Odisha's Cuttack city

Childline officials along with the police prevented a 16-year-old girl from being married off to a man from Madhya Pradesh in Odisha's Cuttack city. Officials had received information about a wedding ceremony in which a minor girl was to be married to a 25-year-old man from Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday. The officials informed the Cantonment police station. On getting information, the police reached the temple and foiled the attempt for the marriage and rescued the minor girl, said a police official. However, before police reached the temple, the groom escaped from the spot. The police detained four persons, including family members of the girl and mediators in this case. The minor girl was produced before the District Child Welfare Committee and her statement was recorded, said the police official.

## SC CONCERNED OVER RISING CHEETAH DEATHS, SAYS IT DOES NOT PRESENT GOOD PICTURE

The Supreme Court on Thursday said that deaths of 40% of translocated cheetahs from Namibia and South Africa in less than a year painted a worrying picture of the state of affairs, as it suggested the Union government to consider if they can be shifted to some other sanctuaries. The court also sought to know why all the cheetahs were only sent to the Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh. A bench of Justices B R Gavai, J B Paridwala and Prashant Kumar Mishra pointed out that two more deaths have happened last week and asked the government not to make it a prestige issue. "Why is this becoming a prestige issue? Please take some positive steps. Also, why were they all put in one place instead of being spread? 40% deaths occurring in less than a year does not paint a good picture," the bench told Additional Solicitor General AishwaryaBhati, appearing for the Centre. The court suggested that some of the cheetahs could be shifted to Rajasthan, particularly at Jawai National Park, which is very famous for leopards. As many as 20 cheetahs were translocated to India from Namibia and South Africa in September 2022 and February 2023 in two batches. Eight cheetahs, including three cubs, have died at Kuno National Park since March this year, due to various reasons. Bhati assured the court of taking all requisite steps in this regard. She said when similar projects were implemented in Rajasthan, deaths of tigers occurred within enclosures. She also submitted at authorities at the highest level have taken cognisance of these deaths. "After all, this is a prestigious project for the country," she said. Bhati also submitted that the deaths are not alarming, as up to 50% of deaths were anticipated within the first year of the project. "We want to know. Prima facie it appears our conditions do not suit them. They reportedly suffered from respiratory problems. One was detected with kidney ailment," the bench told Bhati.

## MP forest dept issues notice to wildlife conservationist seeking details of workshops organised by her NGO

The Madhya Pradesh Forest Department has issued a notice to wildlife conservationist VidyaVenkatesh, a member of the Mumbai-based NGO 'Last Wilderness Foundation', seeking a detailed report on the workshops organised by the NGO in the state's forest areas. The NGO is a member of the state wildlife board, which is chaired by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. Venkatesh is also a nominated member of the state wildlife action plan. The state forest department has mentioned that the NGO has been involved in various types of work (related to training workshops in forests) with multiple sources for revenue for the purpose. Venkatesh has been asked to submit a detailed report that the NGO she is associated with has conducted workshops in reserve forest zones in Madhya Pradesh in the last five years. The forest department has mentioned that the report should carry the details regarding the number of programmes organised with proper mention of date and place. It has also sought the details of the beneficiaries of the programmes. "If you have received from the state forest department or any other branch of it, provide the details of the same. You are requested to submit your reply within the next seven days." The department had issued a similar notice to Venkatesh in January this year, however, no reply was received, it has been mentioned in the fresh notice. January's notice was issued following a complaint by



Madhya Pradesh-based wildlife activist Ajay Dube, who alleged that the NGO has been involved in various activities like nature guide training, tribal tourism, handicraft cell workshops etc. at different tiger reserves and earmarked forest zones in Madhya Pradesh. The NGO has also been organising awareness programmes in the surrounding area of the Kuno National Park (KNP) after the 'cheetah project' was launched and VidyaVenkatesh was also involved in providing training to forest staff deployed for monitoring the cheetahs.





EDITOR'S SPECS

MULTIPLE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS DON'T AFFECT MENTAL WELL-BEING

The use of many different social media platforms is not a significant risk factor for the well-being of the users, according to a study. Social media has become an integral part of everyday life. However, numerous studies have produced conflicting results on how the use of these applications affects the mental health of their users. "Previous studies have only looked at single variables such as depression or general health. Or the type of social media use was not clearly defined," said Sophie Lohmann, from the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research (MPIDR) in Rostock, Germany. The new study, published in the journal PLOS Digital Health, showed that people who use multiple social media channels are no happier or unhappier than others. "There is very little correlation between the use of multiple social media platforms and the outcome variables, such as relationship satisfaction, financial satisfaction, general satisfaction, trust in the state, and so on. When we apply our method, all negative effects disappear completely," Lohmann said. The assumption that the use of multiple channels leads to overload is not confirmed. Further, the researchers said the topics are diverse and, above all, very complex. It is therefore important to define exactly what is meant by 'social media use' and not to lose sight of the complexity of the platforms. "Twitter is not the same as Facebook, which is not the same as TikTok. The way people use the different channels is very different. This must not be neglected in research," Lohmann said. "In the future, more attention needs to be paid to operationalisation in social media research. It needs to be clearly defined what social media use means and what kind of use has which effect."

UNRAVELLING THE UCC

Asad Mirza

On December 9, 2022, BJP MP Kirodi Lal Meena introduced a private member bill on India's Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the Rajya Sabha that fuelled a fresh debate on an issue, which saw no resolution even in pre-independence India and continues to haunt the political climate of the country even today. The sensitive nature of the issue besides giving political mileage to the BJP, affects various political parties, with respect to their stand on the issue. Plus, it also puts various religious communities coming under the purview of the UCC to give up their respective Personal Laws, particularly the Muslims, which are the largest religious minority in the country. Let's dissect the political motives first and then the response of the affected communities. First, the audacious move of tabling the Private Member Bill in the Rajya Sabha came just one day after the BJP secured victory in the December 2022 Gujarat Assembly polls. It reinforced the BJP's political manifesto of enforcing Hindutva, which may also serve as the lynchpin of its political strategy for the upcoming general elections in 2024, by polarising the public. Further, the second move to seek public opinion on the proposed UCC, in absence of any draft of the proposed Bill, was a very astute move by the BJP. As it came within a week of the opposition parties' meeting in Patna in June to formulate a united front and strategy to counter the BJP in the upcoming 2024 elections. As expected the move sowed division within the opposition's ranks. Further, it saw an immediate half-baked response from the so-called leaders of the religious minorities -- particularly the Muslims. Muslim religious and community leaders without batting an eyelid immediately started opposing the UCC, and didn't stop to dwell on what grounds they were protesting and we saw a plethora of sentimentally rich and logically poor responses coming forth from them. The only common stand they took was that they oppose any interference in the Muslim Personal Law. But I'm sure, neither the leaders nor their supporters know which Muslim Personal Law they are talking about. The one codified by any Muslim rulers like the Mughals, the Khiljis or the Tughlaqs or the ones before

them? The answer is NO. In fact, the British colonialists codified the pre-valing Muslim Personal Law, without any consultations from any Islamic jurist or scholar. Before 1937, Muslims of all denominations, all over India, followed the uncodified local Hindu customs, practices and usages in addition to their personal law as per the Sharia. So the British just concurred on codifying the prevalent practices relevant to the marriage, divorce etc., but changed the ones relating to succession and division of property, in the case of Muslims. It would be interesting to know at whose behest the colonial rulers codified the Muslim Law of Succession and Inheritance. It was none other than MA Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League. The Shariat Act of 1937 was imposed on Indian Muslims as a win-win political deal between the British, keen to divide Hindus and Muslims, and the Muslim League, keen to lure the Muslims away the Congress. In a manner this also suited Jinnah's political strategy on how to secure a separate country for the Muslims, but it had an added personal angle also to it. MA Jinnah's daughter Dina married Neville Wadia -- a Parsi, against his wishes, though he himself had married a Parsi lady, Rattanbai Petit. To disown Dina and leave no inheritance for her, Jinnah made use of the recently introduced Shariat Act 1937 and nominated his sister Fatima as his successor. The Act, a joint strategy of the British and the League, contained provisions to sabotage the Islamic Sharia, by secretly smuggling the Hindu customs and usages into the 1937 Act to save the property rights of the Muslim leaders, Jinnah and the zamindars from harm by the Islamic Sharia. Did the Shariat Act of 1937 -- now acclaimed as the holy law of Islam -- contain Hindu law provisions to secure the property rights of the League leaders? Yes, it does. Historian, KK Abdul Rahiman in The History of the Evolution of Muslim Personal Law in (1986) says the British gave strength to



customs and usage that had long been adhered to particularly in matters of succession by sections of Indian Muslims. Further, we have to realise that the UCC would not only affect Muslims but also Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Jains, Jews, Parsis and other minorities and scheduled tribes in the country. And at the moment it is just a political gimmick of the government to polarise the electorate and also sow seeds of discord amongst the unified opposition. Muslim leaders need to bring other community leaders at the same platform and also inform their Hindu brethren that the UCC will abolish the HUF provisions for filing Income Tax, thus it would increase the tax liability of Hindus also. The UCC Bill has been introduced as a political reform by the BJP, guided by principles of Hindutva, as a response to replace the existing complicated set of personal laws. These personal laws are so complicated that even the Britishers didn't dare to interfere with them. Further, the Constituent Assembly, besieged by two schools of thought, one supporting the UCC argued that it provided for the emergence of a secular and progressive nation, while the opponents felt it to be conflicting with the ideas of inclusiveness and pluralism, deemed it fit to circumvent the issue and leave it at the moment and thus chose to include it under the Directive Principles of the constitution, under Article 44 of the Constitution, and leaving it

for the future generations to sort it out. A realistic and practical understanding of how personal laws operate will indicate that the state's organs and the Indian society are yet not ready, even after 73 years for the substantial revamp that such legislation would bring. Instead of gunning for political gains we should try to reflect the rich Indian diversity of traditions and their importance in common Indians' daily life. Lastly, the manner in which the Muslim leadership responded to the government's move, shows its complete immaturity and the set manner of its traditional, out of touch with reality reactive response, completely bereft of any political nuances and strategy, which was also evident during the Babri Masjid movement, Triple Talaq issue etc. Though it is high time but still there is time for the Muslim leaders to formulate a Unified Strategy and response to the UCC, in consultation with leaders of other religious minorities and political parties, so that this time they don't get defeated by the government in its anti-Muslim campaign, though the chances of any such endeavour seem very remote.

(Asad Mirza is a Delhi-based senior political and international affairs commentator)

international

15 INDO-CANADIANS ARRESTED IN AUTO THEFT RING, STOLEN GOODS WORTH \$9 MN RECOVERED

Toronto | Agencies Canadian police have arrested 15 Indian-origin men and laid 73 charges against them in an alleged organised auto theft ring, while recovering stolen goods worth more than 9 million dollars. Dubbed Project Big Rig, a joint task force was formed in March this year to investigate a series of tractor trailer and cargo thefts in Peel and across the Greater Toronto Area, the Peels Regional Police said in a statement on Wednesday. The investigation led to the recovery of 28 containers of stolen cargo valued at \$6.99 million. An additional 28 stolen tractors and trailers valued at \$2.25 million were recovered, taking the total value of recovery to \$9.24 million. Addressing a news conference on Wednesday, Peel Regional Police Deputy Chief Nick Milinovich said that estimated \$1.8 billion worth



of goods travel through the Peel region every day, making it the largest cargo hub in Canada. "Often we are seeing that the proceeds of cargo theft and auto theft are used to fuel and fund organised crime... This often involves drugs and guns that are then directed towards our communities. The recovered cargo and vehicles through this investigation have removed millions of dollars out of the hands of organised crime," Milinovich said. Detective Mark Haywood from the Peel police commercial and auto crime unit said the suspects stole products by cutting through the fences of logistic facilities as well as

stealing cargo loads left parked on the roadway. The stolen property was then sold through a variety of channels, including flea markets, other stores and people acquiring the products without knowing that it was stolen, The Toronto Star reported. The 73 charges against 15 men, in the age groups of 23 to 58 years, include possession of property obtained by crime, trafficking in stolen goods, theft of motor vehicles, break and enter, breach of probation and failure to comply with release orders. The suspects were identified as Balkar Singh, 42; Ajay Ajay, 26; Manjeet Padda, 40; Jagjeevan Singh, 25; Amandeep Baidwan, 41; Karamshand Singh, 58; Jasvinder Atwal, 45; Lakhvir Singh, 45; Jagpal Singh, 34; Upkaran Sandhu, 31; Sukhvinder Singh, 44; Kulvir Bains, 39; Banshidar Lalasar, 39; Shobit Verma, 23, and Sukhinder Dhillon, 34.

Trump loses retrial bid in defamation case

Washington | Agencies Former US President Donald Trump has lost a retrial bid in a case in which a jury found him liable for sexually abusing and defaming columnist E Jean Carroll. E. Jean Carroll, 79, had accused Trump of raping her in a Manhattan department store dressing room in the mid-1990s, and then branding the incident a hoax in an October 2022 post on his Truth Social platform. The jury found Trump guilty of battering the columnist, but stopped short of finding the former President guilty of rape. Trump has been ordered to pay \$5 million in damages. The former President's attorneys had argued in their bid for a new trial that "the Court should order a new trial on damages or grant remittitur because contrary to Plaintiff's claim of rape, the jury found that she was not raped but was sexually abused by defendant during the 1995/1996 Bergdorf Goodman



incident". In a 59-page decision on Wednesday, US District judge Lewis Kaplan ruled the jury did not reach "a seriously erroneous result", in calculating the amount of damages, as argued by Trump's lawyers, and dismissed his request for a new trial. Judge Kaplan, who presided over the original trial, wrote that the trial evidence demonstrated Trump "raped" Carroll in the plain sense of the word. "The finding that Ms Carroll failed to prove that she was 'raped' within the meaning of the New York Penal Law does not mean that she failed to prove that Mr Trump 'raped' her as many people commonly understand the word 'rape'," the BBC quoted Judge Kaplan as saying. "Indeed, as the evidence at trial recounted below makes clear, the jury found that Mr Trump in fact did exactly that." Roberta Kaplan, the lawyer representing Carroll, celebrated the ruling.

SOMALI FORCES KILL 30 AL-SHABAB MILITANTS IN SOMALIA

Mogadishu: The Somali National Army (SNA)'s elite forces have killed 30 al-Shabab militants during a fierce gun battle in the Middle Shabelle region of central Somalia, officials confirmed. Abdirahman Yusuf Al-Adala, the Deputy Minister for Information, on Wednesday told Somali national news agency that the latest military offensive against the militants was carried out as they plotted to stage attacks, Xinhua news agency reported. "Our special forces, Danab and Gor-gor units, conducted a successful operation against al-Shabab militants this morning, the forces also recovered weapons and other military equipment and destroyed terrorist bases during the operation," Al-Adala said. He added that the elite forces are still pursuing the al-Shabab militants, but did not clarify whether there were casualties on the side of the Army. The al-Shabab militants have not commented on the latest military onslaught, as the Somali Army in conjunction with regional and international troops intensify efforts to neutralise the al-Qaeda-linked armed group.

US SOLDIER WHO DEFECTED TO N.KOREA HAD BEEN IN PRISON WORKSHOP IN SEOUL

Seoul | Agencies An American soldier who recently crossed the inter-Korean border into North Korea had been in a prison workshop for 48 days after failing to pay a court fine for kicking and damaging a police patrol car in Seoul, legal sources said on Thursday. Pvt. Travis King, stationed in South Korea, willfully crossed the inter-Korean border into North Korea without authorisation during a tour to the Joint Security Area on Tuesday and is believed to be in North Korea's custody, according to the UN Command and American defence authorities. American media organisations reported that he had been in the process of being sent back to the US for disciplinary action in connection with assault charges he faced in South Korea, reports Yonhap News Agency. The legal sources here said



that King, 23, received a 5 million-won (\$3,955) fine from a court in Seoul on February 8 on charges of inflicting damage on a police patrol vehicle. King, however, did not pay the fine and was eventually detained in a prison workshop for 48 days in line with a court ruling that he be held for one day for each unpaid 100,000 won, the sources said. He was accused of repeatedly kicking the back door of a police patrol vehicle in Seoul's Mapo district in the wee hours of October 8, 2022 and inflicting damage that required 584,000 won worth of repairs. King was apprehended by police at that time for suspected violence at a nightclub.

Chinese national held at Kathmandu airport over 100 kg gold seizure

Kathmandu | Agencies A Chinese national has been arrested from the Tribhuvan International Airport here on Thursday afternoon in connection with the 100 kg gold seizure, believed to be one of the largest hauls in Nepal's gold smuggling history. On Wednesday, the Department of Revenue Investigation (DRI) had seized a huge quantity of gold that had passed undetected through the Customs, and arrested six persons, including one Indian national and five Nepali nationals. According to the DRI, around 100 kg gold, suspected to have been brought from Hong Kong, was confiscated during the raid based on a tip-off. The arrested Chinese national -- Ling Chuwang -- is believed to be the owner of the gold and was supposed to flee from the Kathmandu airport on Wednesday. The airport authorities arrested him while he was trying to catch a flight to China. Along with the Chinese national, one Nepali national has also been arrested, who is believed to be his local handler. "After request from the DRI, we arrested Ling from the airport. We have handed him



over to the DRI for investigation," said Jhalakram Adhikari, Director General in the Department of Immigration. A six-member probe committee has been formed by the Department of Customs headed by Man Bahadur Poudel to probe the matter, said Information Officer Punya Bikram Khadka. The gold was believed to be smuggled into India via Nepal, but its independent verification is yet to be made. The gold, which was smuggled in from Hong Kong by hiding it in motorcycle spare parts, was seized just when it was about to be taken to a taxi. After the Customs officers cleared the motorcycle spare parts, the DRI got a call in which someone tipped them off that there was gold inside the spare parts. With the support of Nepal Police, the gold was recovered from outside the Kathmandu airport by DRI officers.





# 'AQUAMAN AND THE LOST KINGDOM' HAS VFX IN EVERY SHOT

Los Angeles | Agencies

With the current turnover of DC, as it will soon end its original DC Extended Universe and make a transition to the new DC Universe with James Gunn and Peter Safran heading the projects, the studio has struggled with continuing the story of Arthur Curry/Aquaman who is played by Jason Momoa. The upcoming second installment in the 'Aquaman' series, 'Aquaman and The Lost Kingdom' has faced turbulent production, with every shot of the movie containing VFX.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, 'The Lost Kingdom' is already an expensive production. It was greenlit at a \$205 million budget and shot during the pandemic, which was a burdensome expense on tentpole productions. Additionally, every frame of the movie involves visual effects, another major cost. The reshoots have only raised that overall budget. "As the first film made a killing at the box office due to its action and massive spectacle, DC wants to up the ante, particularly for the massive underwater sequences in the movie. The first movie already had a lot of VFX going for it in order to showcase the majesty and grandeur of the Atlanteans, the many sea creatures and its underwater battles.

As 'Aquaman and The Lost Kingdom' wants to enhance the spectacle, director James Wan has showcased concept art detailing the grandeur of the whole thing, particularly the vibrancy and beauty of the underwater kingdom as Aquaman and his allies explore strange new worlds and environments. 'Aquaman and The Lost Kingdom' will be the final movie of the DCEU, which launched a decade ago with Zack Snyder's 'Man of Steel'. The recent DCEU releases have failed badly at the box office with films such as 'Black Adam', 'Shazam! Fury of the Gods' and 'The Flash' all being monetary losses. 'Aquaman and The Lost Kingdom' will hit theatres on December 20, 2023 and will star Jason Momoa, Amber Heard, Willem Dafoe, Patrick Wilson, Dolph Lundgren, Yahya Abdul-Mateen II, Temuera Morrison and Nicole Kidman.



## John Boyega says, he's open to doing more 'Star Wars' projects

Los Angeles | Agencies

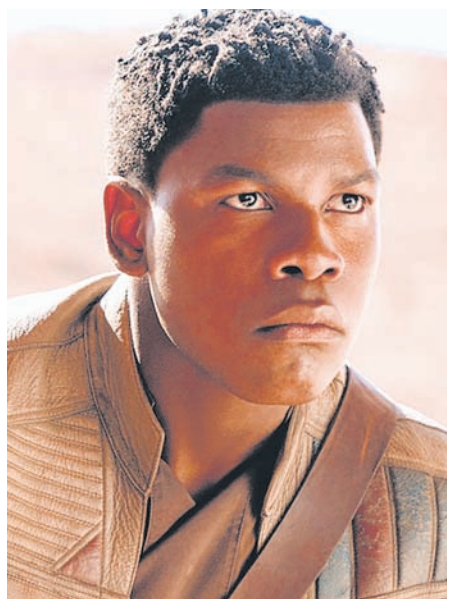
Actor John Boyega has not been particularly happy with the recent direction that 'Star Wars' has taken and has openly criticised the sequel trilogy many times, especially after the premiere of 'Star Wars Episode VIII: The Last Jedi'.

However, the actor, who portrayed First Order stormtrooper turned Resistance fighter Finn in the sequel trilogy, has said that he is more than open to doing more 'Star Wars' movies if given the opportunity.

The actor had previously criticised the makers for their treatment of black characters, lazy writing and lack of imagination, particularly in 'Star Wars: Episode IX - The Rise of Skywalker'.

The actor had accused the makers and studio of capitalising on casting racially diverse characters, particularly black characters before completely sidelining them from the story.

According to 'The Hollywood Reporter', in an interview with TechRadar, done sometime before the SAG-AFTRA strikes, the actor said: "That was a few years ago, so they were the subject of that particular project. But I'm open to all characters and scripts that are enjoyable, have a great cast attached and a terrific director. So yeah, I'm open to all opportunities."



Team Absolute | Los Angeles

Country-pop icon Taylor Swift is seeing no end to her achievements. As her Eras Tour continues to leave audiences in awe and her 'Speak Now' (Taylor's Version) dominates charts, she will now add another string to her guitar and play a different chord as Santa Clara has named Taylor its honorary mayor, the city of Glendale in Arizona officially being named 'Swift City'.

**Taylor Swift named honorary mayor of Santa Clara after Glendale gesture**

The official Twitter account for the city of Santa Clara also gave out a celebratory tweet stating: "WELCOME TO SWIFTIE CLARA! It's been a long time coming, and we are enchanted to announce the City Council

has proclaimed @taylorswift13 as SC's Honorary Mayor for July 28 & 29."

According to the Mirror, in the news release, the Mayor of Santa Clara also said: "The City is honoring Taylor Swift and The Eras Tour, like many cities have done across the country, to celebrate the cultural impact of this exceptional artist and to highlight the City of Santa Clara and Levi's Stadium as a world class destination for national and international talent."

With the 33-year-old's tour now winding down as it nears the end of the US leg, Taylor will be in Santa Clara for a number of shows next week. According to Billboard, Mayor Jerry Weiers of Glendale, Arizona has officially renamed the city to honour 'The Eras Tour', which kicked off on March 17.

## Covid, Hollywood strikes drive 'Joker' financier to file for bankruptcy amid losses

Los Angeles | Agencies

Canadian production company Bron Studios which financed massive Academy Award nominated blockbuster films such as 'Joker', 'Licorice Pizza' and 'Judas and the Black Messiah' has now filed for bankruptcy.

The company had stressed financial difficulties for a long time, and the Covid-19 pandemic coupled with the recently ongoing WGA and SAG-AFTRA strikes has only caused more problems for the studio.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, the company's co-founder Aaron J. Gilbert said that the indie studio had filed for Chapter 15 bankruptcy in the United States as well as protection from creditors in Canada. Talking about the bankruptcy, Gilbert said: "Having explored many options for many months, Bron had no

choice but to take this step in light of its financial circumstances."

"The last few years have been incredibly difficult for Bron, and things have only gotten more complicated over these past months. Covid and the many other issues affecting the media industry the last few years, most recently the strikes, have made Bron's ability to continue its existing business impossible," he added.

According to Variety, in recent months, Bron's co-financing deals with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Warner Bros. sunsetted. He further mentioned in the statement, "Thank you to our many friends who have been there to support us. Thank you to the BRON team and to our incredible creative, production, and business partners. Thank you to the many production financing partners and our corporate backers for supporting us for all these many years."



"Thank you to our various representatives and the many service providers for all the support and patience through a very tough few years at BRON" Gilbert's statement concluded. "Your continued support and patience will remain critical during this restructuring process and we will continue to keep you informed as we move through this process."

With all said and done, the various films financed and/or produced by Bron through the years have garnered much acclaim and many honours, which includes a total of 30 Oscar nominations and six wins.

## MARGOT ROBBIE CONFESSES SHE HYPED 'BARBIE' AS A BILLION-DOLLAR PROJECT

Los Angeles | Agencies



Actress and producer Margot Robbie admitted to a touch of hype on the upcoming film 'Barbie'. "I think my pitch in the green-light meeting was that the studios have prospered so much when they're brave enough to pair a big idea with a visionary director," she said of using Oscar-nominee Greta Gerwig, reports Deadline.

"And then I gave a series of examples like, 'dinosaurs and (Steven) Spielberg,' that and that, that and that - pretty much naming anything that's been incredible and made a ton of money for the studios over the years. And I was like, 'And now you've got Barbie and Greta Gerwig.'"

"And I think I told them that it'd make a billion dollars, which maybe I was overselling, but we had a movie to make, okay?!" she added.

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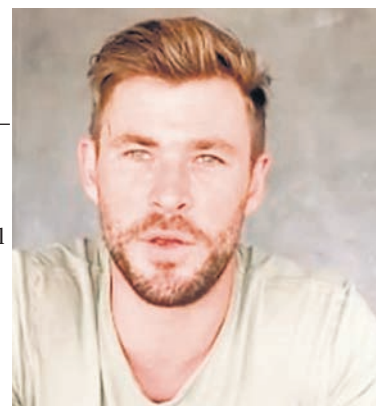
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Robbie wasn't demanding to star in the vehicle. "I didn't want whoever our director was going to be - Greta being the first choice, but if she had said no - I didn't want our director to feel pressured to put me in the role," Robbie said.

## Chris Hemsworth caught 'Emmerdale' actor picking his nose on the toilet

Los Angeles | Agencies

Former 'Emmerdale' actor Max Parker has shared his rather hilarious encounter with Hollywood star Chris Hemsworth which was nothing less than awkward. The actor who previously played chef Luke Posner on Emmerdale has taken to his Instagram and Threads account to share the awkward run-in which he admits he'll "treasure", reports mirror. Although it's not clear how the Manchester-born actor met the Australian star but the troublesome interaction certainly left a lasting impression on Parker. Taking to his Instagram page to share a preview of a post which he initially posted on his



Threads account, Max caused a social media storm by revealing what actually happened.

He penned: "Chris Hemsworth somehow opened my locked cubicle door and caught me p\*\*\*\*g whilst picking my

nose. Imma treasure that moment," alongside a smug-faced emoji. "Standing or sit down wee though? One has more of an impact than the other," asked one follower. A second went on to joke: "What a lucky moment." While a third typed: "This needs a full story time explanation." Since departing his role as Luke on the soap, Max has gone on to star in the likes of the TV series Cobra and more recently, the Netflix hit series,

'Blood, Sex & Royalty', taking on the role of Henry Tudor.

Shortly after his decision to walk away from the Yorkshire-based soap where he met his fiancé, a source said: "Max was never going to stay on the soap for years. He's ambitious and a talented guy - he's already auditioning for new roles and is excited for the future. But never say never - there's always a chance he could return one day."

## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE



Amber Heard





## JASLEEN ROYAL CALLS 'HEERIYE' HER 'PASSION PROJECT', CRAFTED IT FROM SCRATCH

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Singer-composer Jasleen Royal, who is gearing up for her upcoming music video 'Heeriye' featuring Dulquer Salmaan, has said that the single is her passion project.

Jasleen also said that Dulquer being a sweet guy really helped her soothe her nervousness during the song's production.

'Heeriye', composed and produced by Jasleen, has been sung by both Jasleen and superstar singer Arijit Singh. Talking about the song, Jasleen shared, " 'Heeriye' is personally one of the most special songs of my career. It is my passion project that I have curated from scratch. From composing the tune, singing the track with Arijit to producing the music video and featuring in it, especially with Dulquer Salmaan, it has been an immensely exhilarating journey."

"Dulquer is not only an incredibly gifted actor but also an extremely sweet person, while I was excited and nervous the whole time, he made the entire process very easy and comfortable for me. I hope the audience accepts our labour of love with open arms," she added. Jasleen has also produced the music video of the song and also features in it along with Dulquer.

The song marks Dulquer's first non-film project. Dulquer Salmaan shared, " 'Heeriye' is a very special song. I instantly fell in love with the tune, the concept of the music video and definitely the soothing voices of Jasleen and Arijit. It is a quintessential love song and I am glad to be associated with Jasleen Royal and Warner Music India for this beautiful melody. I'm excited to see audiences' reaction to this beautiful love song."

'Heeriye', presented by Warner Music India, is set to release on July 25, 2023 and will be available on all streaming platforms.

## 'Made In Heaven' with Kalki's voiceover intensifies mystery of Season 1 cliffhanger

Team Absolute | New Delhi

An exciting recap video of 'Made in Heaven' season one, accompanied by Kalki Koechlin's captivating voiceover, intensifies the intrigue surrounding the suspenseful cliffhanger that concluded the previous season, leaving fans craving for answers.

Expressing her excitement, Kalki shared: "As an actor, it's incredibly

gratifying to see how season one of 'Made in Heaven' resonated with audiences and became such a popular and critically acclaimed series."

"The overwhelming response from fans has been heartwarming. Moving forward into season two, I couldn't be more thrilled and excited. We have an incredible journey ahead, and just like the fans, I am eagerly looking forward to delving deeper into the lives of these complex characters and seeing what lies ahead of them," she said.

The actress also assured the fans that season 2 will be grander and an enthralling experience.

As the first season of 'Made in Heaven' concluded with Tara (Sobhita Dhulipala) finding out about the affair between her husband Adil (Jim Sarbh) and her best friend Faiza (Kalki Koechlin), their lives stood at a critical crossroad. Now fans are curious to see how their lives will unfold. Will Faiza and Adil pursue their love or will Faiza prioritise her loyalty to Tara, sacrificing her own desires?

Produced by Excel Media and Entertainment and Tiger Baby, created and directed by Reema Kagti and Zoya Akhtar along with Nitya Mehra, Alankrita Shrivastava, and Neeraj Ghaywan.

Starring Arjun Mathur and Sobhita Dhulipala in the lead roles, 'Made in Heaven' season 2 will be streaming soon on Prime Video.



## RANDEEP JHA: WE INTRODUCED ALL OUR CHARACTERS THROUGH EYES OF THE COPS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Director Randeep Jha skillfully takes audiences on a thrilling journey in 'Kohrra', delving into the intertwined lives of dysfunctional families, and the chilling depths of the crime. Set against the backdrop of the picturesque countryside of Punjab, the story revolves around the discovery of a murdered NRI just days before his wedding.

'Kohrra' sets itself apart by seamlessly incorporating both Hindi and Punjabi languages, a multilingual approach that adds authenticity and richness to the narrative.

Randeep emphasised the importance of silence in certain parts of the narrative, acknowledging the challenge it poses, while adding depth and suspense to the story.

He shared: "In 'Kohrra', we have strived to create an immersive experience by introducing all our characters through the eyes of the cops. By delving into the hidden aspects and adding moments of silence, we aim to bring forth a narrative that resonates deeply with the audience."

Suvinder Vicky and Barun Sobti portray two dedicated cops who not only unravel the mystery but also serve



as the lenses through which audiences experience the intricate web of the characters.

The show offers a unique approach to character development, showcasing the depth and complexity of each individual within the backdrop of a compelling crime narrative.

## FROM HIP-HOP

to soulful bliss, QK's 'Le Jaa' redefines heartache

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Recognised for her presence in MTV 'Hustle 2.0', artist Aaryajadhao also known as 'QK' captivates the audience with beautiful rhythm and soulful lyrics in her new track 'Le Jaa'.

'Le Jaa' fiercely resonates with those who have endured the pain of an unhappy relationship and found the strength to move on.

She has ravishingly curated a heart-touching euphony 'Le Jaa', that will bring out the essence of liberation and growth experienced after a sorrowful relationship. With tender yet resilient vocals and an uplifting rhythm, it portrays resilience and inner strength. This track does not only empathise with the listeners but also renders the spirit of courage to move on from an unhappy relationship. Commenting on the release, QK said: "Experimenting with music has always been very exciting to me. With 'Le Jaa' I have tried to transition from upbeat pop to a softer melody. This song is very dear to me as it captures the heavy-hearted emotions felt after a heartache and during the process of moving on." "It makes it even more special as this would be my first collaboration with the talented producer Yashraj Mukhate who added his unique take to 'Le Jaa'.



## Mrunal Thakur on working with Vijay

## 'He brings a great spark on screen'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Mrunal Thakur, who is gearing up for her next 'Hey Ninna', is now looking forward to working with Vijay Devarakonda in the tentatively titled film 'VD 13'. Praising her co-star, she said that with each passing film, the 'Arjun Reddy' star has given memorable characters.

Recently, she announced her next Telugu movie opposite Vijay. She has worked with Nani and Dulquer Salman from the South.

Mrunal said that it is a surreal feeling to have gotten a chance to work with such diverse actors.

She said: "Right from the start when I began working on Sita Ramam, I was instantly welcomed with extreme warmth and love from the people from the south film industry. The industry has some of the finest actors in the country and I am grateful that I am getting a chance to share screen space with them."

"Whether it's Dulquer, Nani and now Vijay, they are such different actors with very different fan bases, it's never a dull day for me on the set. The love I got for Sita Ramam, I hope I receive the same love for my upcoming movies- Hi Naana and #VD13."

Speaking of Vijay, she said: "I'm looking forward to working with Vijay as I do know that we can learn together and from each other as actors. Currently we have started prep and the shoot of the film will start soon, and sharing screen space with Vijay is something I'm excited about."

"Whatever roles he does on screen, he has this great ability to bring this great spark on screen when he's in front of the camera. With each passing film, he's given such memorable

## INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Kriti Kharbanda