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CAG REPORT REVEALS NO ACTION TAKEN AGAINST DEFAULTERS UNDER AB-PMJAY

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In its performance audit report on the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) revealed that no action was taken against the defaulters.

The audit noted that 12 hospitals in Jharkhand and one hospital in Assam indulged in various malpractices -- illegal collection of money from beneficiaries, repeated submission of same photograph for multiple claims and non-disclosure of facts, etc., as per the CAG report on AB-PMJAY.

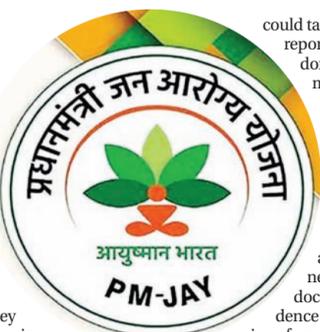
However, follow-up action like recovery of amount of money collected and imposition of penalty, action against errant medical and paramedical professionals, de-empanelment of hospitals etc., had not been initiated, it said.

"NHA replied (in August last year) that SHA (State Health Agency) Jharkhand had taken appropriate action against the defaulters but did not furnish any documentary evidence in support of action taken," the CAG report said.

The reply in respect of SHA Assam was awaited, it added.

The report further said it is the responsibility of SHA to design and implement strategies for beneficiary awareness on possible episodes of fraud under the PMJAY.

The awareness may include understanding types of fraud, its impact on beneficiaries, preventive measures that the beneficiaries



could take and whom to report to. It may be done by using mass media and interpersonal communication at the point of service. "Audit noted that Bihar, Chandigarh and Uttar Pradesh did not plan/conduct anti-fraud awareness activities. The documentary evidence regarding organising of camps for fraud awareness were not made available to audit in any of the selected districts of Himachal Pradesh. Thus, the aim of apprising the beneficiaries of the possible irregularities in implementation of the programme remained unachieved," it said.

The NHA while accepting the audit observation, replied (in August last year) that innovative measures have been taken for improving beneficiary awareness regarding fraud/abuse, it added.

The AB-PMJAY provides a health cover up to Rs 5 lakh per family per year, for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation services. It provides cashless and paperless access to services for the beneficiaries at the point of service -- hospital.

It may be mentioned that the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare had said it is examining in detail the recommendations of the CAG performance audit report on AB-PMJAY.

CAG POINTS OUT AT UNDERPAYMENT OF EXCISE DUTY TO UP GOVT BY RADICO KHAITAN

New Delhi: The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has pointed out at reported underpayment of excise duty worth Rs 1,078.09 crore, including taxes, to the Uttar Pradesh government by Radico Khaitan Ltd.

Radico Khaitan is the manufacturer of 8 PM whiskey and Magic Moments vodka. According to the CAG report, "the assistant excise commissioner, Radico Khaitan Limited, Rampur failed to monitor consumption of input excise material shown in excise records vis-a-vis returns filed in Income Tax Department (ITD) resulted in not detecting understatement of consumption of input excise material involving excise revenue of Rs 1,078.09 crore (including interest of Rs 482.34 crore) during the period 2013-14 to 2019-20".

Records related to molasses, grain and barley malt used for the manufacture of liquor, were examined by the auditor. It also compared the consumption figures of molasses, grain and barley malt submitted by the assessee through statutory returns to the (ITD) with the respective quantities depicted in the records of the Assistant Excise Commissioner (AEC), Radico Khaitan Limited, Rampur, where variation in quantities disclosed in the records and returns submitted to the income tax department compared to those available with the state excise department, were reportedly noticed. "The variations found in the consumed material indicate that the assessee had understated the consumption of inputs items in excise records, involving excise revenue of Rs 595.75 crore on which interest of Rs 482.34 crore was leviable," the CAG said. Radico Khaitan contributes about 30 per cent of the excise revenue of the state. However, Radico Khaitan refutes CAG report and said that it has complied with all revenue laws of the country, adding that it hasn't received any notice of any irregularity in the matter. The company further said that it found "lack of accuracy in the information presented in these media articles."

Modi, Xi agree to intensify efforts towards disengagement alongside LAC

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping have agreed to direct relevant officials to intensify efforts at expeditious disengagement and de-escalation alongside the Line of Actual Control (LAC), official sources said on Thursday.

Briefing the media on the BRICS summit in Johannesburg, Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra when asked about the interaction between Modi and Xi, said that both the leaders agreed to direct relevant officials to intensify efforts at expeditious disengagement and de-escalation.

PM Modi underlined that maintenance of peace, tranquillity in border areas and respecting LAC are essential for normalisation of India-China ties, Kwatra said.

During his conversation with Chinese President Xi Jinping, the Prime Minister highlighted India's concerns on unresolved issues along LAC, the Foreign Secretary said. "It was a conversation on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit where PM Modi talked about the LAC tensions. It was not a formal bilateral," Kwatra told reporters.



Meanwhile, he said that a major outcome of the BRICS summit was the decision of the BRICS leaders to expand its membership to include six new members.

These six members are Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. On the sidelines of BRICS summit, Modi had interactions with other BRICS leaders also, Kwatra said.

"PM Modi highlighted that the BRICS Business Forum is one of the key pillars of Intra-BRICS partnership. He spoke about an important element, the need to develop resilient and inclusive supply chains. And, the importance of mutual trust and transparency in the intra-BRICS country," Kwatra told reporters.

"He (Modi) wrote to the leaders of G20 about the inclusion of the African Union in the G20. We have strongly proposed it as a permanent member of the G20. So, it should probably become G21 if it all goes through," the Foreign Secretary said.

"The prime minister spoke of something which is deeply at the heart of South Africa and many African countries, the protections of the big cats, the five big ones in South Africa under the International Big Cat Alliance. He established something important for all the BRICS countries, a repository of traditional medicines among the BRICS countries," the foreign secretary said further.

Convicts in Bilkis Bano can't say remission order cannot be questioned: Supreme Court

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday remarked that convicts in Bilkis Bano case, whose remission applications were considered by the Gujarat government pursuant to an earlier order of the top court, cannot argue that the remission orders setting them free cannot be challenged at all.

"You cannot say that the remission order cannot be questioned by anybody because of the earlier order (of the Supreme Court). That order was the starting point of the process (of remission). It was the beginning and not the end. They have challenged the end," told a bench comprising of Justices BV Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan to the counsel appearing for a convict.

Notably, in an earlier judgment, the Supreme Court had directed the Gujarat government to consider and decide the application for pre-mature release within two months in terms of remission of 1992 policy of the state. The bench said that its earlier order



was limited to the extent that the Gujarat government is the appropriate government to decide convicts' application for remission and remission order passed thereafter would fall under the category of 'administrative order'.

The final hearing is underway in the batch of petitions filed against the release of convicts, including the one filed by Bilkis Bano.

AT LEAST 10 UNDER-CONSTRUCTION BUILDINGS COLLAPSE IN HIMACHAL

Shimla: At least 10 under-construction commercial buildings collapsed after a massive landslide struck Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh on Thursday.

So far, no casualty has been reported in the incident that took place near the bus stand in Anni market area of the district. Recently, the district administration had got the buildings vacated after declaring them "unsafe". Scary visuals of the disaster have gone viral on social media. Geological experts have warned that equilibrium of slopes have been disturbed with massive ongoing construction across Himachal Pradesh, especially in tourist destinations like Shimla, Dharamsala and Manali.

Delhi HC affirms maternity benefits for pregnant working women

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Delhi High Court has observed that pregnant women in employment are entitled to maternity benefits without being denied so based on the nature of their work, as per the Maternity Benefit Act, 2017.

Justice Chandra Dhari Singh said that the Act does not suggest barring relief to working expectant women due to the type of their employment.

Justice Singh said that maternity benefits are not solely derived from legal obligations or employment contracts; they are a fundamental part of a woman's



identity when choosing to start a family.

The court highlighted that the freedom to become a parent is a constitutional right, and obstructing this right without proper legal procedures contradicts both the Constitution and principles of social justice.

The judge observed that if a woman must choose between her career and

family life, it is detrimental to societal progress.

Justice Singh noted that the Act frames maternity benefits as a "Benefit", but these should instead be considered a rightful entitlement for women employees in such situations, calling for a positive change in perspective and a more adaptive approach to providing maternity ben-

efits.

This observation came in response to a case of a pregnant woman employed under contract with the Delhi State Legal Services Authority (DSLISA).

Despite extending maternity benefits to permanent employees, DSLISA denied them to contractual staff.

Justice Singh criticised this discrepancy, especially considering the petitioner's role in protecting the interests of children within the justice system. The court directed DSLISA to provide all medical, financial, and other relevant benefits to the petitioner in accordance with the Maternity Benefit Act.

BILLIONAIRE GEORGE SOROS-BACKED GROUP PLANS EXPOSE ON INDIAN FIRMS: REPORT

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Months after a US short seller shook markets with a damning report on the Adani group, the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) - an organisation funded by likes of George Soros and Rockefeller Brothers Fund - is said to be planning another 'expose' on certain corporate houses in India, sources said.

OCCRP, which calls itself "an investigative reporting platform formed by 24 nonprofit investigative centres... spread across Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America, may publish a report or a series of articles, three sources with knowledge of the matter said.

An email sent to OCCRP seeking comments remained unanswered.

Founded in 2006, OCCRP claims to specialize in reporting

on organized crime and largely publishes these news articles through partnerships with media houses.

On its website, it identifies the Open Society Foundations of George Soros, a financier with a penchant for funding radical causes around the world, as one of the institutional donors. Others include Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund and Oak Foundation.

Sources said the 'expose' may involve overseas funds investing in the stocks of the corporate house.

The identity of the corporate house wasn't immediately known but agencies are said to be keeping a tight vigil on the capital market.

Hindenburg Research in a January 24 report alleged fraud, triggering a stock market rout.

Adani Group has denied all allegations.

Andhra devotee drops Rs 100 crore cheque in temple, had only Rs 17 in account

Visakhapatnam | Agencies

A devotee deposited a cheque of Rs 100 crore in the 'hundi' (offering box) at Sri Varahalakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple in Simhachalam.

When the temple authorities sent the cheque to the bank concerned, they were shocked to learn that the devotee had only Rs 17 in

his account.

The photograph of the cheque surfaced on social media on Thursday. The cheque was signed by Boddepalli Radhakrishna.

The devotee has not written the date on the cheque which belongs to Kotak Mahindra Bank. The cheque shows that the devotee is an account holder in the bank's branch in Visakhapatnam.

When the officials of the temple body found the cheque in the Hundi, they took it to the Executive Officer. He sensed something amiss and asked officials to check with the bank branch concerned if it was really Rs100 crore cheque.

The bank authorities informed the temple body that the person who issued the cheque has only Rs 17 in his account.

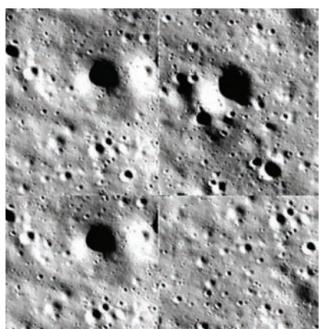
CHANDRAYAAN-3: WHAT HAPPENS TO VIKRAM LANDER, PRAGYAN ROVER AFTER 14 DAYS?

Chennai: The Indian space agency on Thursday said ChaSTE, ILSA and RAMBHA -- the payloads of the moon lander -- have been turned on. In a tweet, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said: "Lander Module payloads ILSA, RAMBHA and ChaSTE are turned ON today (Thursday)." "Rover mobility operations have commenced. All activities are on schedule. All systems are normal," ISRO said. According to the space agency, on Sunday the propulsion module payload SHAPE was turned on. On Wednesday evening, India's moon lander -- part of the Chandrayaan-3 mission -- safely landed on the lunar surface.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Chandrayaan-3 has landed on the Moon after "20 minutes of terror" and the Vikram lander and Pragyan rover - carrying six scientific payloads between them - have one lunar day, or 14 Earth days, to gather enough data to satisfy the curiosities of scientists across the world.

This deadline is critical because after a fortnight the solar-powered Pragyan rover - which made its mark on the Moon late last night with ISRO declaring 'India takes a walk on the Moon' - will slow down as this is the extent of the 'sunlight cycle' on the lunar surface.



Duration of Vikram, Pragyan on Moon?

Vikram and Pragyan will have 14 days only before night falls on the Moon. In other words, after 14 Earth days, the Moon will have a night that will last another 14 Earth days. During this time the rover may not be fully functional as there is no solar power and, more importantly, night temperatures can reach a destructive -208 degrees Fahrenheit or -133 degrees Celsius and the rover, the lander and the payloads will likely have severe trouble operating. During this time, the rover will be touch with the lander and that will relay data back to ISRO's mission command centre. ISRO will have no direct link with the rover for this period.

Why the Lunar South Pole?

Chandrayaan-3 is special as no other spacecraft has been able to achieve a soft landing near the Moon's South Pole. This area - far from the equatorial region targeted by other missions, including NASA's crewed Apollo landings - is full of craters and deep trenches. The findings from the Chandrayaan-3 mission could advance and expand knowledge of lunar water ice, potentially one of the moon's most valuable resources.

What, after mission completion?

Neither the Vikram lander nor the Pragyan rover will return to Earth - despite what some Indian lawmakers may believe. And neither will the propulsion module that delivered them. On completion of their respective experiments both the lander and rover will remain on the Moon. They will not be functional during the lunar night and while there is no plan to revive them after that period, ISRO is hopeful both will survive the long night and start up again.

The Chandrayaan-3 Mission

The Rs 600 crore-Chandrayaan-3 mission was launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Andhra Pradesh's Sriharikota on July 14, piggybacking on a Launch Vehicle Mark-III (LVM-3) rocket. The journey to the Moon took 41 days and, significantly, was completed just days after a Russian spacecraft attempting a similar outcome crashed after spinning out of control.



COVID NEW VARIANTS BA.2.86, EG. 5.1 DOES NOT POSE ANY DANGER TO INDIANS: EXPERTS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The new Omicron sub-variants BA.2.86 and EG. 5.1 will not pose any risk to Indians, said experts here amid fresh concerns of Covid-19.

BA.2.86, known to be highly mutated, has been linked to 6 cases in 4 countries: Israel, Denmark, the UK and the US. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has designated BA.2.86 as a variant under monitoring (VUM).

EG. 5.1 is currently present in 55 countries and has also been designated by the WHO as a "variant of interest" (VOI).

"While EG.5 has shown increased prevalence, growth advantage, and immune escape properties, there have been no reported changes in disease severity to date. We haven't witnessed anything new as far as symptomatology is concerned, but many suspected Covid patients are getting negative RT-PCR tests," Dr Vidya S Nair, Senior Consultant &



HOD unit 2 - Pulmonology at Marengo Asia Hospitals, Faridabad, told reporter. "BA.2.86 will not pose any danger to India, because India has been having Omicron since last almost 20 months," added epidemiologist Dr Ishwar Gilada at the 55th Seminars on International Planetary Emergencies at Erice, Sicily, Italy, citing BA.2 and BA.4.

He noted that India has an edge

over the two new variants, as the country has "since the beginning got good immunity so it will not affect India adversely".

Although there has been slight uptick in cases, Dr Gilada said the variants are not giving rise to any kind of oxygen demand, demand for bed ICU ventilators and deaths are very, very low.

The WHO, meanwhile, said that

"based on the available evidence, the public health risk posed by EG.5 has been evaluated as low and it is similar to other circulating variants of interest". For BA.2.86, the global health agency said that the information is "limited". "To date, there is no evidence of significant changes in the public health impact of these sub-lineages and there is no justification for the assignment of a new 'variant of concern', the WHO added.

"It is indeed too early to draw sweeping conclusions about the BA 2.86 Covid variant. While it has made its presence known, we do not have sufficient data to assert whether it is more infectious than its predecessors. According to the reported cases, most of its symptoms are that of the flu variant, just like the EG.5.1 variant, the symptoms of Covid variant BA 2.86 are similar to that of the flu-like cold, cough, lethargicness, myalgia, fever etc," Dr. Tribhuvan Gulati, Lead Consultant, Diabetes, Obesity & Internal Medicine at the CK Birla Hospital, told reporter.

Govt to launch 'Mera Bill Mera Adhikar' scheme to encourage customers to ask for bills

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The government in association with state governments is launching an 'Invoice incentive Scheme' by the name 'Mera Bill Mera Adhikar' to encourage the culture of customers asking for invoices and bills for all purchases.

The objective of the scheme is to bring a cultural and behavioural change in the general public to 'Ask for a Bill' as their right and entitlement.

The scheme will be launched on September 1. This scheme will initially be launched as a pilot in Assam, Gujarat and Haryana and union territories of Puducherry, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu. All B2C invoices issued by GST registered suppliers (registered in the states of Assam, Gujarat and Haryana and UTs of Puducherry, Dadra Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu) to consumers will be eligible for the scheme.

Minimum value for invoices to be considered for a lucky draw has been kept at Rs 200. Invoices can be uploaded on Mobile Application 'Mera Bill Mera Adhikar' available on IOS and Android as well as on web portal 'web.merabill.gst.gov.in'.

All residents of India will be eligible to participate in this scheme irrespective of their state.



Maximum 25 invoices can be uploaded by an individual on App/web portal in a month to be considered for lucky draw. For each uploaded invoice an acknowledgement reference number (ARN) will be generated which will be used for the draw of prizes.

Winning invoices will be picked by a method of random draw at regular intervals (monthly as well as quarterly).

Meghalaya: 9 cops among 16 injured during protest over public hearing on cement firm expansion plan

Shillong | Agencies

At least 16 people, including nine policemen, were injured in a clash between the mob and the security forces when Police resorted to baton charge and fired tear gas shells to disperse the crowd, who are on Thursday protesting against a public hearing for a cement company's proposed expansion plan in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district.



there were many women and children present at the venue, the district police did not use any force to disperse the mob.

Subsequently, after discussion with the district administration, officials of Meghalaya State Pollution Control Board, village authorities and the cement company executives the venue for the public hearing was shifted to nearby premises. The mob again proceeded towards the new venue with

intention to cause damage to life and properties.

Despite several requests, the mob became more and more aggressive and turned violent. They resorted to stone pelting endangering lives of civilians, district administration and police officials. The reasonable and proportionate non fatal force was used to disperse the mob, the SP said.

A case has been registered at Lumshong police station and the probe is underway.

2 dead, 6 injured after mud from under construction building slides in Delhi

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Two people died while six others were injured after mud from the rear side slid in the basement of an under construction building in Delhi on Thursday, a police official said.

According to the police, a call was received at the Okhla Industrial Area police station's control room regarding the collapse of a building under construction in Sanjay Colony, Okhla Industrial Area Phase 2. Following this, a police team rushed to the scene. The Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southeast), Rajesh Deo, said that the incident occurred on an industrial plot where construction activity was underway, including the excavation of a basement about 20 feet deep.

"In the evening, mud from the rear side of the plot slid, resulting in a total of eight persons being injured. All injured individuals were transported to the AIIMS Trauma Centre.



Among them, two individuals identified as Raman (18) and Mintu (50) succumbed to their injuries and were declared dead upon arrival at

the hospital," said the DCP.

"Additionally, six persons were injured. Among these, three identified as Gulshan (28), Devender (33), and Nitish (23) are currently receiving treatment in the Red Zone at the AIIMS Trauma Centre, while the other three individuals - Arun (22), Nirmal (23), and Jaldhar (50) - sustained minor injuries in the incident," added the DCP. The documents related to the building, including construction permits, are currently being verified. A case under section 288/304A is being registered in connection with this incident.

Meanwhile, the Director of the Delhi Fire Service, Atul Garg, reported that a call regarding a house collapse in Okhla Phase-II was received at 4:55 p.m. "A total of three fire tenders were dispatched to the site, and all eight individuals were successfully rescued. Out of the eight, two were declared brought dead at the hospital," said Garg.

Indian gaming industry should develop games based on our culture: Ministry

Team Absolute | New Delhi

As the 28 per cent GST on online gaming continues to hammer the sector, Vikram Sahay, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, said on Thursday that gaming companies should innovate and develop more games based on our culture, like Ramayana and Mahabharata, to increase their reach among the masses.

Addressing the second edition of the IDGS Gaming Conclave, organised by the Indian Digital Gaming Society (IDGS) in collaboration with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), he told the industry players to develop games on Indian culture.

"Let us realise the value of our culture and develop games that can go international. Something like Ramayana and Mahabharata, if we



can convert them into games, it will be great," Sahay said.

"We are a big visible global player and we are making a difference in this industry. We are trying to bring in education, skilling, and innovation together on a mission mode. We want dedicated funds for this sector -- Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and

Comics (AVGC), including gaming, which can help to develop infrastructure," he stressed. Sean Hyunil Sohn, CEO of Krafton, the South Korean developer behind the popular BGMI mobile game, spoke about investments and Krafton's expectation in terms of return of investment (ROI). "Being a strategic investor, it's diffi-

cult to quantify the ROI. We are looking at where there could be some positive outcomes that we are expecting for long investments. I can say that the Indian market is sizable for top games like BGMI," said Sohn.

Rajan Navani, President of IDGS and Founder and CEO of JetSynthesys emphasised their commitment to nurturing a conducive environment for the growth of the gaming industry in the country.

The conclave was held as several homegrown gaming companies like Mobile Premier League (MPL) and Hike's Rush Gaming have laid off hundreds of employees in the wake of 28 per cent GST on online gaming.

Industry players have lamented that taxing GST on deposits rather than the technology platform commission charged by the companies will make the unit economics unviable, wiping out 80 per cent of the industry.

Pilot says Cong will retain power in Raj, slams BJP

Jaipur | Agencies

In yet another show of strength after his appointment as a CWC member, former Rajasthan deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot on Thursday launched a scathing attack on the opposition BJP and said that the saffron party has failed as the ruling party at the Centre and as the opposition party in Rajasthan.

Pilot was addressing a mammoth crowd in Vijaynagar which had gathered for the Kisan Sammelen being held here.

On Tuesday, Pilot went to his home constituency Tonk, the first time after becoming a CWC member. Here, he addressed another huge gathering at the Karyakarta Sammelen and said, "We will contest the polls together and we will win."

In Thursday, Pilot was given a rousing welcome during his journey from Jaipur to Vijaynagar. People showered flowers on him and greeted him at different places.

Pilot inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of development works worth hundreds of crores of rupees in Vijaynagar on Thursday.



He expressed confidence that the cycle of alternating power between the BJP and the Congress would be broken this time and that the Congress would retain power in the state in the elections to be held later this year.

"BJP leaders in Rajasthan are only sleeping. Their central leaders come from Delhi and try to wake them up but they are unable to wake up. The BJP has been ruling at the Centre for nine years. People voted for the party and gave it absolute majority twice but the party betrayed them. After taking votes from every section, the government only gave pain and sorrow to the voters."

IAF planning to buy 100 LCA Mark 1A fighter jets from HAL

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Indian Air Force (IAF) is planning to buy 100 LCA Mark 1A fighter jets from the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). A proposal to this effect this has been submitted to the Ministry of Defence.

The project may get the required clearance soon. The IAF plans to buy these Made in India aircraft to replace the MiG-21 fighter jets.

Defence experts said that this can be a big boost to the private defence aerospace sector.

On Thursday itself, a Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) meeting, held under the chairmanship of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, accorded Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for capital acquisition proposals worth approximately Rs 7,800 crore.

The Defence Ministry said this decision has been taken to enhance the efficiency of the Indian Air Force (IAF), and the DAC has granted AoN for procurement and installation of Electronic Warfare (EW) Suite on Mi-17 V5 Helicopters.

The EW Suite will be procured from Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).

The DAC has also accorded AoN for procurement of a Ground-Based Autonomous System for mechanised infantry and



armoured regiments which will enable various operations like unmanned surveillance, logistic delivery of ammunition, fuel & spares and casualty evacuation on the battlefield, a Defence Ministry official said.

Proposals for procurement of 7.62x51 mm Light Machine Gun (LMG) and Bridge Laying Tank (BLT) have also been given go-ahead by the DAC.

While the induction of the LMG will enhance the fighting capabilities of infantry forces, the BLT will result in faster movement of mechanised forces.

The ministry said that the AoN for procurement of ruggedised laptops and tablets for the Indian Army under Project Shakti has also been accorded. All these procurements will be sourced from indigenous vendors.

To enhance the operational capability of the MH-60R Helicopters of the Indian Navy, the DAC has accorded AoN for procurement of weapons for the same, the official added.

Aadhaar-based payment for MGNREGS will become mandatory from September 1

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The deadline for implementing Aadhaar-based payment system as the only mode of payment to workers under national rural job guarantee scheme MGNREGS will not be extended beyond August 31, government sources told Press Trust of India.

The Union government in January this year made the use of Aadhaar-based payment system (ABPS) mandatory for paying wages to those enrolled under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

The initial deadline for the mandatory adoption of ABPS mode was February 1, which was later extended to March 31, then till June 30, and eventually till August 31.

However, officials in the rural development ministry said the deadline will not be extended any further as over 90 per cent of active workers' accounts have already



been linked with Aadhaar. According to a statement issued by the ministry in June, out of the total 14.28 crore active beneficiaries, Aadhaar number has been seeded with 13.75 crore. A total of 12.17 crore Aadhaar numbers have been authenticated and 77.81 per

cent were found eligible for ABPS at that time, as per the ministry.

In May 2023, about 88 per cent of the wage payment were made through ABPS.

The ministry had also said that the data of job cards issued to beneficiaries of MGNREGS cannot be

deleted on the basis of the reason that the worker is not eligible for ABPS. According to a written reply by rural development minister Giriraj Singh in Parliament during the recently-concluded monsoon session, bank accounts of around 1.13 crore MGNREGS workers, or around eight per cent of the total active workers under the scheme, are yet to be seeded with Aadhaar.

North-eastern states are lagging behind in the process, with accounts of more than 42 per cent workers in Assam, around 23 per cent in Arunachal Pradesh, over 70 per cent in Meghalaya, and 37 per cent in Nagaland not being seeded with Aadhaar numbers.

ABPS as an alternative payment mode along with the direct account transfer mode has been in use under MNREGS since 2017.

Ministry officials said that states have been asked to organise camps and follow up with beneficiaries to achieve 100 per cent ABPS adoption.



SHIVRAJ ANNOUNCES 'HANUMAN LOK' PROJECT IN KAMAL NATH'S BASTION - CHHINDWARA

"Shri Hanuman Lok" to be constructed at Jam Sanwali Hanuman Temple

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday announced a proposal to develop "Hanuman Lok" in the state's Chhindwara district on the lines of "Mahakal Lok" corridor in Ujjain.

Addressing a public rally in Chhindwara -- considered a bastion of former Madhya Pradesh CM and senior Congress leader Kamal Nath, Chouhan also announced the formation of a new district out of Chhindwara in the tribal dominated region of Madhya Pradesh.

He announced that separating three tehsils of Chhindwara, namely -- Pandurna, Manandavadi and Sausar -- a new Pandurana district would be made. The Congress, however, took jibe at CM Chouhan, claiming the latter had announced plans to make Pandurana a district for the third time since 2008. "CM Chouhan had announced plans to make Pandurana a new district ahead of Assembly elections in 2018, and prior to that in August 2008. Similarly, the announcement on Hanuman Lok has also not been made for the first time. Even in October 2016, CM Shivraj had announced the same," Kamal Nath's media advisor Piyush Babele posted



on social media. Chhindwara has been a bastion of Kamal Nath for the last over four decades. In fact, he has projected the developments of Chhindwara as a model for the assembly elections.

CM Chouhan made these promises during a visit to Chhindwara a day after two-time former chief minister

and Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh visited his assembly constituency Budhni on Wednesday.

As per the proposal of the project released by the state government, spread over an area of 26.5 acre, the temple precinct will be developed by the state tourism board in two phases. "The total cost of the Hanuman

Lok project is Rs 314 crore with the first phase costing Rs 35.09 crore. The tourism board will also develop a parking lot on a land parcel of more than 40,000 sq ft, to accommodate 400 four wheelers and an equal number of two wheelers," the Madhya Pradesh government said in an official communication.

CM Chouhan for all round development of Chhindwara

CM ADDRESSES AT STATE LEVEL ROZGAR DIWAS AND MAHILA SAMMELAN

Bhopal: The Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has all efforts will be made for all round development of Chhindwara. He performed Bhumi Pujan for Machagora Water Supply Scheme, which will be built at a cost of Rs 848 crore 29 lakh. It will ensure water supply in 711 villages of 7 development blocks. He also launched 35 development works worth Rs 1178 crore 54 lakh and performed Bhumi Pujan for and 30 works costing Rs. 258 crore 75 lakh. Another college will be opened in Chhindwara and a magnificent auditorium will be constructed.



Schemes like providing one thousand rupees per month for nutritious food to Bhabha, Saharia and Baiga sisters, Kanya Daan Yojana, Jal Jeevan Mission, distribution of laptops and providing assistance to expectant mothers were discontinued by the previous government. CM Chouhan said that the state government is committed to transforming the lives of sisters and daughters. Schemes like Ladli Laxmi and Kanya Vivah have been started to address discrimination issues.

Addressing the State Level Rozgar Diwas and Mahila Sammelan in Chhindwara today, Chouhan formally started distributing loans worth more than Rs 5 thousand crores to 8 lakh 34 thousand persons under the Rozgar Diwas programme.

Chouhan wished the beneficiaries a bright future. Agriculture Minister and in-charge of Chhindwara Kamal Patel and public representatives were present.

711 kalash from 711 villages

The Chief Minister welcomed the public attending the Mahila Sammelan and State Level Rozgar Diwas by showering flowers. Shri Chouhan performed bhoomi puja for Machagora Group Water Supply Scheme by receiving Jal Kalash Yatra. Self-help groups of Livelihood Mission and beneficiary Bahnas of Ladli Bahna Yojana presented a huge rakhi to CM Chouhan. People's representatives welcomed Chief Minister Chouhan with a huge garland.

Tap water at every house

The Chief Minister said that due to the efforts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, drinking water is being made available at every house. In previous governments, it was difficult to install even hand pumps.

NSUI members cane-charged during protest in Indore

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The members of NSUI were cane-charged by the police at Indore in Madhya Pradesh on Thursday during a protest organised by the student wing of the Congress.

The National Students Union of India (NSUI) members -- around 2,000 -- staged a protest in Indore's Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya, highlighting several issues including alleged delay in conducting exams, declaring results and poor evaluation of answer sheets.



The students took out a rally and then tried to forcefully enter the premises, prompting the police to use water cannons and resort to cane-charge to control the situation.

Several of them were detained by the police but released later.

"Students' issues remain unaddressed. Irregularities are also going on in the university which will also be highlighted by us," said NSUI city president Rajat Patel.

Indore-based Congress leader Shobha Oza

said: "NSUI members are fighting for the rights of the students of Devi Ahilya University, but the police brutally attacked the agitators with water cannons and canes! It is shameful that the police, unable to prevent crimes, are wreaking havoc on the innocent."

Uniform is a symbol of honour for society and country - Governor Mangubhai Patel

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel said that uniform is a symbol of honour for society and the country. Uniform instills a sense of security in the mind of the public. Governor Patel was addressing the trainee officers of Sashastra Seema Bal at Raj Bhavan on Thursday. He advised the trainee officers of Sashastra Seema Bal to be patient, stress-free, do regular yoga, exercise and eat nutritious food for good health. A sapling and a memento was presented to the Governor by Shri Sanjeev Sharma, Inspector General of Sashastra Seema Bal. On this occasion, Principal Secretary to the Governor Shri D.P. Ahuja was also present.

Governor Mangubhai Patel said that secured borders of the nation is



lays the foundation of happiness and peace for the citizens. The sol-

diers stay awake to protect our borders while staying away from the

family, so that we countrymen can sleep peacefully. Security is very important for holistic development of any country.

Trainee officers should take inspiration from the stories of loyal, honest and brave soldiers who made supreme sacrifice for the nation. Suppress anti-social elements and anti-national forces with full rigour for border security. Simultaneously, ensure the safety of people living on the borders. Injustice should never be done to any innocent.

Governor Patel said that after hard training, you are going to assume the responsibility of protecting the country's borders during 'Azadi ke Amrit Kaal'. He congratulated the trainee officers on becoming members of the prestigious and proud security force of the country.

Ayurveda physicians should boost the credibility of AYUSH department : MoS AYUSH

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Minister of State for AYUSH (Independent Charge) Ramkishore 'Nano' Kanware has said that Ayurveda physicians should increase the credibility of the AYUSH department in the society through their exceptional work. He said that Ayurvedic system of medicine flourished in the world from the ages till date. During Corona period, the general public has understood its importance to boost immunity.

Minister of State Kanware was addressing the workshop organised in the auditorium of Pt. Khushilal Sharma Ayurveda College today. Chief Executive Officer of Devaranya Yojana Shri Sanjay Kumar Mishra was also present on this occasion.

Minister of State for AYUSH Shri Kanware apprised that the spectrum of activities of the AYUSH department has been widened in the last few years in Madhya Pradesh. The state government has provided adequate resources to the



department. The field officers of the department should make medical services

easily accessible to the general public by making regular visits. Regular operation of Ayush Health and Wellness Center should be ensured.

Principal Secretary Ayush Kalpana Srivastava said that Yog Se Nirog programme started during the Corona period has yielded better results. Commissioner Ayush Smt. Sonali Wayangankar told that the number of 562 health and wellness centres currently operating is being increased to 800. The works of Devaranya Yojana and National Ayush Mission were also discussed.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Upgradation of 550 AYUSH dispensaries.
- Approval to Super Specialty Panchkarma Centres in 10 districts.
- 562 health and wellness centres operated.
- Special health service in 75 Ayush Villages.
- Health survey of about 2 lakh people from 37 thousand families.
- Formation of district level committees in Devaranya Yojana.
- Special arrangement for new research in AYUSH colleges.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh Police said it has arrested a couple involved in 60 criminal cases in the Jabalpur district who were wanted by police in four states -- Telangana, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh for the last several years, an official said.

Police added the accused couple identified as Ashok Reddy (60), a resident of Golkonda (Telangana), and his wife Raimti aka Kumari Potai (43), resident of Narayanpur (Chhattisgarh), were involved in Maoist activities.

The accused Maoist, Ashok Reddy, was carrying a collective reward of Rs 82 lakh in cash, said an official press statement issued by the Madhya Pradesh Police headquarters on Tuesday. The police said Reddy and his wife Potai were allegedly involved in Maoist activities in neighbouring states -- Telangana, Maharashtra and



Chhattisgarh, however they are suspected to be involved in Madhya Pradesh as well.

The Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) of Madhya Pradesh Police that arrested the accused couple from Jabalpur, claimed to have recovered a pistol with cartridges along with Rs three lakh in cash and a Communist Party of India (Maoist) literature from their possession.

The police said the accused couple are also facing alleged charges of murder, attempt to murder, dacoity, rioting, attack on police, abduction, arson and cases under the Explosives Act, Arms Act and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act have been registered

against Reddy in various states.

"Ashok Reddy was a member of Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee of the banned CPI (Maoist), and his wife Raimti aka Kumari Potai was looking after the work related to Maoist literature, printing pamphlets and posters and issuing press releases of the organisation. The main area of Reddy's work was Telangana and Chhattisgarh, but there is every possibility of involvement of the Maoists in strengthening the Maoist cadre and network in Madhya Pradesh," the Madhya Pradesh Police said.

After the arrest, a case was registered against the arrested couple under relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code, the Arms Act and the UAPA at Bhopal's ATS police station, it added.

"Further investigation is underway to find out more about the Maoist network and modules," the police said.

Forest fires threaten the livelihoods of dona-pattal makers in Betul

Team Absolute | Betul

Khandu Suhane (56) a resident of Basner Kalan village of Betul district in Madhya Pradesh, inherited from his father the art of making dona-pattal, and he worries that this art is the only thing that he will be able to leave behind for his future generations.

"I have spent my life making pattals. Now, my wife, son and daughter-in-law are also involved in this work. We not only sell our products locally but also to some areas in Maharashtra..." he said.

"You hear people saying that dona-pattal is eco-friendly and it is a great alternative to plastic but you never see anyone do anything to promote it or even try to find out the hard work that goes into making it. The orders that we get are



also infrequent and when we get them we have to work through the day and night to fulfil it," he adds.

Dona pattal is made from the leaves of all-

weather creepers mahur or Bauhinia Vahlia, which thrive in the forests of Madhya Pradesh.

"We have to wake up early in the morning to go to the forest to pluck them by hand to ensure

that they do not break. In the forest, we are alone, traversing tricky terrain amid fear of wild animals. Crossing through shrubs we often wound ourselves. If the creeper has reached a height with the aid of the tree there is fear of falling and slipping. All of this we have to do no matter what the weather is," he says.

No leaves for this art According to Suhane, his family of four can together make 1,000 pattals or 1,000 donas in a day. "The number varies on the availability of leaves. Four to seven leaves are used for the small pattal or dona and six to eight for the big pattal. For 1,000 pattals, I get Rs 1,200 and for 1,000 dona it is somewhere between Rs 400 to 800," he says. "If the cost of transport and packaging is included we manage to make a profit of Rs 800 on every 1,000 dona-pattal," he says.

Suhane is worried that his marginal profits are also at risk due to increasing difficulty in procuring Bauhinia Vahlia leaves. "The forests are shrinking and the existing ones see frequent fires in the summer due to which leaves are not easily available," he adds.

Mulla Singh Kakodia, from Baghwad says that earlier the leaves were available easily. "You could get ample leaves, even for big orders, nearby," he says.

"If the leaves are exhausted in surrounding forests, one has to go to nearby forests like Sawalmenhda forest, Jaridhama near Khedisaoligarh, Tahali, Kumhali, Bhimpur forest, Badgaon near Bhainsdehi, Kaneri, Koylari - all about 50-70km away. The cost of travel is not included in our profit," Suhane adds.



EDITOR'S SPECS

CHANDRAYAAN-3: A 'PROUD MOMENT' FOR INDIAN DIASPORA

It was a 'proud and historic day' for India's 32 million-plus strong diaspora, which stood in unison with their mother country amid chants of 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' and 'Vande Mataram', as the nation conquered the moon on Wednesday with its historic Chandrayaan-3 mission. From holding special screenings of the landing event, to saying prayers and distributing sweets, loudest cheers on the mission's success could be heard from the community that is far away, yet not away from India. Capturing the excitement of Indians in South Africa, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is in the country for BRICS Summit, shared pictures of community members meeting him and celebrating. Taking to X, member of the House of Lords of the UK Parliament, Lord Rami Ranger, said, "Indians are literally over the moon with the smooth landing of the Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft! Congratulations ISRO. India becomes the only nation to land on the South Pole of the Moon." "Congratulations to India on the #MoonLanding -- this is a national, regional and global success story. Everyone involved has played their personal part in a national victory. Indians from across the UK joined the High Commission in London where people chanted 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' and 'Vande Mataram' slogans. Calling it a 'moment of immense pride', the Friends of India Society International (FISI), a UK-based diaspora group, celebrated India's expanding prowess in the realm of technology. Singapore's Indian-origin Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan also dropped a congratulatory message to Indians. Calling the success an "incredible moment", Google's Sundar Pichai and Microsoft's Satya Nadella congratulated ISRO for its victory. "Wow! Chandrayaan-3's moon landing is a great achievement for India and all humanity! Congratulations to the ISRO team and all of India," Gita Gopinath, First Deputy Managing Director of the IMF, wrote on X.

'PRAYAS' TO GIVE FILLIP TO CHILDREN'S CREATIVITY

Lalit Garg

The Union Ministry of Education is giving start to a scheme called as 'Prayas' or 'Promotion of Research Attitude in Young and Aspiring Students' with the aim of providing opportunities for research and discovery to the school students through introducing them to scientific methods and experiments during the education. The objective of the scheme is to generate scientific temper among young students and develop evidence based on scientific process, innovation and creativity. This 'effort' to give an open sky to the creativity and imagination of the students is worthwhile. As a result, widespread positive changes will be seen in the school education of India and this will remove the imperfections of traditional education.

There are limitless possibilities to boost creativity, skills, originality and efficiency amongst children. If the child is confined within a limited framework, then his talent also remains confined within the given scope. Therefore, by identifying the interests in childhood and adolescence itself, if a child is given an opportunity to know, understand and do something in the field of his interest, then there are full possibilities that the talent of a large number of children will come to the fore and the country and society will benefit from it. Although this should be a basic aspect in the educational system, and it has been taken care of to some extent, now the government is formally going to take a concrete initiative in this direction.

We can't do everything. But it is also true that we can do much more than what we think about our abilities. How many times do we hold back ourselves just thinking that we will not be able to do it? Many of those who are less than us go ahead, while we cannot take a step forward. This situation is a tragedy during student life, and it is ironic. Until now educationalists were not able to pay attention to these basic things, now efforts have started in this direction, so it should be welcomed. It is a fact that the process of discovery and learning is very intense amongst children and adolescents. Especially if the subject of their interest is allowed to develop freely during



studies, their creativity often brings out something new. But our prescribed syllabus is an essential part of the educational structure for most of the children, and they have to complete their studies accordingly, suppressing their inherent creativity. Due to negligible conditions to move ahead from bookish knowledge, children's talent does not blossom and manifest properly. In this, the talent of many such children remains suppressed, whose interests do not get the right direction and opportunity to understand them. Such cases are common, rather rampant in which many times during schooling, parents force children to study such subjects, which they have to study forcibly. It is assumed that children should be educated according to the prescribed curriculum and the wishes of the parents, while they are discouraged to understand and learn something new in the subject of their choice.

To meet this situation, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has prepared a guideline for the 'Prayas' scheme 2023-24, which is to start from 10 October 2023. According to the guidelines of 'Prayas', its objective is to generate scientific temper among young students, to give them an opportunity to grow according to their true potential, skill, ability and talent. Psychological consultant Dr. Robert

Woods said, 'Who is at the forefront of your priority? If you are, you will not intentionally make mistakes. If the mistake is being made under a well-thought-out conspiracy, then its consequences can be bad. Unintentional mistakes, whether in work or talk, can be handled in time.'

According to the effort, a total incentive grant of Rs. 50,000 will be given for each selected research proposal. Out of this amount, Rs 10,000 will be given to the student. If there are more than one student, this amount will be divided. Out of this, Rs 20,000 will be given to schools and Rs 20,000 to experts of higher educational institutions to facilitate students to do research work. In the project, a science teacher from the school will be appointed to guide the students in their research work throughout the term.

After observing and assessing all the situations, this fact has been coming to the fore again and again that now education should be given a new form. This is a great expectation to remove the incompleteness and inadequacy of education. The effort is a step towards fulfilling such an expectation. Often the creative talents of many children are suppressed in a way during their schooling. The children, who can become carriers of new discoveries in the field of knowledge and science,

remain followers of a ready-made pattern. From this point of view, the importance of 'Prayas' can be recorded in the form that it emphasizes on the development of the ability of the students to do research, or discover individually or in groups. In fact, children learn the most by observing and understanding the environment around them. That is why according to the Prayas plan, any local problem will be identified and the studies would be conducted in it. The emphasis is on examining the scientific reasons behind it and finding solutions and researching any solution, idea or concept. Zen Master Marie Jacsch says, "Facing our conflicts and embracing the unknown leads us to growth, and that makes us move forward."

Under 'Prayas', an effort will be made to solve a local problem or to find a research-based solution with the help of an expert from higher educational institutions along with school students and teachers. The age of the participating learners will be 14-18 years. It will be mandatory for them to study in class 9th to 11th. Obviously, if opportunities are made available in the right direction under the well thought out guidance of experts who understand the psychology of children and adolescents, then this scheme can prove to be a significant initiative in expanding the horizons of imagination and creativity of the students. Nothing happens just by knowing; we have to work on that too. In the same way nothing is achieved by merely thinking or having desires. We also have to take steps towards fulfilling those desires. But what happens is that we have a lot to do, but we do nothing. Due to this kind of educational process, the overall talent of the students was not being revealed, if attention is paid to this lack of education, then its results will also be good. Whatever we want through education, such elements have to be put in education. Acacia seed was being sown and mango fruit was expected. How was it possible? Kudos to our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, now these things are being taken care of in the new education policy!

international

WAGNER CHIEF YEVGENY PRIGOZHIN KILLED IN PLANE CRASH, PUTIN TIGHTLIPPED

Moscow | Agencies

Wagner mercenary group's chief Yevgeny Prigozhin, who stage a failed mutiny against Russia's military leaders, died in a plane crash in Tver region in Moscow, and a probe has been initiated into the incident, Federal Agency for Air Transport said.

The incident occurred on Wednesday evening when the aircraft, owned by Prigozhin, was flying from Moscow to St Petersburg with seven passengers and three crew, BBC reported.

All ten bodies have been recovered and a criminal investigation has been launched.

The ill-fated aircraft Embraer Legacy caught fire on hitting the ground and was reportedly in the air for less than half an hour. A Wagner linked Telegram



channel 'Grey Zone' reported Prigozhin's death, saying he was "killed as a result of actions by traitors of Russia". Prigozhin was a key ally of Russia President Vladimir Putin but their relationship soured after the Wagner chief staged mutiny against country's military leaders.

Charges against Prigozhin were dropped under a deal that he will end the rebellion

and relocate to Belarus.

President Putin, who spoke at the BRICS summit in South Africa via video-link on Thursday, did not mention Prigozhin or the plane crash.

Though the Kremlin is yet to confirm whether the Wagner chief died in the plane crash, aviation officials said he was one of the passengers on board.



Six Indian pilgrims among 7 killed as bus overturns in Nepal

Kathmandu: Seven people, including six Indian pilgrims, were killed in a road accident in Nepal in wee hours on Thursday, local media reported.

The bus proceeding towards Janakpur from Kathmandu overturned and fell some 50 metres down the road at a river bank south of Churiamai temple at 2 a.m.

The deceased included one Nepali, a resident of Loharpatni in Mahottari district and six Indian nationals from Rajasthan, Deputy Superintendent Pradeep Bahadur Chhetri of the Area Police Office, Simara, was quoted as saying by Kathmandu Post. DSP Chhetri informed that the injured passengers are undergoing treatment at various hospitals in Hetauda of Makwanpur district.

Preliminary probe revealed that the driver of the bus, might have fallen asleep leading to the accident.

Haley v Ramaswamy: For the first time, 2 Indian-Americans spar in GOP debate

Washington | Agencies

For the first time in the history of the US, two Indian-American presidential candidates locked horns over the country's foreign policy in the Republican party's first presidential debate.

On Wednesday, Nikki Haley, 51, accused Vivek Ramaswamy, 38, of supporting America's foreign adversaries and abandoning its friends, and said that her GOP rival lacked foreign policy experience.

Asserting that a win for Russia is a win for China, Haley said that Ukraine is the first line of defence for the US, which Ramaswamy doesn't understand and wants to handover Kiev to Moscow.

"The problem that Vivek Ramaswamy doesn't understand is he wants to hand Ukraine to Russia, he wants to let China eat Taiwan, he wants to go and stop funding Israel," Haley said.

"You don't do that to friends. What you do instead is you have the backs of your friends," Hely said even as Ramaswamy interrupted her on and off, calling her accusations false.

Ramaswamy, who was the only presidential candidate to raise hand when Fox News moderators asked who would not keep supporting Ukraine, argued the US should focus on protecting its own border first.

Stating that Haley was "pushing this lie" about him, Ramaswamy accused her of backing Ukraine at the



behest of defence contractors.

"I wish you well in your future career on the boards of Lockheed (Martin) and Raytheon," Ramaswamy told Haley.

The youngest presidential-hopeful had recently unveiled his foreign policy vision at the Nixon Presidential Library, which called for less involvement in foreign affairs that do not directly concern the US.

"I do not want to get to the point where we are sending our military resources abroad, when we could be better using them here at home to protect our borders, protect my homeland," Ramaswamy said at the debate.

Haley said Ramaswamy is choosing Russian President Vladimir Putin who has said that once they take over Ukraine Baltic states are the next.

Pak court adjourns Imran's plea challenging Toshakhana verdict



Islamabad | Agencies

The Islamabad High Court has adjourned till Friday former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's plea challenging his trial and conviction in the Toshakhana case.

A trial court in Islamabad on August 5 had sentenced Khan to three years' imprisonment and slapped a fine of Rs 1,00,000 while hearing the Election Commission of Pakistan's criminal complaint against the former Prime Minister for con-

cealing the details of Toshakhana gifts.

Latif Khosa, appearing for Khan, said the trial court's decision had a lot of mistakes.

Highlighting that the high court had ordered the trial court to answer the questions raised by the defence, Khosa said the latter even ignored the orders of the high court.

ECP counsel Amjad Parvez said the PTI chief had been convicted on August 5, as documented. Parvez stressed that the trial bench decisions of the top court were part of the official record and clarified that the top court's ruling had neither been reviewed nor contested.

The trial court had found Khan guilty of "corrupt practices by hiding the benefits he accrued from the national exchequer wilfully and intentionally", Dawn reported.

The PTI chief had "deliberately concealed" details of the gifts he retained from the Toshakhana -- a repository where presents handed to government officials from foreign officials are kept -- during his tenure as the Prime Minister, the ECP had said in its complaint.

On Wednesday, the Pakistan Supreme Court had acknowledged "procedural defects" in Khan's conviction by the trial court.

Khan is currently lodged in Attock jail.

Incredible feat: Top US leaders celebrate India's lunar success

Washington | Agencies

From Vice President Kamala Harris to Ambassador Eric Garcetti, top American leaders congratulated India for the historic touchdown of Chandrayaan-3 on the southern polar region of the moon, calling it an 'incredible feat'.

"Congratulations to India for the historic landing of Chandrayaan-3 on the southern polar region of the moon," Indian-American Kamala Harris wrote on X on Thursday as India became the fourth country to achieve the feat after the US, China, and the erstwhile Soviet Union.

"It's an incredible feat for all the scientists and engineers involved. We are proud to partner with you on this mission and space exploration more broadly," Harris said.

Last month, India signed the three-year-old Artemis Accords, a US-led international partnership on planetary exploration and research.

The Artemis Accords is closely linked to NASA's Artemis Program, which aims to return astronauts to the moon's surface, build a space



camp there, and carry out in depth space exploration.

Congratulating the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), which is Artemis Accords partner, NASA administrator Bill Nelson wrote on X: "Congratulations @isro on your successful Chandrayaan-3 lunar South Pole landing! And con-

gratulations to #India on being the 4th country to successfully soft-land a spacecraft on the Moon. We're glad to be your partner on this mission!"

Indian-American Congressman Ro Khanna, who was in India this month to celebrate Independence Day, called it a "big moment" for

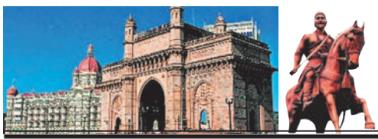
the country. "A big moment for India. Congratulations... I saw incredible ingenuity and dynamism across India in the delegation we recently led," Khanna said.

"Congratulations to ISRO and the people of India for the Chandrayaan-3's historic landing on the South Pole of the Moon. We look forward to deepening our partnership with India on space exploration in the years ahead," US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan wrote on X.

Taking on to X, US Ambassador to India, Eric Garcetti, said he sees "exciting opportunities" ahead for the US and India.

"That's how you stick a landing! Congratulations to India, @ISRO and the entire team on the successful landing of #Chandrayaan3! I can see exciting opportunities ahead for #USIndiaSpace collaboration," Garcetti said.

"India is the first country to ever land a craft on this part of the lunar surface," Congressman Brad Sherman said.



FILM'S RELEASE SHOULD NOT BE STOPPED AT 11TH HOUR: BOMBAY HIGH COURT

FILMS SHOULD NOT BE PREVENTED FROM RELEASE AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR, THE BOMBAY HIGH COURT SAID WHILE REFUSING TO STAY THE RELEASE OF AYUSHMANN KHURRANA STARRER 'DREAM GIRL 2'. THE MOVIE IS SLATED FOR RELEASE ON FRIDAY.



Team Absolute | Mumbai
A single bench of Justice Riyaz Chagla on August 22 heard a suit filed by one Ashim Bagchi

who claimed the story of the film was similar to a script he had registered with the Film Screen Writers Association in May 2007.

Bagchi sought a stay on the release of the film pending hearing of his suit. Justice Chagla, however, noted the suit and application seeking injunc-

tion order on the film's release was filed only on August 18 and the respondents have not had an opportunity to respond to it.

"It is well settled that at the eleventh hour films should not be prevented from their release. An opportunity is required to be given to the Respondent / Defendant to file their reply to the interim application," the HC said in its order.

The bench directed the respondents (Balaji Telefilms Ltd, the company's directors Ekta Kapoor and Shobha Kapoor, writers of the film Raaj Shaandilyaa of Think Ink Picturez Ltd and Naresh Kathooria) to file their affidavits in response to the suit and posted the matter for hearing on August 31. Bagchi, in his suit, claimed he had initially issued a cease and desist notice to the production company, which also included Ekta Kapoor and Shobha Kapoor. When there seemed to be no response to the notice, Bagchi approached the High Court.

CBI lodges case against ex-Superintendent of Customs, conducts search operations

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has said that they have filed a case against Mayank Singh, the former Superintendent of the bond section at the Jawaharlal Nehru Customs House (JNCH) in Raigad, Maharashtra, along with others, including two private companies based in Goregaon and Thane, and unknown accomplices. Search operations were also carried out.

According to the CBI, searches were conducted at the premises of the accused individuals in Navi Mumbai, Noida, Sitapur, Goregaon and Thane.

The case has been lodged against Export Pvt. Ltd. in Goregaon, Mumbai, and Shree Marketing in Thane, among others.

The CBI official mentioned that a joint surprise check was previously carried out by the CBI and JNCH officials in the bond section of JNCH, Raigad.

"It was alleged that two bills of entry from the mentioned private companies had redemption fines of Rs 9,56,000 and Rs 4,96,000 imposed on them. The Customs Intelligence Unit (CIU) had placed the goods covered under these two bills of entry on hold," said the CBI official.

The official also added that the two private companies conspired with the former



Superintendent of the Bond Section, JNCH, Raigad, and others by offering undue advantages, enabling them to take delivery of the goods covered under these two bills of entry without paying the required fines or penalties, resulting in a loss to the government exchequer.

The investigation into the matter is currently ongoing.

2 killed after ceiling slab from 20-year-old building collapses in Mumbai

Team Absolute | Thane

Two persons were killed and six others injured when the slab of a 20-year-old residential building collapsed in Nerul area of Navi Mumbai, fire brigade officials said on Thursday.

The third floor ceiling slab of the four-storey Tulsi Bhavan building located at Shirsole in Nerul collapsed at around 8.50 pm on Wednesday, they said.

The slab came crashing down on the second and first floors, killing a labourer and another person, divisional fire officer Purushottam Jadhav said.

The building has four wings and the slab collapsed in its 'B' wing, he said.

Some civil work was underway on the third floor when the slab collapsed, said another fire official.

The building has a tailoring shop on the ground floor and the shopkeeper closed the outlet and left the place a few minutes before the incident, he said.

One of the them has been identified as Babaji Shingade, Jadhav said. The injured persons have been admitted to a local hospital, he said.



The building has been evacuated and the occupants currently lodged at the Ahilyabai Holkar Samaj Mandir hall in Nerul, the official said. After being alerted, fire engines from Nerul and Vashi along with the disaster management team rushed to the spot and carried out rescue operations and later cleared the debris. Navi Mumbai Municipal Commissioner Rajesh Narvekar and other senior officials also reached the spot to supervise the rescue and relief operations.

The building was legal and had all the requisite permits, another civic official said. The bodies have been sent to a government hospital for postmortem.

Local police have as of now registered a case of accidental death, Jadhav said.

Anonymous alumnus gifts \$18.6mn to IIT Bombay for green energy research

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In an unexpected windfall, the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay has received a donation of \$18.6 million from an anonymous alumnus to establish a Green Energy and Sustainability Research Hub, which will redefine the institution's role in addressing the global climate change crisis, an official said here on Thursday.

To be located within a state-of-the-art academic building on the IIT Bombay campus, the hub will focus on critically important areas like evaluating climate risks and developing effective mitigation strategies, climate change adaptation, and comprehensive environmental monitoring. It will also advance climate solutions, fostering the adoption of renewable energy sources and energy-efficient technologies, said an official on the donation,



but the identity of the donor who opened up the purse strings was not revealed.

The hub will facilitate research in several critical areas, including, but not limited to, battery technologies, solar photovoltaics, biofuels, clean-air science, flood forecasting, and carbon capture. It will also serve as a nexus for learning and exploration, offering state-of-the-art infrastructure and facilities for students and researchers alike. Furthermore, the hub would offer industry-tailored educational training and cultivate strategic collaborations

with global universities and corporations. The objective is to drive practical and transformative solutions while nurturing entrepreneurship in the realm of green energy and sustainability, said the IIT-Bombay.

"The establishment of this hub underscores our dedication to tackling climate challenges through cutting-edge research, fostering interdisciplinary collaborations, and nurturing entrepreneurial endeavours. The hub stands as a testament to the impact that collective efforts can achieve in paving a sustainable path for the future," said IIT-Bombay Director Prof. Subhasis Chaudhari. He noted that this is "probably the first time in Indian Academia that the philanthropist wishes to stay anonymous at this point," and this would motivate many other citizens to come forward for the cause of IIT Bombay. The IIT-Bombay was set up in 1958 as the second IIT, and is

recognised worldwide as a leader in the field of engineering education and research.

The Institute was granted the status of 'Institution of Eminence' by the Ministry of Education (the then Ministry of Human Resources Development) on July 9, 2018, and is renowned for the quality of its faculty and the outstanding calibre of students graduating from its undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

It ranks not only amongst the best in the country but also highly recognised in the world for achievements in the field of education and research.

In June 2023, the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) ranking IIT Bombay 1st in India and 47th globally in Engineering and Technology, and for the first time, it was ranked 149th globally, thus securing its position in the top 150 universities in the QS World University Ranking 2024.

PIL seeks closure of Mumbai-Nagpur Expressway until safety measures implemented

Team Absolute | Nagpur

A public interest litigation (PIL) has sought court orders to temporarily halt vehicular traffic on the Mumbai-Nagpur Expressway which has witnessed a series of serious accidents claiming many lives.

The PIL was filed by one Anil Wadpaliwar on Thursday before the Bombay High Court's Nagpur Bench, through his lawyers Shreerang Bhandarkar, Bhupesh Patel and Manish Shukla.

A division bench comprising Justice Atul Chandrakar and Justice Vrushali Joshi has issued notices to top officials of the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC), Principal Secretaries of the state Road Transport and Highway Departments, the national and state Public Works Departments, and others concerned, to file their replies within four weeks.

The petitioner has cited the alarming number of accidents, including



many fatalities, that have occurred on the 701-km long expressway, of which around 600-km is functional, since its inauguration in December 2022.

The PIL has sought suspension of all traffic until essential wayside amenities and other safety measures are implemented to prevent further mishaps and save precious lives.

Referring to the data from the State Highway Police, he said that the expressway has witnessed a total of 39 major accidents claiming 88 lives, plus there were 87 other accidents injuring 232 people, and 215 minor crashes hurting 428 persons.

The PIL has also urged for direc-

tions to order a comprehensive survey and a detailed report on the functioning of this access-controlled expressway, and the necessity of implementing solutions to mitigate the recurring accidents on it.

Alluding to a study by the VNIT and other media reports, the PIL has highlighted the aspect of 'highway hypnosis' - a phenomenon causing accidents due to long hours of monotonous driving conditions. Earlier, a NGO, the Council for Protection of Rights President, Barrister Vinod Tiwari had raised the issue with the authorities on the need for safety precautions on the Samruddhi Mahamarg that has earned the sobriquet of 'killer highway'. After the July 1 Buldhana bus accident that claimed 27 lives, the state government came under severe criticism from the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi allies Congress, Nationalist Congress Party and Shiv Sena (UBT), besides social groups and NGOs. The MSRDC finally invited e-ten-

ders for construction of wayside amenities with minimum investment of Rs 50-crore each with a five-year time period, which Tiwari said is "meaningless".

When fully completed, the 701-km long expressway, costing Rs 55,000-crore, will link Mumbai and Nagpur and slash the travel time from the current 16 hours to around 8 hours.

IANs had first highlighted the grave issues in detailed reports (May 4 & July 1), after which the government initiated some measures to reduce accidents. However, Tiwari claims that the MSRDC's latest response is 'tokenism' since it has given a five-year period for construction for the facilities - "fill then, people should keep dying on the expressway". As per an official, the facilities that are envisioned are big and small hotels/restaurants, toilets, drinking water kiosks, clinics, quick response units, ATMs, shopping plazas, entertainment arcades, garages, puncture repairs, etc.

Actress Seema R. Deo from 'Anand' passes away at 81

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Veteran Bollywood and Marathi film actress Seema R. Deo - who enacted a key role in the superhit 1971 film 'Anand', passed away here following prolonged illness, family sources said on Thursday.

She was 81 and breathed her last at a private hospital this morning after a long battle with Alzheimer's Disease and other disorders.

Born in Mumbai as Nalini Saraf, Seema Deo is survived by her sons actor Ajinkya and director Abhinav.

Seema Deo acted in nearly 90 Hindi and Marathi movies in a career spanning over six decades from the black-and-white to the colour era of the Indian film industry.

She is hugely remembered for her major role in the musical blockbuster 'Anand', along with her husband Ramesh, and Amitabh Bachchan among other actors.



Top Bollywood personalities have expressed shock over her demise and consoled her passing on social media.

FORMER SHIRDI MP BHAUSAHEB WAKCHAURE JOINS SHIV SENA (UBT)

Mumbai: Former Shiv Sena (undivided) MP Bhausaheb Wakchaure on Wednesday joined the Uddhav Thackeray-led faction of the party, reported news agency.

Wakchaure won the Lok Sabha elections in 2009 on Shiv Sena ticket from Shirdi constituency in Ahmednagar district. He joined Congress in 2014 but lost to Sadashiv Lokhande of Shiv Sena.

In 2019, Wakchaure failed to save his deposit as he contested as an Independent candidate.

On Wednesday, he joined the Shiv Sena (UBT) at 'Matoshree', the residence of Uddhav Thackeray in Mumbai. His entry into the Shiv Sena (UBT) camp comes against the backdrop of a vertical split in Shiv Sena (Undivided) last year and at least 13 MPs joining the Eknath Shinde-led camp. In the 2019 elections, Shiv Sena won 18 seats in Maharashtra which sends 48 members to Lok Sabha.



Maharashtra govt issues order on free treatment at public hospitals

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Health services, including treatment, in all government hospitals in Maharashtra falling under the public health department's jurisdiction have been made available free of cost for patients, the state government has said, reported news agency.

Medical tests, treatment and all other services provided on public-private partnership, excluding blood supply, are available free of cost to patients from August 15, said a government resolution (GR) issued on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra minister for women and child development Aditi Tatkare on August 10 said the state government would soon form a policy for setting up creches or day-care centres for children.

Speaking at a joint meeting



of her department with those of school education, labour and home, she said the policy will consider the opinions of government as well as non-governmental organisations,

adding that the fourth women's policy documentation will include the issue of creches.

The meeting was attended by Susieben Shah, chairper-

Covid-19: Maharashtra records 29 new case

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The data stated that 19 patients were discharged on August 24 taking the total recovered patients tally to 80,21,835 till date.

The recovery rate in the state is 98.18 per cent. Presently, Maharashtra has 144 active cases in the state.

"The case fatality rate in the state is 1.81 per cent," the state official said. "Out of 8,74,71,519 laboratory samples 81,70,546 have tested positive (9.34 per cent) for Covid-19 until today," the govt informed. "2,166 test were conducted on August 24, 2023 out of this 1,620 test were done in government laboratories, 546 were done in private laboratories," said the release.

At present dominant variant of Covid is Omicron XBB.1.16. Total 1733 cases were found to be infected with this variant. There were 19 deaths reported among the cases of this variant. Since January 1, 2023, 127 Covid-19 deaths have been



recorded. 72.44 per cent of these deaths have occurred in individuals above 60 years of age, 84 per cent of the deceased had comorbidities, and 16 per cent did not have any comorbidity.

India saw a single-day rise of 54 new coronavirus infections while the active caseload stood at 1,484, according to Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday.

The death toll was recorded at 5,31,926, the data updated at 8 am showed.

India's Covid case tally is 4.49 crore (4,49,96,786).

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease has increased to 4,44,63,376, and the national recovery rate stands at 98.81 per cent, according to the health ministry's website.



Heidi Klum slams reports claiming her extreme diet, says 'there's no real journalism anymore'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Supermodel Heidi Klum has slammed "crap" reports suggesting that she only eats 900 calories a day, commenting that "there really is no real journalism anymore." Shortly after making headlines due to her alleged extreme diet routine, Klum set the record straight on the matter via social media, reports aceshowbiz.com.

The 50-year-old former Victoria's Secret Angel shut down claims about her eating habit via Instagram Story.

In a video, she could be heard saying: "I just got home, and some friends are sending me these articles that have been written that I only take in 900 calories."

"One, I want to say, I don't think I've ever had to count my calories in my life," the former Sports Illustrated Swimsuit cover model clarified.

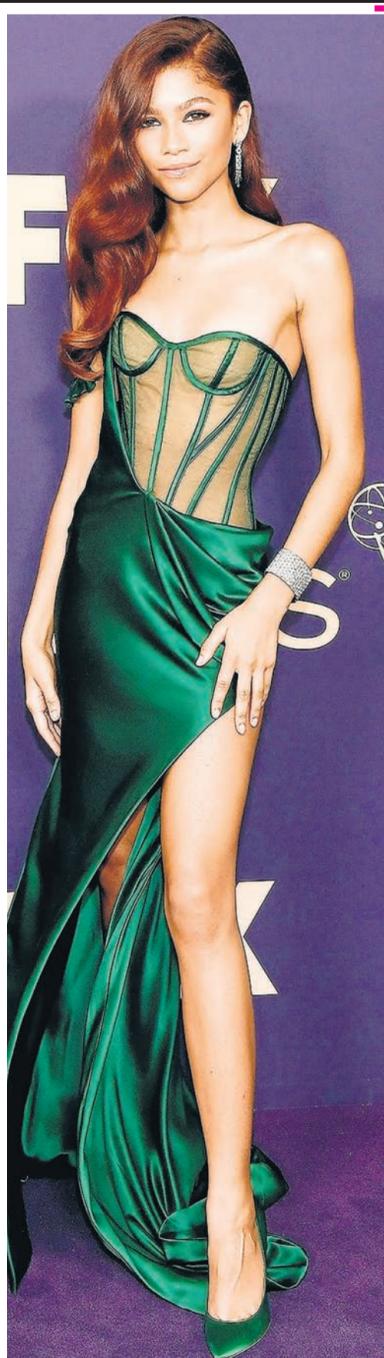
She went on to state: "And don't believe everything that you read, So, I don't count my calories."

In the same footage, Heidi also defended herself for showing off how much she weighs to her followers. "Someone asked me how much I weigh, and I got on the scale and showed how much I weighed," she recalled. "I don't know. People just put things together and just write a bunch of crap, and it's really sad because there really is no real journalism anymore."

"People just make up stories, one person writes it, and then everyone jumps on it," the former "Project Runway" star continued.

"And it's really sad because you know, people read that and they think that, and possibly follow that, and that's not good."

Earlier that day, The Daily Mail reported that Heidi revealed to her followers she only consumes 900 calories each day.



My entry in Hollywood was 'frightening yet thrilling' experience: Zendaya

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Zendaya's journey into Hollywood hasn't been a picnic as the 'Dune' actress has had to face a bunch of troubles when she entered the industry. Zendaya recently spoke about how she felt when she stepped in as "a leading lady", calling it a very frightening experience, but something she wanted to do nonetheless which was thrilling for her.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, talking about how her roles in 'Euphoria', 'Spider-Man' and 'Dune' catapulted her fame to massive levels and made her one of the industry's biggest modern faces, Zendaya said: "It was a little bit scary when I entered. While it was definitely something that freaked me out, I think it is also a good feeling."

"To have your own moments of self-doubt and then be like, 'Ooh, can I do this?' After this, you can run from that feeling and stay safe and comfortable, or you can go, take the risk and say 'You know what, f*** it'", she added.

Zendaya further doubled down about the growing attention she had been getting as a Hollywood star, which came to her notice while filming in Boston in 2022.

"After the last Spider-Man and the last season of Euphoria, there was a visceral change," Zendaya explained. "Before, I could get away with going places and getting in and out. But in Boston, I would end up going right back home, because it was really over stimulating."

"Everybody would go hang out at a bar or something, and I'd be like, 'I'd love to, but I think I could ruin everybody's night. Because it's just not going to be fun once I'm there,'" she added.

The conversation was held in regards to her upcoming film 'Challengers', where the 26-year old will portray the character of Tashi Donaldson, the fictional tennis superstar turned coach who gets caught in a love triangle.

Talking about her role in the upcoming dramedy, Zendaya called her new venture as a stepping stone to something new which made her feel more 'grown up'. She said "I felt like it was a good step into a more, I guess you could say, 'grown-up' role and into that next phase."

Dua Lipa roped in to star in Asif Kapadia's 'Camden'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer Dua Lipa is set to star in a new documentary series 'Camden', which is being directed by Oscar-winning filmmaker Asif Kapadia.

The series, which centers on the influence of London's Camden neighborhood, will also put the spotlight on the likes of Coldplay's Chris Martin, Mark Ronson, Boy George and the Black Eyed Peas, reports aceshowbiz.com.

Individual episodes will be helmed by Toby Trackman, Yemi Bamiro and co-director Sarah Lambert. Plans to make the documentary series were announced on Wednesday, August 23, at the Edinburgh TV Festival, according to The Hollywood Reporter.

Lipa was born and raised in London, but her family hail from the Balkans and the pop star previously claimed that it's a "big part" of her identity.

The brunette beauty - who lived in Kosovo during her teens - told WSJ Magazine: "It's such a big part of who I am. Given my parents and how they came to the UK, (the refugee situation) has always been something that's really close to my heart." Lipa, 28, also shared that she won't allow anyone to deny her "identity". The 'Levitating' hitmaker said: "I read a lot of comments from people telling me that I don't have a country, I don't have an identity, Kosovo doesn't exist. I lived in Kosovo, I know the lives that were lost (during the war)." "So for somebody to deny me my identity and my experience, it's hard for me to stand back and not speak up about it. So that's something that I will always do."



Japanese girl group XG dish out high octane dance-party energy in 'New Dance'

Los Angeles | Agencies

The Japanese girl group XG are riding on the waves of high octane energy and all out dance-party mood as they have unveiled the music video for their latest track, 'New Dance' which is touted to be the lead track from their very first Mini Album/EP 'New DNA'.

The Seoul based Japanese dance pop maestros continue to stylistically experiment and look for ways to gradually evolve their sound, while still retaining their original sound.

The group is mainly known for their Hip-Hop, electronic and R&B sound signature, and while it is very much present here, there is also some experimental 70's dance pop in the mix, and a bit of a deviation from their old BTS style K-pop, instead reeling more towards modern day American pop.

'New Dance' is an uplifting dance track that features prominent guitar riffs and hi-hats, accompanied by a catchy chorus that adds color to the entire



song. The lyrics convey a message of enjoying yourself and dancing as if nobody is watching.

The first track taken from the Mini Album, 'Grl Gvng' saw XG adopting a techno-style steam punk flavour to accompany the track's sci-fi sound. The video saw them arriving from outer space.

Now 'New Dance', whose very theme is exploring life's offerings, goes on to highlight much of the beauty, harboured in sim-

ple things. The video, while showcasing the dance-party vibe of the song, also displays great scenes like a sunset beach, rooftops under clear blue skies, as well as venturing into the city and dancing in the streets, thus encapsulating the summer vibes of XG.

XG's new EP 'New DNA' is coming soon, as it will hit shelves and platforms on September 27, 2023, showcasing all their evolution.

Halle Berry to pay \$8,000 per month to former husband for child support

Los Angeles | Agencies

After years of marriage, Halle Berry and her husband Oliver Martinez have finalised their divorce after a bunch of hiccups and doubts. According to a Los Angeles court, the actress will have to pay \$8,000 every month in child support. Berry and Martinez, who share 9-year-old son Maceo, reached an agreement on their divorce and custody, as reported by E!Online. The custody case, which was filed in Los Angeles Superior Court on August 21, declared that the former couple will share joint legal and physical custody of their son. Berry, 57, has also agreed to pay Martinez \$8,000 a month in child support and 4.3 per cent of all income she makes above \$2 million.

The agreement also indicates that the 'Catwoman' actress will pay for Maceo's tuition, school uniforms and school supplies as long as he is in private school, \$8,000 to Martinez per



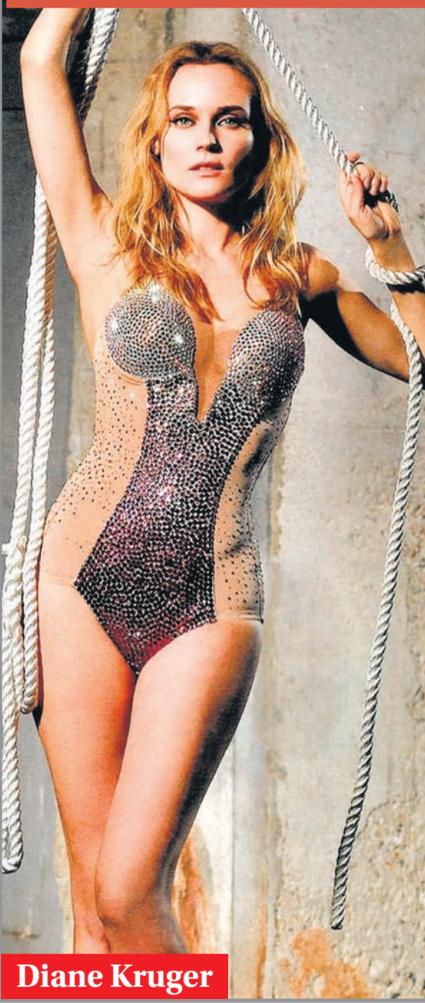
month as child support as well as "4.3 per cent of any income she receives above \$2,000,000."

For the custody agreement, it seems the two have worked out a schedule that gives half of the week, Monday to Wednesday, to one parent and the other half of the week,

Wednesday to Friday to the other, with alternating weekends. Time is also set aside to "make up time" if work commitments create an inconvenience.

Berry will also be responsible for the cost of Maceo's extracurricular activities, including soccer, which is specifically named in the documents. Berry is also footing the bill for Maceo's private school tuition, his extracurricular activities, his health insurance and his therapist. According to E!News, Martinez's legal team provided the following statement: "The public documents filed in the matter should speak for themselves. The parties wanted more clarity in regards to Maceo's schedule and each of their respective time with their son. The judgment was reached in mediation with the parties and their counsel."

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Diane Kruger



132nd Durand Cup

PHALGUNI SINGH'S GOAL TAKES NORTHEAST UNITED TO THE SEMIFINALS

Guwahati (Assam) | Agencies

Konsam Phalguni Singh's second-half goal was enough for ISL side NorthEast United FC to overcome a spirited Indian Army Football Team in the first quarterfinal of the 132nd Durand Cup played here at the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium here on Thursday.

Phalguni Singh scored the lone goal of the match in the 51st minute to seal victory for NorthEast United FC.

The Indian Army head coach, L. Anthony Ramesh made two changes to the starting lineup with captain Bhabindra Malla Thakuri back in the goal after suspension and Liton Shil in place of Alwin E.

The NorthEast head coach Juan Pedro Benali made five changes to his starting lineup with Soraisham Dinesh Singh, Gaurav Bora, Gani Ahmed Nigam, Radeem Tlang and Konsam Phalguni Singh coming in.

NorthEast United settled down quickly and controlled possession in the middle of the pitch. The Indian Army team was sticking to its plan of defending with numbers and attacking in the counterattacks.

Liton Shil tested NEUFC keeper Mirshad with a long-range effort and minutes later he combined with Rahul Ramakrishnan but the latter's effort whisked past the post.



NEUFC dominated the next exchanges and troubled the Army defence. Ibson Melo set up French midfielder Romain Philippoteaux inside the box and his curler came back off the crossbar. Rochharzela had a golden opportunity to give NEUFC the lead but the forward lashed his effort over the crossbar.

The Army pushed hard in the final minutes to find the equalizer as the coach brought on fresh legs to inject more pace. They piled the pressure on the NEUFC defence but the Highlanders soaked all the pressure to keep their one-goal lead intact and qualify for the semifinals.

EAST BENGAL AND GOKULAM GO HEAD TO HEAD IN QUARTERFINAL

Kolkata: Two former champions, Indian Super League (ISL) club East Bengal and I-League winners Gokulam Kerala, meet in the second quarterfinal of the 132nd Durand Cup on Friday, hoping to make the most of their chances and advance to the semis.

The clash at Kolkata's Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Kriangan (VYBK) will be between two teams that are at the opposite end of the spectrum.

East Bengal have won the Durand Cup 16 times, the joint highest, and led the head-to-head 3-2 in six previous encounters against the Malabarians.

The last game between the two ended in a draw but Gokulam ousted the Kolkata giants the last time they met in the semifinals of this very tournament, before going on to win it in 2019. Given the history and the footballing cultures that the two sides represent, it is sure to be a needle clash at the VYBK come Friday evening in front of roaring packed stands. On Thursday, both coaches shared their thoughts after final training ahead of the big day.

Chess World Cup

Praggnanandhaa goes down fighting to Carlsen in final



Chennai | Agencies

World No. 1 chess player by rating, Norwegian Grandmaster (GM) Magnus Carlsen (32) won the FIDE World Cup after defeating Indian prodigy GM R. Praggnanandhaa (18) in tie-breaker at Baku in Azerbaijan on Thursday.

Former world champion Carlsen clinched the title by winning the first tie-breaker game and then drawing the second one.

In the second tie-breaker, Carlsen with white pieces seemed to be in a hurry to wind up the game soon and went in for Queen exchange at the 17th move.

Soon after, the two players exchanged their bishops. At the end of the 22nd move, both players had four pawns, one rook, knight and a bishop each. The two then signed the peace treaty.

Playing with white pieces in the first game of the tie-breaker, Praggnanandhaa had an advantage in the ini-

tial stages and later maintained equality for a large part of the 47-move game.

However, the Indian player suffered a reversal from the 37th move onwards. At that point of time, the players were left with two rooks and minor pieces -- two knights for Carlsen and a knight and a light coloured bishop for Praggnanandhaa.

The Indian player was also much behind on the clock and resigned on the 47th move. It was the maiden World Cup title for Carlsen.

World Badminton Championship

Men's pair Satwik-Chirag advances to quarters; Treasa-Gayatri ousted in women's doubles

Copenhagen (Denmark) | Agencies

India's top men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty struggled their way into the quarterfinals at the BWF World Badminton Championships even as the women's combine of Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand crashed out to China's Chen Qing Chen and Jia Yi Fan in the pre-quarterfinals on Thursday.

The second-seeded Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, the Commonwealth Games men's doubles gold medallists, overcame the sixth-seeded Indonesians Leo Rolly Camando and Daniel Marthin of Indonesia in three games, winning 21-15, 19-21, 21-9 in 61 minutes. A bronze medallist in this event, the World No.2 Indian pair is hoping to win their maiden World

Championship title this time and overcame a loss in a tight second game to prevail over the Indonesians.

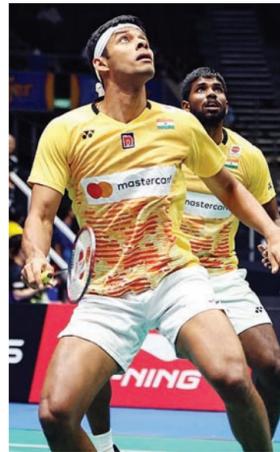
Hopes, however, ended for the women's doubles pair of Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand, which too made its mark at the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham by winning a maiden bronze medal. Treasa and Gayatri lost their pre-quarterfinal match to China's top-seeded pair of Chen Qing Chen and Jia Yi Fan 14-21, 9-21 in just 42 minutes at Court 1 at the Royal Arena in the Denmark capital.

In the men's doubles pre-quarterfinals, Satwik and Chirag took control from 12-10 in the first game and surged to a 17-11 lead. They went on to win the first game 21-15 to make a bright start in the match.

In the second game, after the lead changed hands a few times initially,

the Indians led 8-5 and then extended it to 11-8 before the Indonesians came back strongly to level scores and take a 14-11 lead. Satwik and Chirag narrowed the gap in the neck-and-neck battle and levelled the scores at 17-17. The scores were tied again at 18-all and 19-19 before the Indonesians won two successive points to win the game 21-19.

In the decider, the Indian pair jumped to a 3-1 lead and though the Indonesians levelled scores at 4-4, Satwik and Chirag opened a two-point lead and from 7-6 won the five successive points to take a 12-6 lead. They maintained their advantage and went on to win the game 21-9 to win the match and now await the winner of the match between Denmark's Anders Skaarup Rasmussen-Kim Ashtup and Malaysia's seventh-seeded Yi Ee Teo and Yew Siri Ong.



Messi's double assist powers Inter Miami to US Open Cup final

Cincinnati | Agencies

Lionel Messi registered two assists and converted a penalty kick as Inter Miami CF defeated FC Cincinnati 5-4 on penalties following a dramatic 3-3 draw to advance to the 2023 US Open Cup Final.

Miami will play Houston Dynamo in the final, scheduled on September 27 as the club looks to claim its second trophy of the year.

With Miami trailing 2-0 after the hour mark, reigning World Cup champion Lionel Messi twice connected with Leonardo Campana to force extra time on Wednesday night. The 2019 US Open Cup champion Josef Martinez then slotted the Herons ahead 3-2 in the 93rd minute,



only to have FC Cincinnati's Yuya Kubo score a 114th minute equalizer to send the match to the penalty kick tie-breaker. In the shootout, Miami goalkeeper Drake Callender saved the fifth-

round attempt from Cincinnati native Nick Hagglund, before Benjamin Cremaschi converted to send Inter Miami to its first US Open Cup Final and second championship match of 2023.

US Open

Alcaraz, Tiafoe among 'Stars Of The Open' exhibition event, raise money for Ukraine

New York | Agencies

World tennis stars Carlos Alcaraz, Frances Tiafoe and Matteo Berrettini and others banded together for 'Stars of the Open', an exhibition event in support of Ukrainian humanitarian relief.

And a sold-out crowd of 14,000 at Louis Armstrong Stadium on Wednesday night enjoyed some tennis hijinks in the headlining singles match as fan favorites Frances Tiafoe and world No. 1 Carlos Alcaraz traded strokes and advice.



There were US Open legends on the court, too, as nine-time US Open champion John McEnroe teamed up with No. 3 Jessica Pegula for an all-New Yorker team. They faced Argentina's 1990 US Open winner Gabriela Sabatini and Italian Berrettini, a former US Open semifinal-

ist. The fundraiser brought out celebrities beyond tennis, too. NBA star Jimmy Butler and two-time Latin Grammy winner Sebastian Yatra were also part of the event that raised \$320,000 towards the Ukraine Crisis Relief Fund. Butler served as a

ball crew member for part of the night and even played a few points with Alcaraz following the Spaniard's exhibition tie-break with Tiafoe.

Players were mic'd up throughout the festivities, providing several moments of laughter for those watching. A memorable moment was when Gael Monfils partnered his wife Elina Svitolina in mixed doubles against Americans Christopher Eubanks and Jennifer Brady to close the night.

The US Open main draw will be made on Thursday and action begins on August 28.

JOHN ISNER ANNOUNCES HE WILL RETIRE FROM TENNIS AFTER US OPEN

New Delhi: American tennis player John Isner has announced on social media that he will retire after playing at this year's US Open. His 17th consecutive appearance in his home major will be his last.

The 38-year-old at Flushing Meadows will draw to a close his illustrious career, during which he has won 16 ATP Tour titles, 488 tour-level matches and competed in the ATP Finals (in 2018). Isner will leave behind a legacy as one of the greatest servers in the history of the sport. According to ATP Stats, he holds the record for most career aces with 14,411. No other player has hit the 14,000-ace mark and only five have reached 10,000 aces.

The American finished inside the Top 20 of the year-end ATP Rankings for 10 consecutive years from 2010-19 and was the year-end No. 1 American eight times (2012-16 and 2018-20). He reached a career-high World No. 8 in July 2018 after making his first major semi-final at Wimbledon.



Shooting World Championship

Rajeshwari finishes fifth in trap, wins India's 7th Paris quota

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Rajeshwari Kumari became the second-ever Indian shooter to win an Olympic quota place in the Women's Trap event after she finished fifth in the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Championship (All Events) at Baku, Azerbaijan on Thursday.

Shooting in the Azerbaijan capital, after setting a national record score of 120 (beating her own record of 118) in the qualification round, India No.1 Rajeshwari finished with 19 hits from the first 30-targets of the six-woman 50-shot final to snare India's seventh Paris 2024 quota place in Shooting.



Chinese Taipei's Lin Yi Chun won gold with 40 hits to 39 of Italy's Jessica Rossi, the 2012 London Olympic Games winner and three-time world champion, the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) informed in a release on Thursday.

India thus ended their engagements in the Olympic events with one gold (10m Air Pistol Mixed Team) and two bronze (10m Air Rifle Women and 50m Rifle 3 Positions Men) medals and four (five if you consider the Air Rifle Mixed Team spot that they picked up with Mehuli's bronze) Paris 2024 Olympic quotas and seven finalists.

Fitness of K.L Rahul under the limelight as India begin conditioning camp of six days in Bengaluru: Report

Bengaluru | Agencies

As India's Asia Cup-bound players begin their six-day conditioning camp in the city ahead of the six-team event, how wicket-keeper-batter KL Rahul shapes up from a fitness perspective will be keenly witnessed.

During the Asia Cup squad announcement press conference in New Delhi on Monday, chief selector Ajit Agarkar said Rahul had recovered from a right thigh injury at the NCA but picked up a niggle unrelated to the original injury which could keep him out of the initial phase of the



Asia Cup.

As per a report in ESPNcricinfo, the NCA's medical team is believed to be happy with Rahul's batting workload but is carefully monitoring his wicketkeeping load. "He is understood to have complained of soreness after one of the practice matches organised by the NCA last

week," it said.

The report added that the six-day camp, which will be held at the Karnataka State Cricket Association's (KSCA) Three Ovals campus in Alur, will have fitness as a key focus area. "The camp also aims to serve as an exercise in team bonding before the focus shifts to the final stages of World Cup preparation," it added. On Thursday, 15 out of 18 Asia Cup-bound players will be tested on fitness parameters, with Sanju Samson, Jasprit Bumrah and Prashidh Krishna set to land in Bengaluru late on Thursday night after the T20I series against Ireland finished on Wednesday.

INDIAN WOMEN'S BLIND CRICKET TEAM MAKES HISTORY, ENTERS FINAL

Birmingham | Agencies

The Indian women's blind cricket team made history on Thursday by becoming the first team to qualify for the final of the International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA) World Games 2023 on the back of their stellar show here.

The Indian women's team qualified for the final with their third successive victory in the league phase, against Australia on Wednesday night.

Blind cricket made its debut in IBSA World Games last week with England and Australia playing the first match. When the Indian women's cricket team played their first match of the tournament on August 20, the Women In Blue



showed an all-round display of talent. In their opening match against Australia, India won the game by 8 wickets to kick off their campaign in

style. The women's blind cricket team restricted Australia to 59/6 and they chipped down the target quite easily in the end.

In the second match against England, India went all guns blazing and scored 268/2 in the allotted 20 overs with Gangavva H. smashing 117 in 60 balls. England lost the match by 185 runs.

In the third match on Wednesday, India thrashed Australia by 163 runs to continue their dominant display of cricket. The Indian women's blind cricket team has qualified for the finals and the title showdown will be played on Saturday. Before the finals, India will play its last league match against England on Thursday.

Meanwhile, in the men's game, India will play the semifinals on Friday. If the Indian team wins the semifinal clash, they will meet Pakistan in the finals of the IBSA World Games 2023.



69TH NATIONAL AWARDS

'Rocketry' wins Best Film; 'RRR', 'Gangubai Kathiawadi' shine in technical awards

Team Absolute | Mumbai

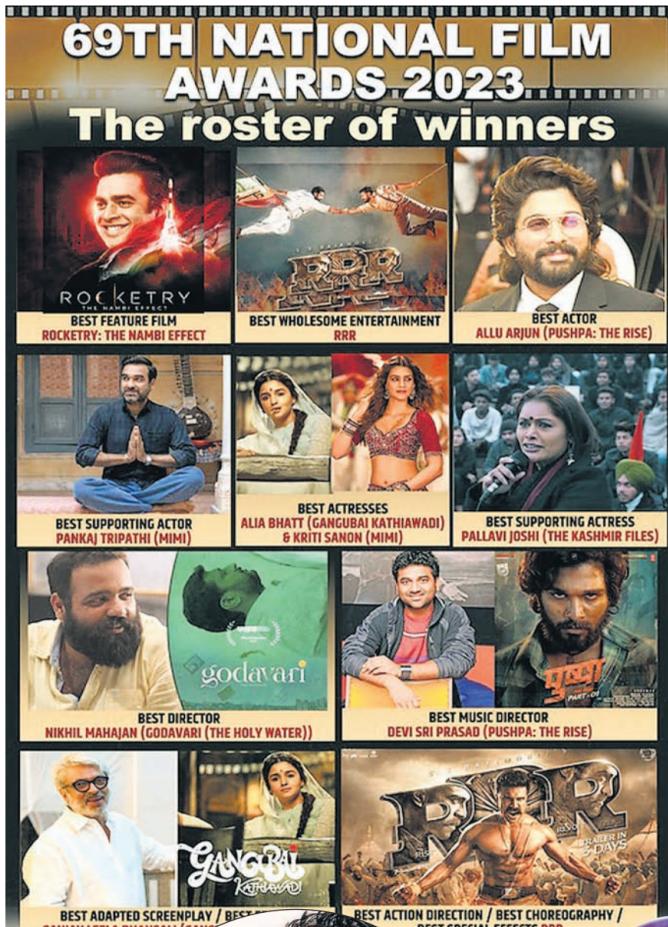
The 69th National Film Awards were announced at the National Media Centre in New Delhi on Thursday. Ahead of the announcement, the Chairperson and other jury members called on the Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Anurag Thakur and presented him with the selections for the Awards.

Best feature film award has been given to 'Rocketry: The Nambi Effect' and the Best Non-Feature Film has been bagged by 'Ek Tha Gaon' directed by Srishti Lakhera. 'The Kashmir Files' was feted with the Nargis Dutt Award for Best Feature Film on National Integration, while 'RRR' bagged the Award for Best Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment.

Allu Arjun has won the award for Best Actor for his stellar performance in the movie Pushpa (The Rise Part I) while Alia Bhatt and Kriti Sanon became joint winners of Best Actress Award for 'Gangubai Kathiawadi' and 'Mimi', respectively.

Here's the complete list of winners across non-feature and feature categories:

Best Feature Film: Rocketry
Best Director: Nikhil Mahajan, Godavari
Best Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment: RRR
Nargis Dutt Award for Best Feature Film on National Integration: The Kashmir Files
Best Actor: Allu Arjun, Pushpa
Best Actress: Alia Bhatt, Gangubai Kathiawadi and Kriti Sanon, Mimi
Best Supporting Actor: Pankaj Tripathi, Mimi
Best Supporting Actress: Pallavi Joshi, The Kashmir Files



Goldie Sohel's

Latest single is a heartfelt tribute to dogs

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Punjabi Singer Goldie Sohel's latest song 'Ghumakkad' is an ode to just how special dogs can be to humans and showing why a dog is really considered a person's best friend.

A song brimming with life and radiating positivity, the song is Goldie Sohel's own homage to dogs, who is a big animal lover and dog owner himself.

Talking about his latest tune, Goldie, who is married to singer Asees Kaur, said: "Ghumakkad" is a happy melody with a big heart. I've always been a passionate animal lover and had six dogs at my Guwahati home, and this song is dedicated to the travel-sized friends we call dogs. "It was quite a joyful experience composing and singing this single, and I am looking forward to fans loving this melody as much as we did," he added.

The song is indeed a simple, wholesome and light-hearted melody whose biggest strength is in fact its simplicity, as it is able to highlight the emotions behind Goldie's own voice. Simple instrumentation, with a cheery atmosphere, the song also features production that highlights the song's mood, being very open and very clear. Derived from the Hindi word meaning "wanderer", 'Ghumakkad' is a lively tune, which despite its positive nature has an emotional side to it, which pertains to everyone, extending beyond dog or animal owners as it tells just how vast life is, how there is to really explore beyond our four

walls and the great, unpredictable adventure that is life. But of course, dogs are an integral part of the song, and the music video for 'Ghumakkad' makes sure that point is not overlooked. Very well produced and extremely wholesome in nature, the video shows a very relatable day to day life of an average person.

A charming reflection of the song, the video beautifully portrays the joy of dogs when they hop into a car with their owners who become their best friends and their sheer joy at being with them.

The video stars actress Shruti Bakshi alongside the cuddly and absolutely adorable golden retriever Messi. The video shows Shruti taking a break from her hectic life and driving along with Messi to the beautiful landscape of Alleppey in Kerala.

As much as the song showcases Shruti, the video showcases Messi's bright energy and his energetic ever positive spirit of adventure which is symbolic of how even in the most tiring of times, dogs can show us what to do when fatigue overcomes as well with their vibe alone.

The Deepak Rawat directorial also has a special appearance by Goldie Sohel.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Singer Neeti Mohan has recalled memories of her audition days, reminding her of the challenges she set to return featuring Himesh Reshammiya, Neeti Mohan, Anu Malik as judges and Aditya Narayan as the host. While candidates from across the country are auditioning for a spot in the top 12, a select few have captivated the judges with their distinctive voices and passion for singing.

One such contestant is Akarshit Wadhwan from Amritsar whose rendition of 'Dil Haara' mesmerised one and all. Listening to his performance, Neeti said: "Since you are the first contestant, we could sense a slight nervousness at the beginning of your performance, but I must say, you managed to overcome your fear and performed the rest of the song with all your heart. I love your voice and it is evident that you have been learning music since your childhood. Missing a beat or two at the beginning is something I completely understand, because everyone has a fear of presenting themselves in front of cameras on stage for the first time."

"Just like you, I have given auditions at the start of my career and making up for it in the course of your performance. You did that beautifully and blew us away with your rendition," she added.

Kartik Aaryan 'enjoyed playing this emotionally charged character' in 'Satyaprem Ki Katha'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

As their film 'Satyaprem Ki Katha' is premiering digitally after a great run in theatres, actors Kartik Aaryan and actress Kiara Advani have poured their hearts out on why the movie and their characters mean so much to them. Kartik said: "Satyaprem is one of my most loved characters till date and is very close to my heart. The journey of bringing Sattu to life on screen has been an incredible and enriching experience. It was a one-of-a-kind role - who is simple, honest, and madly in love." "I thoroughly enjoyed playing this emotionally charged character and I am eternally thankful to the incredible team behind the film." Kiara added: "Satyaprem Ki Katha holds a very special place in my heart. Embracing and portraying Katha's complexities and vulnerabilities, was quite the challenge yet a rewarding experience. The amount of affection and admiration that I have received and am still receiving for Katha is more than I can ever imagine." "It was absolutely amazing to collaborate with the entire film team. I am grateful to my director Sameer Vidwans who brought out my best performance as Katha." "Satyaprem Ki Katha follows Satyaprem (Kartik) in his quest for love, eventually falling in love with Katha (Kiara). Their journey from laughter, friendship, and finally marriage hits a rocky terrain when Satyaprem confronts a major "truth", which tests their bond. "With Satyaprem Ki Katha, we knew that we wanted to bring out an imperative subject, blended with a dose of entertainment," said director Sameer Vidwans. "I wanted to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Kartik and Kiara who embraced Sattu and Katha as their own and for the powerhouses Sajid Sir, Shareen and Kishor Sir for entrusting our poignant story."



MISSING SONG BEATS DOESN'T MEAN YOU ARE NOT A GOOD SINGER: NEETI MOHAN



Pragya Jaiswal

Pankaj Tripathi dedicates his award to his late father

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Pankaj Tripathi, who is currently receiving good response to his recent release 'OMG 2', has been feted with the Best Supporting Actor award for his work in 'Mimi' at the announcement of 69th National Film Awards in Delhi on Thursday.

The actor, who is grieving the loss of his father, has dedicated his award to his late father.

He said in a statement: "This is unfortunately a period of loss and grieving for me. If Babuji was around, he would have been really happy for me. When I first got the National award mention, he was very proud and pleased". The actor also congratulated actress Kriti Sanon, who shared the Best Actress Award with Alia Bhatt for her film 'Mimi'. He further mentioned: "This National Award I dedicate to him and his spirit. I'm who I'm today because of him. I'm at a loss of words due to this time but I'm happy and grateful to the team. Kriti also has won the Best Actress, so a huge congratulations to her." The winners of the 69th National Film Awards were announced at the National Media Centre in Delhi on Thursday.

