

absolute india

VOL. 10, ISSUE 269, MUMBAI | TUESDAY, AUGUST 08, 2023 | ₹5 | PAGE 08

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM MUMBAI, BHOPAL AND NEW DELHI

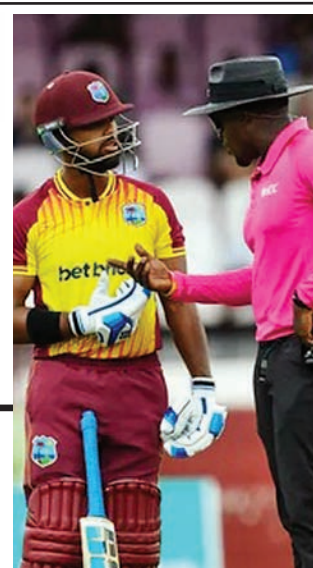
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SC constitutes committee of 3 women ex-judges, appoints ex-IPS to monitor Manipur probe
TO BUILD A SENSE OF TRUST
Punjab and Haryana High Court stays demolition in Nuh

The Supreme Court on Monday said that it will constitute a three-judge committee headed by Justice Gita Mittal, former Chief Justice of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court to look into "humanitarian" issues like relief, rehabilitation, remedial, etc., in the violence-hit Manipur.

The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Monday restrained the Haryana government from the ongoing demolition drive in Nuh district that witnessed communal violence last week.

Team Absolute | New Delhi
A bench comprising Chief Justice of India D. Y. Chandrachud and Justices J. B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said that the effort of setting up such a committee is to restore a sense of rule of law in the northeastern state.



It said that each of these 42 SITs will have at least one investigating officer, not below the rank of Inspector, from another state. During the hearing, Attorney General R. Venkataramani submitted before the top court that the state government is handling the issue at a very mature level.

and is expected to be made available on the website of the Supreme Court by the day end.

MEITEI BODY URGE PM NOT TO DIVIDE MANIPUR AS DEMANDED BY TRIBALS

New Delhi/Imphal: A day before the tribal leaders' meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi to press for their demand for creation of a separate state for tribals, the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), apex body of the Meitei community, on Monday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi not to divide Manipur and to introduce the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

and were used by the suspects during the communal clashes. Advocate Mohammad Arshad, appearing for the victims in the matter, alleged that the demolition drive has been ongoing in Nuh since August 3 without any prior notice to the occupants.

The restraining order is yet to be released and the matter will be taken up post-lunch on Monday.



Mazar set on fire in Gurugram

Gurugram: Unidentified individuals set fire to a mazar in Gurugram's Khandas village early on Monday, police said. A complaint was lodged by the mazar's caretaker Ghasite Ram. This incident occurred while Section 144 was in effect in Gurugram, a measure put in place due to communal clashes originating from the Nuh district and spreading to various parts of the city and nearby regions in the previous week.

CONGRESS DUBS DELHI SERVICES BILL AS UNCONSTITUTIONAL

Team Absolute | New Delhi
The Congress on Monday hit back at the government over the Delhi Services Bill in Rajya Sabha dubbing it as completely unconstitutional. Congress said that BJP approach is to control everything, by hook or crook and usually more by crook than by hook.



and operated by NCT budgets, subject to the Home Ministry for appointment of its heads? This government, and this bill does it all! Something not done earlier, Singhvi said. Singhvi, who is also a noted lawyer said: "Why has nobody done it earlier? Because it is the habit of this 'control freak sarkar' (gov-ernment) whose visiting card is vendetta identity badge is of a graceless and fuming loser, whose approach is to control, control n control everything, by hook or crook and usually more by crook than by hook. "This bill is completely unconstitutional, it is fundamentally anti-democratic, and it is a front-term assault on the regional voice and aspirations of the people of Delhi. It violates all principles of federalism, all norms of civil service accountability and all models of assembly-based democracy," the Congress leader said.

Rahul Gandhi's Lok Sabha membership restored

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Lok Sabha membership of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was on Monday restored by the Lok Sabha Secretariat, three days after the Supreme Court stayed his conviction in a defamation case.



in a defamation case had come on August 4, which was a Friday, a weekend. However, Monday being a working day, the decision was immediately taken by the Speaker's office.

ED probe uncovers alleged flow of Chinese funds to Indian journalists

Team Absolute | New Delhi
Several journalists in India allegedly received funds from China, Enforcement Directorate (ED) sources said on Monday. This revelation came to light during an investigation into a PMLA case related to NewsClick studio. However, as of now, the ED has not made any official statement regarding the matter. As per the sources, an investigation was conducted under the PMLA into PPK NewsClick Studio for an alleged fraudulent infusion of foreign funds amounting to Rs 38.05 crore over a span of three years.



several documents. The ED's case is based on an FIR lodged by the Economic Offence Wing (EOW) of Delhi Police in August 2020. The name of activist Gautam Navlakha emerged during the course of the investigation, leading the agency to question him as well. ED's investigation revealed that Prabir Purkayastha allegedly paid Rs 20 lakh to Navlakha. It was also discovered that Navlakha and Purkayastha established a firm in association with an American arms supplier. The ED found that a few American-based firms - Justice and Education Fund Inc, GSPAN LLC, and Tricontinental Ltd Inc -- provided funds to News Click. All three firms are registered at the same address in the US. Additionally, a Brazil-based firm, Centro Popular Demidas, also sent money to NewsClick. NewsClick has called the ED probe a "fictitious account".

DRUNKARD STRIPS WOMAN ON ROAD IN HYDERABAD

Hyderabad: In a shocking incident, an inebriated man stripped a woman passing on the road at Balaji Nagar on the outskirts of Hyderabad, police said on Monday. The accused, identified as Peddamaraiah, not only misbehaved with the woman but also stripped her publicly in the incident that took place around 8.30 p.m. on Sunday near Balaji Nagar bus stand under the limits of Jawahar Nagar Police Station of Rachakonda Police Commissionerate. Peddamaraiah, a labourer and habitual drunkard, was accompanied by his mother and shockingly, she did nothing to stop him. Some passersby filmed the incident on their mobile phones instead of intervening to save the woman. He misbehaved with the woman by touching her inappropriately while she was walking on the road. As the woman tried to save herself by pushing him and briskly walking away, an enraged Peddamaraiah pounced on her and started tearing off her clothes. His mother did nothing to save the woman. As another woman, riding a bike, stopped to question him, the accused also tried to attack her. The victim stood drooped on the road for about 15 minutes. After the accused left the place, some people came forward to cover her and informed the police. On a complaint by the victim, aged 28, police registered a case and arrested the accused.

DIAL installs 12 multi-product feminine hygiene vending machines at IGI

Team Absolute | New Delhi
With an aim to enhance women's hygiene accessibility at Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport, the Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) on Monday said that 12 multi-product feminine hygiene vending machines have been strategically installed right outside all women's restrooms at Terminal 2. "These state-of-the-art vending machines offer an array of essential products for women, catering to their diverse hygiene needs. In the future, this initiative will be extended to Terminal 3 and Terminal 1 as well, ensuring that women travellers across the airport have easy access to these essential products," said DIAL in a statement issued on Monday. "The newly installed vending machines are revolutionary in their design, offering a wide range of sanitary products, including menstrual cups, tampons, sanitary pads, toilet seat covers, intimate wipes, and panty liners," said a DIAL official.

Price of tomatoes, chilli heated up veg and non-veg thalis by 34%, 13% in July

Chennai | Agencies
According to the report, in July, the cost of cooking a vegetarian thali at home stood at Rs 33.7 (June rate Rs 26.3) whereas the cost of non-vegetarian home meal was at Rs 66.8 (June rate Rs 60). According to CRISIL, a vegetarian thali comprises roti, vegetables (onion, tomato, and potato), rice, dal, curd, and salad. For a non-vegetarian thali, chicken has been considered instead of dal. Broiler prices for July 2023 are estimated. CRISIL said out of the 34 per cent rise in the cost of vegetarian meals, 25 per cent can be attributed to the 233 per cent hike in tomato price last month. In June, the tomato price was Rs 33/kg and shot up to Rs 110/kg in July.

The cost of preparing a vegetarian thali at home has gone up by 34 per cent while that of a non-vegetarian thali went up by 13 per cent in July as compared to the input prices that prevailed in June 2023, CRISIL said in a report. Tomatoes aside, the other ingredients that heated up the cost side last month as compared to June were the prices of onion that went up by 16 per cent, potato by 9 per cent, chilli 69 per cent, and cumin by 16 per cent. However, given the lower quantities of these ingredients used in a thali, their cost contribution remains lower than some of the vegetable crops, CRISIL said. On the other hand, the cost of a non-vegetarian thali rose at a slower pace as the price of broilers, comprising more than 50 per cent of the cost, likely declined 3-5 per cent on-month in July, the report notes. "A 2 per cent on-month decline in the price of vegetable oil provided some respite from the increase in cost of both thalis," the report said.



PM Modi to hold meeting with Northeast NDA MPs

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to hold a meeting with NDA MPs from northeast on Monday evening. The meeting will be attended by BJP Members of Parliament and those from its allies. Assam BJP MP Pradhan Barua told reporter that the Prime Minister will address all NDA MPs. However, the topic of discussions are not yet known. National BJP president J. P. Nadda, Union Ministers Sarbananda Sonowal, Kiren Rijiju and Nitin Gadkari will also attend the meeting. PM Modi has already had six cluster talks with NDA lawmakers from various states. Notably, the Central government has given particular attention to the Northeast since BJP came to power.





DELHI HC SEEKS CENTRE'S STAND ON PIL AGAINST 'ILLEGALLY' CONSTRUCTED RELIGIOUS STRUCTURES

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi High Court on Monday sought Centre and Arvind Kejriwal-led government's response on a plea by five seeking direction for removal of illegal and unauthorised constructed religious structures from public spaces here. A division bench of Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Saurabh Banerjee issued notice and sought a stand of the Central government through the Ministry of Home Affairs, Delhi government, Delhi Police, Public Works Department and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi in the Public Interest Litigation (PIL). The PIL by five petitioners - Preet Singh, Sunil Antil, Neeraj Chauhan, Rajesh and Ashok Kumar Mittal - says that illegally constructed mosques, mazar and dargah may give rise to communal disharmony. "...such illegal activities are rapidly increasing with intention to capture more and more land illegally and unauthorisedly in the name of pseudo religion due to which the national integrity and national interest is being jeopardised," the plea states. It says that the mosques, mazar and dargah in question, illegally constructed on public land, are in violation of the directions of the Supreme Court, and the situation is so alarming that such activities might give rise to "communal disharmony and its affecting public as well as law and order, but the respondents are negligent in performing their constitutional responsibilities and duties as no action is being taken against such illegal construction for political reasons thereby giving a jolt to the secular fabric of the Constitution." The PIL says that such illegal constructions lead to road accidents. "The Mazars at public roads are creating day to day trouble for the pedestrians. The persons holding the charge of mazars spread 'Chadar' and coerce the public to pay donations and in this way a huge amount is collected by adopting all nefarious acts. The matter becomes worse on Thursdays when the organisers collect huge amount of money creating superstitions in the mind of public. On Thursday evening even some times road is blocked by the organisers. Quwwals are organised and traffic is obstructed. The unsocial elements take advantage of the situation and a number of mishappenings including outraging the modesty of women occur," the plea says. The plea sought for the court to issue an appropriate writ. "...directing the Respondents to ensure that no religious or any type of constructions in the shape of Mosque, Mazaar, Dargah, Graves or any other religious constructions whatsoever name it may be called, are constructed at public land, parks, playgrounds, roads, highways or any other place of public utility," it says.



order, but the respondents are negligent in performing their constitutional responsibilities and duties as no action is being taken against such illegal construction for political reasons thereby giving a jolt to the secular fabric of the Constitution." The PIL says that such illegal constructions lead to road accidents. "The Mazars at public roads are creating day to day trouble for the pedestrians. The persons holding the charge of mazars spread 'Chadar' and coerce the public to pay donations and in this way a huge amount is collected by adopting all nefarious acts. The matter becomes worse on Thursdays when the organisers collect huge amount of money creating superstitions in the mind of public. On Thursday evening even some times road is blocked by the organisers. Quwwals are organised and traffic is obstructed. The unsocial elements take advantage of the situation and a number of mishappenings including outraging the modesty of women occur," the plea says. The plea sought for the court to issue an appropriate writ. "...directing the Respondents to ensure that no religious or any type of constructions in the shape of Mosque, Mazaar, Dargah, Graves or any other religious constructions whatsoever name it may be called, are constructed at public land, parks, playgrounds, roads, highways or any other place of public utility," it says.

Rahul to be first from Congress to speak on no-confidence motion in LS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi is likely to speak as the first leader of the grand old party to speak on the no-confidence motion in Lok Sabha on Tuesday. Party sources said that the Rahul Gandhi will be the first leader of the Congress to speak on the no-confidence motion moved by the INDIA parties in the Lok Sabha. Meanwhile, speaking to media, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, when asked if Rahul Gandhi will speak on the no-confidence motion in the lower House, he said, "He will definitely speak in the Lok Sabha." The membership of Rahul Gandhi was restored on Monday by the Lok Sabha secretariat, three days after the Supreme Court on Friday stayed his conviction in the Modi surname remarks defamation case.



The INDIA parties have moved a no-confidence motion against the BJP government over the Manipur issue. The Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) has been

demanding for a detailed statement by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in both houses of Parliament. The INDIA parties have also been demanding for a detailed discussion in the Manipur issue in Parliament.

Maha NCP chief Jayant Patil denies meeting Amit Shah

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) State President Jayant Patil on Monday denied that he had any meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Pune on Sunday and Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar has confirmed the same. Ajit Pawar, who heads the breakaway NCP faction, said that Patil was in Mumbai with NCP President Sharad Pawar and not in Pune as speculated. Patil himself dismissed the reports that he had met Shah and was now on way to joining the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). When asked, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP and Chief Spokesperson Sanjay Raut scoffed at the reports and said that Patil is a true NCP



loyalist and would not make any such moves, as claimed. BJP's Deputy CM Devendra Fadnis also joined in and asserted that there was no Shah-Patil meeting as claimed and termed it as 'rumour-mongering' by some persons. Since Sunday, there were persistent unconfirmed reports by some media that

Patil called on Shah at a five-star hotel during his daylong visit to Pune. The reports also contended that Patil was unhappy in the NCP and was considering options - five weeks after the vertical split in which Ajit Pawar walked out of the party and joined the ruling Shiv Sena-BJP government as a Deputy CM.

Delhi court posts defamation case against Raj CM for Aug 21, directs to furnish bail bonds

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi court on Monday posted for August 21 Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat's defamation complaint filed against Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot for 'misleading statements' against him in connection with the Sanjivani Credit Cooperative Society scam. Before the court of Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (ACMM) Harjeet Singh Jaspal of Rouse Avenue Court, Gehlot appeared virtually for the hearing since sessions/revision court's Special Judge M K Nagpal had, on August 1, said that his physical and personal appearance before the magistrate on August 7 may not be practically convenient and necessary. "It is pertinent to mention here that vide order dated August 1, 2023, Revision Court (Ld. AS) Special Judge, CBI-09) has directed this court to allow the accused to



appear through VC and has further directed that this court shall not insist on the accused furnishing bail bonds today," ACMM Jaspal noted.

Accordingly, he directed the accused to furnish bail bonds on the next date of hearing and appear in person for the said purpose, unless otherwise directed by the revision court. The magistrate then posted the matter for hearing on August 21 for scrutiny of documents in the case. "...let the matter be taken up before this court on 21.08.2023. Be kept for scrutiny of documents/further proceedings," the judge said. When Gehlot had moved to sessions court against the magistrate's order, which had, on July 6, issued summons to him in the case, and had ordered him to appear on August 7, Judge Nagpal had refused to stay the proceedings. The judge saw no ground for staying the proceedings. The judge had directed the ACMM not to insist on the physical presence of Gehlot on August 7, and permitted him to join the proceedings through Video Conferencing (VC).

HEAVY SHOWERS AHEAD FOR NORTH, NORTHEAST INDIA: IMD

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Monday forecast isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall in Uttarakhand, north Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Sikkim and over Northeast India during next three days. Subdued rainfall activity is expected over the remaining parts of the country during next one week. In a bulletin released by the weather forecast agency, it said that in Northwest India, there will be light to moderate scattered rainfall with some fairly widespread activity, including isolated instances of heavy rainfall over Uttarakhand from till Thursday. "Uttar Pradesh will experience similar conditions from Monday to Wednesday, while Himachal Pradesh is expected to see this on Monday. East Uttar Pradesh could encounter isolated heavy rainfall from Monday to Wednesday, and Uttarakhand along with West Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday. The rest of the region is anticipated to have subdued rainfall for the next week," said the IMD. Moving to East India, there will be



light to moderate fairly widespread to widespread rainfall, with isolated episodes of heavy rainfall. "West Bengal and Sikkim are likely to experience this on Monday and Tuesday, while Bihar and Jharkhand will have these condi-

tions from Monday to Wednesday," the IMD predicted. "Gangetic West Bengal could see isolated very heavy rainfall Monday, and Bihar on Monday and Tuesday," the weather agency said.

AUTHENTIC FLAVOR OF ITALIAN FOOD ALONG WITH LIVE BAND

Jaipur: If you are fond of Italian food, then enjoy the rich Italian menu here at Holiday Inn from 4th August in the Italian Food Festival "Gusto Italiano". Here you will get to experience the flavour of food along with some soothing music. If you're a fan of pasta, pizza and lasagna, don't hold yourself back and try Roadhouse Bar & Grill. The premium hospitality address is hosting a 10-day food festival, where you will get a chance to savor a variety of authentic Italian cuisine prepared by expatriate Chef Ramesh along with the in-house culinary team. Seafood Risotto with Sea Bass, Fresh Homemade Pasta, Pumpkin and Sage Stuffing Chocolate Ravioli Pasta and much more.

CISF constable in Visakhapatnam suspected to be honey-trapped by Pak woman

Visakhapatnam | Agencies

A constable of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) in Andhra Pradesh's Visakhapatnam is suspected to have fallen in a Pakistani honey-trap. Kapil Kumar, deployed in the security wing at Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, had allegedly developed friendship with a woman called Tamisha over social media. Suspecting his movements, the officials began questioning him. They seized his mobile phone and sent it for forensic analysis. The CISF lodged a complaint with Steel Plant Police Station for further investigation. The police registered a case against him under the Official Secrets Act and began a probe. Various agencies have joined the investigation as the case is linked to national security. They were trying to find out if he had provided any sensitive information to the Pakistani woman. Visakhapatnam is the headquarters of Eastern Naval Command of the Indian Army. Kapil Kumar has been serving in the security wing of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant since 2002. He had earlier served at Bharat Dynamics Limited in Hyderabad.



Minor girl gang raped for 28 days by 6 people in Bihar's Muzaffarpur

Patna | Agencies

A 13-year-old girl was kidnapped and gang raped for 28 days by six people in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district, an official said. On the evening of August 5, the accused called the victim's mother and asked to take her from Saraiya Chowk. An FIR under IPC section of 366A and the POCSO Act has been registered and the district police is conducting raids different locations to arrest the accused. In a written complaint, the victim's mother alleged that the accused from Siswan village under Saraiya police station came in a car and kidnapped her daughter on July 9. "On July 9, I lodged the written complaint against the accused but the district police did not take any action. On August 5, I received a call from the



accused at 8 p.m., he asked me to pick my daughter from Saraiya Chowk. When I reached there, I found her abandoned. I took her home and informed the police about the incident," she said in the complaint. According to the police, the victim came in contact with the accused on Facebook. After she was kidnapped on July 9, she was taken to an undisclosed location and

held captive for the next 28 days. "We have registered an FIR under IPC section 366A and the POCSO Act. We have also recorded the statement of the victim before the duty magistrate under section 164 and conducted her medical examination. She has given the identifications of the accused. Raids are on to nab them," said Vijay Kumar Singh, SHO of town police station MUzaffarpur.

ODISHA EOW BUSTS PAN-INDIA CRYPTO PONZI SCAM, TWO ARRESTED

Bhubaneswar | Agencies

The Economic Offence Wing (EOW) of Odisha police has unearthed a pan-India crypto currency-based Ponzi scam involving money of more than Rs 1000 crore, a police official said on Monday. The EOW has arrested the head of STA Crypto Token namely Gurtej Singh Sidhu (40), from Sri-Ganganagar, Rajasthan and its Odisha unit head Nirod Das. Sidhu is a native of Faridkot, Punjab and Nirod belongs to Bhadrak district of Odisha. Sidhu was frequently changing his location in places like Goa, Lonavala, Mumbai, Delhi, Faridkot, Bhatinda, Hanumangadh and Sri Ganganagar. A team of EOW led by DSP Sasmita Sahoo was tracking his movement and finally able to arrest him, said an EOW official. Acting on an intelligence input that a crypto currency-based Ponzi scam is being run in Odisha especially in Bhadrak, Balasore, Bhubaneswar, Mayurbhanj, Jajpur, Kendrapada and Keonjhar districts, the EOW has conducted an enquiry. During the investigation, the EOW found that STA through some upline members are very active in these dis-



tricts and they have been using various propaganda tools to persuade people to join in this scheme and earn huge money in a very short time. The members have started using the STA Token like a legal tender in their day to day business. It is estimated that more than 10,000 people from Odisha have already been mem-

bers of this scheme. This Ponzi scheme has more than 2 lakh members (Pan India) mainly in the states like Punjab, Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand, Haryana, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Assam, the official informed. STA (Solar Techno Alliance) was launched in September 2021. In its

website & social media accounts it claims to be a one stop solar technology service. Though STA is not authorized by RBI or any other authorities to collect deposits, it runs a huge Ponzi (Pyramid) scheme in the garb of crypto tokens. The firm uses the socially popular terms like green energy, solar technology etc. to mask its crypto-Ponzi scam. The STA website is hosted from Iceland but its business and activity is limited to India only and it is headed by one David Gez, a young Hungarian (Europe) national who has visited India multiple times. According to the EOW, both David and Gurtej Sidhu have travelled to many places in India including Odisha and have attended various STA programs. They are always seen using luxurious lifestyles like star hotels, expensive cars, fancy clothes, surrounded by bouncers, hero's welcome in meetings etc. The Ponzi firm conducts several publicity programs at various places to spread its membership. They use fancy hotels, motivational speakers, music, lunch/dinner etc. in such meetings to brainwash future members.



SC STAYING RAHUL GANDHI'S CONVICTION IN DEFAMATION CASE EXPOSES CENTRE'S 'VINDICTIVE POLITICS': SHIV SENA (UBT)

"There shouldn't be hatred in society": Top RSS leader

▶ THE SHIV SENA (UBT) ON MONDAY CLAIMED THE SUPREME COURT ORDER STAYING CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI'S CONVICTION IN A 2019 CRIMINAL DEFAMATION HAS EXPOSED THE UNION GOVERNMENT'S "VINDICTIVE POLITICS", A NEWS AGENCY REPORTED.



criminal defamation case over his Modi surname remark and sentenced to two-year imprisonment to stop him from contesting the Lok Sabha polls, the Marathi daily claimed. A punishment for two years and above automatically disqualifies a lawmaker. The Supreme Court on Friday stayed Rahul Gandhi's conviction, paving the way for restoration of his Lok Sabha membership. Rahul Gandhi's Lok Sabha membership was restored on Monday. The Lok Sabha Secretariat issued a notification announcing his disquali-

fication has been revoked and his membership restored. Rahul Gandhi represents Wayanad in the Lok Sabha. "The Supreme Court studied properly the decisions of lower courts over the disqualification of Rahul Gandhi as Lok Sabha member and then gave its decision...the court's decision has exposed the vindictive politics of the Union government," the editorial in 'Saamana' claimed. It is clear that Rahul Gandhi would give a tough fight (to political opponents) in the 2024 Lok Sabha elec-

tions and topple the "tyrant" government in the national capital Delhi, it said. Rahul Gandhi was convicted and sentenced to two-year imprisonment to restrict him from contesting the next Lok Sabha election, it claimed. "Purnesh Modi was used as a front-man to file the defamation case (against Gandhi). The SC exposed the lie of the applicant," the editorial said. The only objective of the (Surat) court was to disqualify Rahul Gandhi, it claimed. Neither the Surat court nor the Gujarat High Court gave any reason behind the sentence of two-year imprisonment to Gandhi. The Supreme Court pointed out this fact and gave its decision, the Marathi daily said. The editorial also claimed Prime Minister Narendra Modi performed a "gimmick" by bowing before the Lok Sabha steps (nine years ago), but since then justice, truth, logic and Constitution are defeated on a daily basis. "There is suppression of truth, justice and morality from the land of Gujarat, but the Supreme Court has not remained a mere spectator," it added.

Team Absolute | Nagpur

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale has said ideological opposition and dissent are different things, but there should not be personal hatred while living in society. Hosabale was addressing a gathering during the inaugural ceremony of Dattaji Didolkar's birth centenary celebrations here on Sunday. Didolkar was an RSS leader and founder member of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP). Hosabale said Didolkar maintained cordial relations and respected the views of others without compromising on his ideology. "There can be opposition to ideology. Ideological opposition is a different thing, but one should not bear opposition at the personal level in society. When we live in society, we should not have enmity against each other, but live a simple life on the principles of humanity and justice," he added. Hosabale said Dattopant Thengdi, founder of the Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh, had very cordial relations with many Communist leaders while working for the rights of labourers, "which is taught to us by Sangh". "Ideological opposition is a different thing. There can be dissent. But, no one has taught us to live with hatred for each other in society."



People like Dattaji have taught us this discernment and to have a big heart," the RSS leader said. Speaking on the occasion, BJP MP and Union minister Nitin Gadkari recalled his long association with Mr Didolkar during his Vidyarthi Parishad days. "Dattaji always stood behind workers and was like a guardian for workers," he said.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

An editorial in the Shiv Sena (UBT) mouthpiece 'Saamana' said Rahul Gandhi is expected to give a tough fight to political opponents during the Lok Sabha polls due next year. Rahul Gandhi was convicted by a court at Surat in Gujarat in the 2019

Train carnage: RPF constable's police remand extended till Aug 11

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai magistrate on Monday extended, till August 11, the police custody of a Railway Protection Force constable Chetan Singh who had killed his supervisor and three passengers on a running train on July 31. The Government Railway Police, which is investigating the case, produced him before the court after his initial remand ended Monday, and sought an additional seven days remand as it wanted to scan CCTV footage, identify more witnesses, etc. However, the magistrate only allowed an extension till August 11. The chilling incident took on board the Jaipur-Mumbai Superfast Express on July 31 morning, in Palghar as the train sped



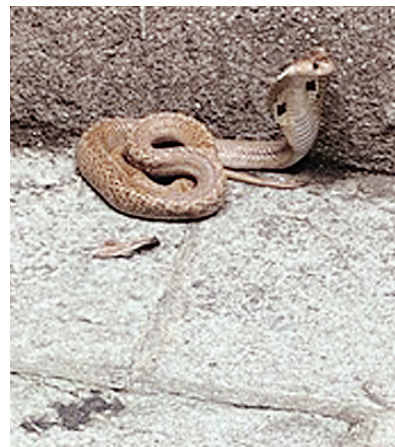
towards Mumbai and Singh was finally caught at Mira Road station in Thane. After investigations and scanning certain videos on his alleged hate-comments against the minorities after the killings, the GRP added the Indian Penal Code Section 153 (A) for promoting enmity between different groups on r. In the incident, Singh shot dead his immediate boss RPF ASI Tikaram Meena, and three passen-

gers: Syed Saifullah of Hyderabad (Telangana), Asghar A. Shaikh, 48, of Madhubani (Bihar), and Abdulquader M. Bhanpurawala, 62 of Nalasopara (Palghar in Maharashtra). Singh was nabbed after he jumped off the train near Mira Road station along with his weapon and later arrested late that evening, and a magistrate sent him to a week's police remand on August 1.

DEADLY COBRA RESCUED FROM THACKERAY HOME

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A highly venomous and angry cobra was rescued from Shiv Sena (UBT) President and ex-Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's bungalow, 'Matoshri' in Bandra east, as his family heaved a sigh of relief, an official said here on Monday. On Sunday afternoon, there was a frantic call to the Wild Life Animal Protection & Rescue Association (WLAPRA) activist and snake-friend Atul Kamble, who lives nearby, that a snake was slithering around in the compound. "I immediately rushed there with my gear and checked the entire premises. Finally I located it hiding, very scared and trembling behind a water tank in the bungalow compound," Kamble, 34, told reporter of his rescue mission. Aided by his 15-year experience and rescuing over 9,000 snakes and other reptiles in the city, Kamble caught the 4-foot-long cobra and placed it in an open space. "It was surrounded by a large and



excited crowd, it seemed to be in an aggressive mood, so I had to calm it down... After the people retreated some distance away, it relaxed and then opened its hood in a 'striking' position to convey that he is the 'Boss' there," smiled Kamble. The entire operation lasted a nail-biting 15-20 minutes with the Thackeray household and others gawking as Kamble tricked the cobra



into his bag. Then he informed the Thane Forest Division's Round Officer (Borivali-Bandra) Roshan Shinde and as per the rules, the cobra was released back into its natural habitat. A relieved and grinning 'Tiger' Thackeray personally came out to thank and appreciate Kamble for his efforts. Kamble said that many snakes have been displaced by the ongoing

Mumbai Metro lines works, and there are many complaints - almost 3-4 dozen daily - of snakes sneaking into residential complexes, homes or offices. He cautioned that after the Mumbai Metro works are over, there may be complaints of not only snakes, but even leopards entering the underground metro stations.

FIR AGAINST BHIDE FOR COMMENTS AGAINST GAUTAM BUDDHA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Navi Mumbai police have registered an FIR against Hindutva leader Sambhaji Bhide following a complaint for his alleged derogatory comments against Gautam Buddha and social reformers. In July, an FIR was registered in Amravati against Sambhaji Bhide, for allegedly making offensive remarks about Mahatma Gandhi's lineage during his speech, police said. Amid opposition parties' demand for action against Bhide, the founder of the Shri Shiv Pratishthan Hindustan outfit, for his derogatory remarks against Mahatma Gandhi, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis last week said insult of national icons will not be tolerated. Advocate Amit Katarnavre gave a complaint at the New Panvel police station, alleging Bhide made



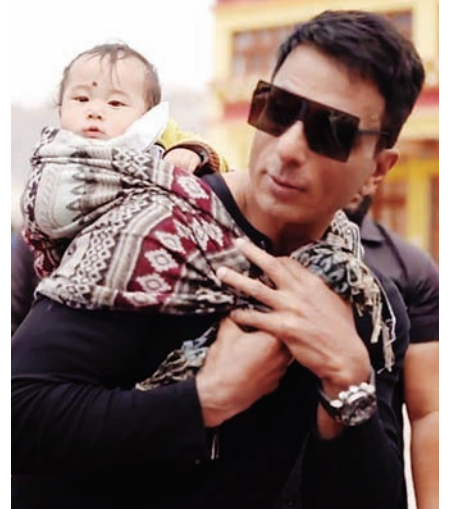
derogatory comments against Gautam Buddha, Jyotiba Phule and Periyar Naicker, which hurt the sentiments of those who revered them.

The complaint by Katarnavre cited some online videos in which Bhide was seen purportedly making derogatory comments against the social reformers. On Sunday, the police registered an FIR against Bhide under Indian Penal Code Sections 153-A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc), 153-B (imputations, assertions prejudicial to national-integration) and 295-A (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs). "The FIR also included relevant provisions of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act," the police said. On August 1, an FIR was registered against Bhide in Maharashtra's Nashik city for his alleged derogatory remarks against Saibaba of Shirdi and Phule.

Sonu Sood turns 'babysitter' as he gives piggyback ride to baby in Kaza

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actor and humanitarian Sonu Sood shared a video of himself giving a baby in Himachal Pradesh a piggyback ride. Sonu took to Instagram, where he shared the video. In the clip he is seen asking the name of the baby to the mother. He then puts the baby on his back with the help of a cloth he ties him around. Sonu then walks around, and is seen telling the baby that he is taking him to Bombay. He tells the baby "Bombay actor banne jaa rahe hai." He is then heard telling others: "Naya Roadie aa gaya hai." For the caption, Sonu wrote: "Any job of a babysitter. I am the best attractive packages available." Sonu shared the video from Kaza in Himachal Pradesh, where he is currently shooting for the youth-based reality show 'MTV Roadies - Karm Ya Kaand'. In July 2016, he established the production house Shakti Sagar Productions, which is named after his father, Shakti Sagar Sood. In



September 2020, Sood was chosen for the 'SDG Special Humanitarian Action Award' by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for his humanitarian works during the COVID-19 pandemic.

MAN ARRESTED FOR REPEATEDLY RAPING 13-YEAR-OLD NEIGHBOUR

Mumbai: A 50-year-old autorickshaw driver has been arrested for allegedly repeatedly raping his 13-year-old neighbour in Panvel. The accused was arrested on Sunday night. As per the police, on the basis of a complaint lodged by the victim's mother, a case under section 376 (rape) and other relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act was registered. "The accused, a resident of Panvel, allegedly raped the victim on 10 occasions between 2020 and 2022," the police said.

Now, Edelweiss tries to 'conjoin' Nitin Desai's death & NCLAT verdict

Quaid Najmi | Mumbai

Under pressures from various quarters, the Edelweiss Financial Services Ltd (EFSL) has attempted to 'connect' a NCLAT verdict with the suicide of ace art director Nitin Desai -- both 24 hours apart. In a filing to the BSE on Sunday, the EFSL confirmed that it had extended loans of Rs 150 crore (2016) and Rs 35 crore (2018), as stated in the Raigad Police FIR (August 4) to Desai's ND Art World Pvt. Ltd (NDAWPL), "at prevailing markets rates". However, NDAWPL encountered financial difficulties in 2019 and went into default, and attempts to improve its financial condition failed to bear fruit. The loans were taken over by CFM Asset Reconstruction Co. Pvt. Ltd which also initiated legal proceedings. The Edelweiss ARC acquired a portfolio of assets from CFM under an auction process which included NDAWPL, and continued with the legal actions initiated earlier. Eventually, the NDAWPL was admitted under IBC by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on July 25.

"Nitin Desai's appeal against the NCLT order was dismissed by the Honourable Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) on August 01, 2023, and he took his life the following morning," the EFSL said in the filing. The Edelweiss has not referred to the series of allegations levelled in the Raigad Police FIR, based on a complaint by Desai's widow, Neha on August 4. Denying any wrongdoings, the Edelweiss Group has reiterated that it is "deeply saddened" by Desai's tragic demise, and it is "a big loss to the Indian film industry", assuring it "will cooperate fully" with the authorities in the case, and that "pursuing recoveries on NPA accounts is not just a right of creditor but also an obligation". The FIR has named Edelweiss ARC Managing Director and CEO R. K. Bansal, C-MD Rashesh Shah, Smit Shah, Keyur Mehta (both of a subsidiary) and Jitendra Kothari (Interim Resolution Professional). Incidentally, the FIR mentions that after the insolvency resolution proceedings were initiated, the studio officials and Desai's lawyer Vrunda Vichare had informed Neha Desai that NCLT's Kothari would reach the studio with bouncers to take control of the property on July 29 -- four days after the NCLT ruling and three days before the NCLAT verdict, both against Nitin Desai.

The FIR cites a recording left behind by Desai for Vichare, where he had narrated how 2-3 investors were ready to invest in the studio, but the Edelweiss and its honchos demanded 'double-triple the dues' and pressurised him in different ways. "Smit Shah, Keyur and Bansal have looted my studio for their selfish motives... they didn't accept my proposals... they tried to trap me," said a desperate sounding Nitin Desai in the recordings quoted in the FIR. "Ya lokaani majhi vaat lavli aahe (These people have destroyed me)," were Desai's words, adding that "these monsters threatened, pressured" him, forced him to sell off his prime office in Powai's Hiranandani Complex, and conspired to finish him off, as per the FIR. The FIR adds that the studio was set up in 2004 at Khalapur, Raigad, and soon became a popular shooting venue for films, teleserials, and his fame grew. It added that in 2016, Rashesh Shah came with an investment proposal, sweet-talked and lured Desai with big dreams for the developing the studio, and accordingly, sanctioned two loans -- Rs 150 crore (November 2016) and Rs 35 crore (February 2018) -- against mortgaging the property. Neha Desai said that though he was paying his



EMIs regularly, in April 2019, the Edelweiss officials suddenly put immense pressure on him to pay up six months' advance EMI from May-October 2019, which he complied after selling off his office, and continued to pay up the EMIs regularly till February 2020. Then came the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown series, work at the studio had completely halted and Nitin Desai was delayed in repaying his loans/EMIs, though his own losses were pegged at some Rs 100-crore.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Bihar, UP, TN top 3 states with maximum Jan Dhan beneficiaries

Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu are the top three states with the highest number of beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMMY) in 2022-23. During 2022-23, a total of 6.23 crore Jan Dhan accounts were opened. According to Finance Ministry data, Bihar tops the list of states with maximum beneficiaries of the scheme, which stood at 84,89,231 in 2022-23. Uttar Pradesh held the second position with 68,08,721 beneficiaries, while Tamil Nadu stood third with a total of 64,06,513 PMMY beneficiaries. Under PMMY, collateral-free institutional credit of up to Rs 10 lakh is provided by the member lending institutions (MLIs), i.e., scheduled commercial banks (SCBs), non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and micro finance institutions (MFIs). Any individual, who is otherwise eligible to take a loan and has a business plan for small business enterprise can avail loan under the scheme for income generating activities in the manufacturing, trading and service sectors, and also for activities allied to agriculture across three loan categories, i.e., 'Shishu' (loans up to Rs 50,000), 'Kishore' (loans above Rs 50,000 and up to Rs 5 lakh) and 'Tarun' (loans above Rs 5 lakh and up to Rs 10 lakh).

Community members raise concerns as state govt rolls out 'bulldozer justice'

Shekhar Singh

As Haryana follows demolition of alleged accused persons houses by using bulldozer in similar lines with neighbouring states while dealing with the recent communal riots, in which six people were killed, concern raises in the minority community which question the 'selective' clean up of the government. Zamil Khan, a resident of Nuh, expressed concern over the recent events where armed Hindu activists shouted provocative slogans during a procession. He pointed out that instead of taking action against these activists, the police seemed to be selectively targeting Muslim properties during the demolition drive. He questioned the authorities, saying: "The authorities have chosen to demolish homes and shops belonging to Muslims only. Why haven't they taken any action against those responsible for the violence and those who openly brandished weapons during the rally?" Zamil Khan believed that this approach was an attempt to appease Hindutva groups that sought to disrupt the social harmony and communal amity that had existed in the area for many years. His home had been demolished, leaving him with the question of where to go next. Haroon Khan, whose shanty and juice booth near Nalhar medical college were demolished, expressed his innocence, stating that he had no involvement in the riots or any association with such individuals. His juice booth was his means of supporting his family, and he was now worried about how to provide



for his family of three after the demolition. A Hindu resident, working as a construction laborer, also acknowledged that both communities' poor people had suffered due to the violence. He decided to leave the area with his wife and three children and return to his village in Orissa for safety and stability. Nearly 45 illegal commercial shops, comprising pharmacy stores, were razed to the ground near a medical college in Nuh. The authorities bulldozed illegal structures on 2.6 acres of land around SKHM Government Medical College on Nalhar Road, the same place from where a woman judge along with her 3-year-old daughter, who had gone to buy medicines, was caught in the crossfire. It was around 1 pm on July 31 when Additional Chief Magistrate (ACJM) Anjali Jain went out to buy some medicines from SKHM Medical College in her car

along with a gunman, her toddler daughter and one more employee who was driving the vehicle. While they were returning after an hour and reached the Bus Stand on the Delhi-Alwar road, they saw a mob of 100-150 people that had already gathered there. "Within no time, the mob started pelting stones at our car and torched other vehicles. After some time, the rear glass of our vehicle was shattered by a stone and then the mob began firing at our car," an FIR that was lodged on the complaint of the Process Server Tek Chand (a Court employee), accessed by Correspondent, read. To save their lives, all occupants of the car, including ACJM Anjali Jain and her daughter, stepped out of their vehicle and hid themselves in the workshop of the old bus stand. "After waiting for some time at the workshop, some Advocates came and rescued all of us," the

complaint read. Next day, when they went to check the official car of the ACJM, it was found in a torched state. Sources said that the shops and structures that were razed to the ground on Saturday and Sunday belonged to some immigrants. "All of them were illegal constructions. Notices were given to owners for the demolition. Some owners of illegal structures were involved in the violence too," Sub Divisional Magistrate Ashwani Kumar told the mediapersons. The demolition drive was carried out in the Nalhar area where shanties mostly belonged to the accused who fired bullets at around 2,500 pilgrims hiding in the Nalhar Mahadev temple. The shanties were illegally raised on the land of the Forest Department, as claimed by the authorities. On Friday,

Haryana government razed shanties of migrants living in Tauru, about 20 km away from violence-hit Nuh, for encroaching on government land. The bulldozer move, however, is also being seen as action against alleged rioters, as both the district administration and the Minister earlier alleged outsiders were involved in the clashes. Sources said Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar ordered the demolition. Migrants from Assam had allegedly set up shanties on Haryana Urban Authority land in ward number one along Mohammadpur road of Tauru town in Nuh district, sources said. More than 250 shanties were built in about one acre of land, and they were reportedly living here for the last four years. Police and administration have alleged "outsiders", including alleged infiltrators, were involved in the attack on the VHP procession. However, the questions still stand -- what about four people have been arrested in connection with the rioting and murder of an imam at Gurugram's Anjuman Jama Masjid on the intervening night of Monday and Tuesday (July 31 and August 1). State Home Minister Anil Vij has claimed that the violence behind the clashes in Nuh was part of a "big game plan". Till now, 176 arrests have been made for the communal clashes that first broke out on Monday during a Hindu religious procession after rumours that the absconding cow vigilante Monu Maneser, a key accused in Bhiwani killings, would also attend the event.

international

TRUMP CALLS FOR RECUSAL OF JUDGE IN 2020 US ELECTION FRAUD CASE

New York | Agencies

Former US President Donald Trump has called for recusal of the judge in the 2020 election fraud case. Trump took to his social media platform, Truth Social, on Sunday morning to express his displeasure with a federal indictment for attempting to overturn the 2020 election. He described the case as "the ridiculous freedom of speech, slash fair elections case" and said that his legal team would immediately be asking for recusal of the judge. Trump has said that he will ask the judge to step aside on what he called "very powerful grounds", the BBC reported. He gave no details of his grounds for asking her to step down. The former President has said there is "no way" he can get a fair trial with the judge assigned to his case.



Federal judge Tanya Chutkan, who is overseeing the Trump case, was appointed in 2014 by former President Barack Obama. Judge Chutkan previously ruled against Trump's efforts to shield evidence from the House January 6 Committee and has faced frequent attacks from Trump allies in recent days. Trump had described her and the Department of Justice (DOJ) as "highly partisan and very corrupt", the BBC reported. She is the only federal judge in Washington who has delivered sentences against defendants in cases related to the 6 January Capitol riot that are longer than the sentences that the DOJ asked for, according to NBC News. According to DOJ, any judge of the US shall disqualify themselves in any proceeding in which their impartiality might reasonably be questioned.

UKRAINE DETAINS INFORMANT FOR PLOTTING AIRSTRIKE DURING ZELENSKY'S VISIT

Kiev: The Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) on Monday announced that it has detained a female informant for Russia "who was preparing an airstrike in the Mykolaiv region during the visit of President Volodymyr Zelensky". In the statement, the SBU said the alleged informant "on the eve of the recent trip of the President of Ukraine to Mykolaiv region, was gathering intelligence about the planned visit" late last month, reports CNN. The Security Service further said that the alleged conspirator "tried to establish the time and list of locations of the approximate route of the Head of State in the territory of the region". However, SBU agents had obtained information about the "subversive activities of the suspect" and adopted additional security measures. In monitoring the communications of the woman, the SBU had established that she also had the task of identifying the location of electronic warfare systems and warehouses with ammunition of the armed forces. According to the investigation, the perpetrator was a resident of Ochakov, southern Ukraine, and a former saleswoman in a military store on the territory of one of the military units of the region.

Israel's Supreme Court to hold expanded hearing on PM incapacity law

Jerusalem | Agencies

Israel's Supreme Court has said that an expanded panel would hear appeals against a recently-passed law, which makes it harder to declare Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu unfit for office, in September. In a decision published by the country's top court on Sunday, the justices instructed the state to respond to arguments and explain why the new law should not come into effect until after the next elections, to avoid it from being perceived as a tailor-made law designed to benefit Netanyahu, Xinhua news agency reported. The court also set an expanded panel of 11 justices to hold the follow-up hearing scheduled for September 28, after the court held a first hearing on Thursday. Netanyahu's far-right coalition passed the law in March, changing the conditions under which a prime minister in Israel could be declared unfit for office.



The law cancelled the possibility of removing Netanyahu due to his conflict of interests over his ongoing corruption trial. Moreover, only Netanyahu's government or the parliament, in which Netanyahu's coalition also has a majority, now has the authority to remove an incumbent prime minister and only on medical grounds. The petitions against the law came as Netanyahu's coalition was trying to pass a controversial plan to reshape the Israeli legal system and undermine the power of the Supreme Court, which sparked mass demonstrations across the country.

Firefighting chopper crashes while battling blaze in California

Los Angeles: A firefighting helicopter crashed in California's Riverside County while battling a brush fire in the region, the media reported on Monday. According to the Los Angeles-based KABC-TV station, the accident occurred late Sunday night while crews were battling the Broadway Fire near Cabazon. Authorities warned that there could be multiple fatalities as there was no immediate information as to how many people were onboard the ill-fated helicopter. The crash was reported in the area of Pipeline Road and Apache Trail, according to the Riverside County Sheriff's Office. The Broadway Fire was reported in the area of Broadway and Esperanza avenues. It has spread to at least three acres so far, reports KABC-TV. The cause of the crash is under investigation.

Foreigners including Americans held in Afghan prisons: Report

Kabul | Agencies

A number of foreign nationals, including Americans, have been held in Afghanistan's prisons, a local media report said on Monday citing a Taliban official. Without revealing the exact number of imprisoned foreigners in Afghanistan, the Taliban regime's chief spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said: "They have been held in connection with security and other issues such as violation of our laws," Xinhua news agency reported citing the TOLO News report. If proven innocent the detained would be released and the solution would also be found for those not innocent, TOLO News quoted Mujahid as saying. Neither Mujahid nor TOLO News provided more details.



The revelation came a week after the US and Taliban held talks in Doha for the first time since the fall of Kabul in August 2021. During the talks held in the Qatari capital on July 30-31, Washington pressed the regime to "reverse policies responsible for the deteriorating human rights situation" in Afghanistan, as well as for the release of detained American citizens. On their part, the Taliban said they wanted the unfreezing of Afghanistan's assets, as well as lifting of sanctions and travel bans.

Niger military junta shuts airspace indefinitely

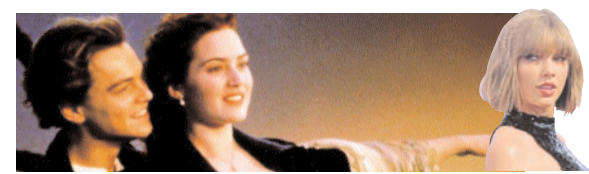
Niamey | Agencies

Niger's military junta has indefinitely shut the country's airspace until further notice after a regional bloc warned it could use force if President Mohamed Bazoum was not reinstated, the media reported on Monday. According to flight tracking website Flightradar24, there were currently no aircraft in Niger's skies, the BBC reported. Following a crisis meeting on August 4, military chiefs of the Ecowas regional trading bloc which comprises 15 West African countries, including Nigeria, Senegal, Togo and Ghana, announced that they had drawn up a detailed plan for the possible use of force if Bazoum was not reinstated by 11 p.m. on August 6. "All the elements that will go into any eventual intervention have been worked out here, including the resources needed, the how and when we are going to deploy the force," the BBC quoted Abdel-Fatau Musah, Ecowas commissioner for political affairs, peace and security, as saying in a statement. "We want diplomacy to work, and we want this message clearly transmitted to them (Niger's junta) that we are giving



them every opportunity to reverse what they have done". But as of early Monday morning, Niger's coup leaders have showed no sign of willingness to cede power. On Sunday thousands of their supporters rallied defiantly at a stadium in the country's capital Niamey. Bazoum was detained on July 26, and Gen Abdourahmane Tchiani, commander of the presidential guard, later proclaimed himself the new leader. In response to the bloc's warning, a junta spokesman said that Niger's armed forces were ready to defend the

country. The military takeover has been internationally condemned, including by former colonial power France, as well as the European Union, UN and the US. Meanwhile, two of Niger's neighbours -- Burkina Faso and Mali -- had earlier warned they would treat any outside military intervention in Niger as "a declaration of war" against them, reports the BBC. Burkina Faso and Mali are both Ecowas members but have been suspended from the bloc since being ruled by military juntas.



Emily Blunt

Talks about missing out on playing Black Widow

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Emily Blunt could've joined the Marvel Cinematic Universe as Natasha Romanoff, the Black Widow, in Iron Man 2.

The actress is now opening up about what she thinks of Scarlett Johansson who ended up playing the role across multiple films. "Come on, the best girl got it," Blunt said on the Happy Sad Confused podcast about Johansson adding that she was "amazing", reports Deadline. Johansson would go on and reprise the superhero role in films like 'The Avengers' (2012), 'Captain America: The Winter Soldier' (2014), 'Avengers: Age of Ultron' (2015), 'Captain America: Civil War' (2016), 'Avengers: Infinity War' (2018), 'Captain Marvel' (2019), 'Avengers: Endgame' (2019) and the standalone 'Black Widow' movie in 2021. Furthermore, Blunt has been rumored to have been offered other roles in the MCU.

Roles that Blunt was reportedly up for included 'Captain Marvel' which ultimately went to Brie Larson, Peggy Carter who Hayley Atwell ended up playing and Sue Storm from 'Fantastic Four' which went to Jessica Alba and Kate Mara in different adaptations of the franchise.

"Rumors. Talk. Queries. That kind of thing," Blunt said of the rumours noting that she never met with producers or directors of the films. Since 'Black Widow' first made an appearance in the MCU in 2012, Blunt has starred in films like 'The Five-Year Engagement' (2012), 'Looper' (2012), 'Edge of Tomorrow' (2014), 'Into the Woods' (2014), 'Sicario' (2015), 'The Huntsman: Winter's War' (2016), 'The Girl on the Train' (2016), 'A Quiet Place' (2018), 'Mary Poppins Returns' (2018), 'A Quiet Place Part II' (2020), 'Jungle Cruise' (2021) and most recently 'Oppenheimer'.

In an interview from 2019, Blunt said on the Howard Stern show on SiriusXM that she was "contracted to do Gullever's Travels" in 2010 despite not wanting to do it.

"It was a bit of a heartbreaker for me because I take such pride in the decisions that I make, and they mean so much to me, the films that I do, so that was tough," she said of turning down the Marvel role. "They (Fox) kind of have a bit of a hold over you. There were other movies that I would want to do."



Helen Flanagan says she's '33 and thriving' on her birthday

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Helen Flanagan has shown off a very different look for her 33rd birthday, causing a flurry of excitement on Instagram.

The 'Coronation Street' star sent her followers into a frenzy as she posed in her bedroom, sporting a low-cut leather mini dress next to a luxury bag, reports Mirror.co.uk. Helen looked sensational as she stared longingly at the camera with her blonde hair swept off her face, revealing super glam makeup and elegant diamond earrings.

The actress' Marilyn Monroe tattoo can be seen on her left arm as could Helen's sizeable collection of designer accessories.

She captioned the snap: "33 and thriving" and judging by the comments, it seems her fans agreed. One replied to the post: "Omg Helen, you look stunning!" While another told the mum-of-three she looked like "an angel".

Later in her Instagram Stories, Helen appeared to smoke a candle as she put it in her mouth before lighting it and sticking it in her scrumptious looking, heart-shaped birthday cake. This clip didn't go down quite so well with fans as one asked the 'Rosie Webster' star to "stop being so desperate."

As per Mirror.co.uk, the actress has recently returned from Barbados, where she took her kids, Matilda, Delilah and Charlie. Helen treated her fans to a number of bikini pictures, including one defiant snap after she was reportedly asked to leave a restaurant because she was "underdressed."

GAL GADOT ON 'HEART OF STONE': LIKED BEING INVOLVED IN THE STORY FROM THE VERY BEGINNING

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Gal Gadot, who is not only playing the protagonist in 'Heart Of Stone' but is also producing it, says it's fulfilling to do both, because not only she has inputs over the project as a whole and calls it "really rewarding."

This dual responsibility showcases her multifaceted abilities and her commitment to pushing boundaries.

Gal said in a statement: "It's really fulfilling to do both, because not only do you have input over the project as a whole, but your role in the film as well. It is really rewarding. I especially liked being involved in the story from the very beginning. It has made the role of Rachel Stone feel much more personal."

"You want your audiences to be visually interested. I like to think of going to the movies as an opportunity to experience interesting places. Not everyone gets to go to amazing places like Iceland, Italy, Portugal, the UK or Senegal. So beyond great action, you get to see these locations you may not otherwise experience."

From the breathtaking landscapes of Iceland to the timeless charm of Italy, from the colourful streets of Portugal to the historic majesty of the UK, and even the vibrant spirit of Senegal - each location became an integral part of the film.

'Heart Of Stone' also stars Alia Bhatt, Jamie Dornan and is directed by Tom Harper. The film revolves around an intelligence operative for a shadowy global peacekeeping agency races to stop a hacker from stealing its most valuable and dangerous weapon.



Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Will Smith admitted that he regrets pushing Willow Smith and Jaden Smith to fame at such a young age because "nobody in (his) family was happy."

The 54-year-old made the honest confession when appearing on Kevin Hart's Peacock talk show 'Hart to Hart', reports aceshowbiz.com. The actor first said, "2010 was like the greatest year as an artist, as a parent. 'Karate Kid' came out in June, 'Whip My Hair' came out in October. I'm building this dream of a family I've had in my mind. I'm going to do it better than my father did it."

"We've talked about it, my father was abusive... I told myself I would never have that kind of energy with my family, and I had a dream, an idea of a family I was building," he continued.

"Pretty much 2010 to 2012 I had achieved everything I had ever dreamed. I was beyond (my) wildest dreams. Unfortunately, Will said his kids' careers interfered with family bonding."

"Nobody in my family was happy. Nobody wanted to be in a platoon. Willow was the first one to begin the mutiny, and it was my first realisation that success and money don't mean happiness. Up until that point, I really believed that you could succeed your way - to a house and a family - and you could win your way to happiness," he explained.

That experience led the Oscar winner to reevaluate his priorities. "You can have so much stuff that it makes you miserable," he stated.

"That was my first pull-back, and I was like, 'OK, what am I missing?' That's when I started reading and studying psychology and the relation to human happiness. I was never unhappy. I loved life - but I was driving the people around me in a way that I was leaving scorched earth."



WILL SMITH REGRETS PUSHING HIS KIDS TO FAME AT YOUNG AGE

Bella Hadid proud of herself after recovering

Los Angeles | Agencies

Bella Hadid has gotten better after more than a decade of health troubles. The supermodel, who was diagnosed with chronic Lyme disease in 2012 has posted on social media to reveal that she's recovering after "almost 15 years of invisible suffering."

"The little me that suffered would be so proud of grown me for not giving up on myself (heart emoji)," Bella wrote on Instagram alongside photos of her medical records and her various treatments.

"Thankful to my mommy for keeping all of my medical records, sticking by me, never leaving my side, protecting, supporting, but most of all, believing me through all of this. Living in this state, worsening with time and work while trying to make myself, my family and the people who support me, proud, had taken a toll on me in ways I can't really explain."

"To be that sad and sick with the most blessings/privilege/opportunity/love around me was quite possibly the most confusing thing ever. One thing I want to express to you all is that I, I am okay and you do not have to worry, (heart emoji) and 2, I wouldn't change anything for the world. If I had to go through all of this again, to get here, to this exact moment I'm in right now, with all of you, finally healthy, I would do it all again. It made me who I am today."

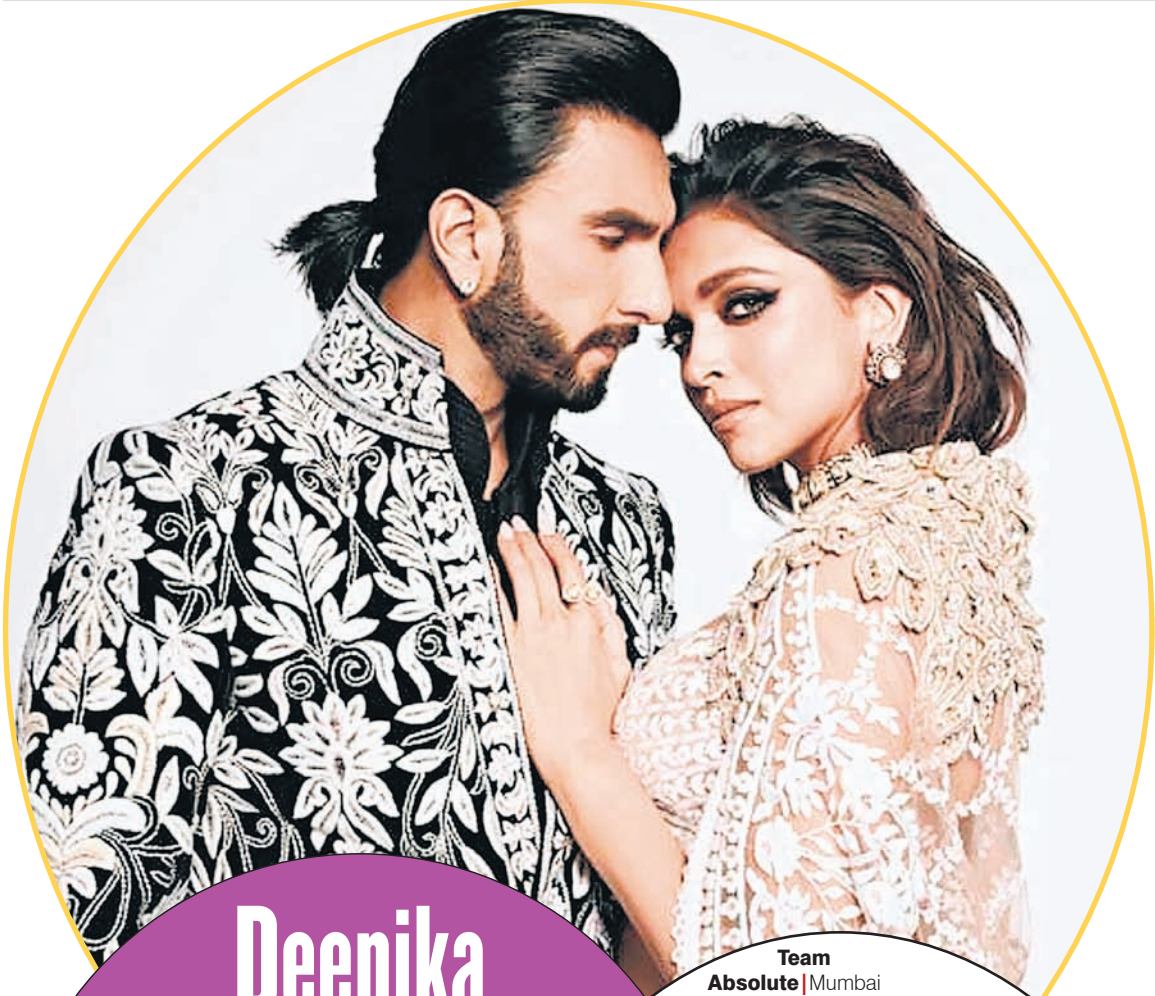
Bella has also offered some words of encouragement to people going through similar struggles. She said: "The universe works in the most painful and beautiful ways but I need to say that if you are struggling - it will get better. I promise."



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Kylie Jenner



Deepika says 'Marry your best friend' tagging hubby Ranveer

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Deepika Padukone recently took to her social media and shared a post about "marrying your best friend". She also tagged her husband Ranveer Singh in the post.

The actress shared a note in her Instagram feed, which read, "Marry your best friend. I do not say that lightly. Really, truly find the strongest, happiest friendship in the person you fall in love with. Someone who speaks highly of you. Someone you can laugh with." She emphasised on how comfort is one of the key pillars of a healthy marital life and shared that one should not hold themselves back from laughing their heart out no matter how embarrassing it sounds, in front of their partners.

As per the actress, to find a partner who enjoys seeing you laugh is a rarity, and shall be cherished. Deepika said: "The kind of laughs that make your belly ache, and your nose snort. The embarrassing, earnest, healing kind of laughs. Wit is important. Life is too short not to love someone who lets you be a fool with them. Make sure they are somebody who lets you cry, too. Despair will come."

The actress shared that such kind of love never gets diluted. "Find someone that you want to be there with you through those times. Most importantly, marry the one that makes passion, love, and madness combine and course through you. A love that will never dilute - even when the waters get deep, and dark." Earlier, there were rumours of trouble in paradise between Ranveer and Deepika, who got married in 2018 in Italy. Their wedding festivities were an illustrious affair with several receptions held for high profile guests from different sectors.



ANURAG KASHYAP WANTED TO GIVE A 'COMIC BOOK' KIND OF SPIN TO UPCOMING MOVIE

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Indian auteur Anurag Kashyap, whose films like 'Gangs of Wasseypur', 'Ugly', 'Dev.D', 'Black Friday' and others have strengthened the parallel cinema in India and have cultivated an enormous fan base, is set to visit the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IFFM) as his upcoming film 'Kennedy' has been selected as the closing film at the festival.

Kashyap, who is often credited as the poster boy of the present day indie cinema in India, shared that he had the idea of 'Kennedy' brewing inside him for 20 years but it only got materialised when the pandemic hit the world. In a way, the pandemic became the perfect physical setting for Kashyap's story as he wanted to give it a very "comic book" kind of a spin to the story.

Talking about how the came together, the director said: "I have had the idea for 'Kennedy' for close to 20 years, the titular character existed in my head for 20 years. It was based on a character that was narrated to me by Sudhir Mishra in 2003. But, back then I didn't want to make another encounter-cop film because during those days this subject was a hot topic."

The director shared that he wanted to render a "Giallo" kind of a treatment to the story. Giallo is a genre of Italian cinema of murder mystery fiction that often contains a broad range of themes like slasher, thriller, psychological horror and supernatural horror elements.

Anurag further mentioned: "I decided to give my own spin to it more like a comic book take. I wanted to render a Giallo kind of treatment to it. But, somehow it wasn't materialising and then the lockdown happened and it gave me a great opportunity to set this film in the context of a lockdown because people were anyway wearing a mask during the lockdown so it presented an opportunity for the masked character to become one with the crowd."

Anurag, who is known for his knack for fully improvising the scenes on sets, made a rare exception for 'Kennedy' as he said that the film was completely designed before the team ended up on set, leaving little to no room for improvisation.

SUSHMITA'S DARING TRANSFORMATION FROM GANESH TO GAURI, HEROIC BATTLE FOR TRANSGENDER RIGHTS



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The trailer of upcoming series 'Taali' starring Sushmita Sen in the lead, showcases the revolutionary story of transgender activist Shreegauri Sawant, and her iconic fight for the recognition of the third gender in India.

The two minute 11 seconds trailer, which was unveiled on Monday starts with Sushmita's voice, saying "Namaste Mai Gauri. Ye Kahani mere jaisekahi Ganesh thi."

The trailer ends with Gauri hugging little kids, and saying, "maahona koi gender nahi, feeling hai".

Sushmita's impressive transformation as the transgender activist, in her

role of a lifetime, has heightened the anticipation for its release of the show.

'Taali' throws light on the trials and tribulations of Shreegauri Sawant's life - her daring transformation from Ganesh to Gauri, and the discrimination she was subjected to because of that, her fearless journey towards motherhood, and the audacious battle that led to the inclusion and identification of the third gender on every official document in India. Talking about her powerful portrayal of Shreegauri Sawant, Sushmita said: "When I was first approached for 'Taali', in my mind it was an instant yes, however, I took six and a half months to come on-board officially. I knew I wanted to be absolutely prepared, well-read and researched to take up a critical and significant responsibility like

this one."

Shreegauri Sawant shared: "I am overwhelmed and grateful to the entire team of Taali for treating my story with sensitivity. After interacting and looking at the effort Sushmita put to get my nuances right, I cannot think of anyone else doing justice to my character. She has portrayed my journey with so much authenticity."

"This is not just my journey, this is the journey and the ordeal of my people, and many people around me, who are fighting for basic rights in society. The show raises some hard-hitting questions which hopefully can change the attitude of the society towards transgenders," added Shreegauri.

SHANKAR MAHADEVAN ON 'SHIV CHALISA': THIS BREATHLESS RENDITION SEEKS TO MIRROR ETERNAL NATURE OF LORD SHIVA

Team Absolute | New Delhi



Renowned vocalist Shankar Mahadevan, who has sung a breathless rendition of 'Shiv Chalisa' said that it "not only pays homage to the mighty deity, but also inspires a deep, heartfelt connection with the divine."

Shemaroo Bhakti's super-fast and breathless rendition of 'Shiv Chalisa', is a divine musical marvel, sung by Shankar Mahadevan. This unique offering will take devotees of Lord Shiva and music enthusiasts on an extraordinary spiritual voyage.

Commenting on this new version, Shankar said: "The divine energy of Lord Shiva is beautifully encapsulated in the 'Shiv Chalisa.' Our rendition aims to not only pay homage to the mighty deity but also to inspire a deep, heartfelt connection with the divine. Just as a river flows ceaselessly, this breathless rendition seeks to mirror the eternal nature of Lord Shiva."

"The overwhelming response to the super fast Hanuman Chalisa was humbling, and I hope that this rendition of the Shiv Chalisa on Shemaroo Bhakti will touch the hearts of devotees and resonate with them at a spiritual level. Music is a universal language, and I am grateful to be part of this journey," he added.

Continuing the monumental success of the super fast 'Hanuman Chalisa', which amassed over 21 million views on Shemaroo Bhakti's YouTube channel, Shankar has again collaborated with music composer, Dr Sanjayraj Gaurinandan.

Music composer Dr Gaurinandan said: "It is an honour to collaborate with Shankar Mahadevan on the rendition of 'Shiv Chalisa', celebrating Lord Shiva's eternal nature through our mesmerising music. Our aim is to immerse listeners in divine grace and create a spiritual tapestry that resonates with all souls."

Katrina posts love-filled pics with hubby Vicky Kaushal

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood actress Katrina Kaif has shared a few romantic moments spent with her actor-husband Vicky Kaushal. Katrina took to her Instagram stories on a lazy Sunday, where the star couple could be seen spending some quality time in the sea-facing balcony of their Mumbai residence.

The actress posted two pictures. The first has Vicky looking at the view with Katrina pointing at him with the caption "Hi". The other image showcases a mushy romantic moment between the two.

In both the images, the two were seen casually dressed. While Vicky wore a sleeveless black T-shirt paired with a baseball cap, Katrina is seen in a plain white T-shirt.

She also posted a

photograph of the view and captioned it "Home".

Incidentally, Katrina does not share much about her personal life on social media.

Katrina and Vicky got married in December 2021 in a guarded wedding ceremony at the Six Senses Fort Barwara in Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan.

On the work front, Katrina will be seen alongside Salman Khan in the third instalment of the 'Tiger' franchise. She also has 'Merry Christmas' with Vijay Sethupathi, which will hit the theatres on December 15.

Vicky will be next seen in 'Sam Bahadur', which is scheduled to release on December 1.



Sonnalli Seygall