

absolute india

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50 dead in Himachal landslides, Cloudburst, 7 swept away by flash floods

THE RAINFALL HAVOC



Happy Independence Day

NOTICE

Happy Independence Day Absolute India office will observe holiday on 15th August 2023. Next issue will be published on 17th August 2023.

Editor

ACTION BEING TAKEN AGAINST SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS FALSELY QUOTING CJI

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday said that action was being taken by the law enforcement authorities against a social media post using a file photograph of Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud and falsely quoting him to provoke public for protest against the authorities. "The post is fake, ill-intended and mischievous. No such post has been issued by the Chief Justice of India nor has he authorised any such post," said the press note released by the Public Relations Office of the Supreme Court. Appropriate action is being taken in this regard with the law enforcement authorities, it added.

In another natural disaster, 10 persons were buried alive in the Kandaghat area of Solan district after a cloudburst that triggered a flash flood and landslides. The disaster occurred at around 1.30 a.m. on Monday at Jadon village in Dhawla sub-tehsil, some 45 km from the state capital. The rainfall havoc has caused significant damage to infrastructure and affected the lives of many people in the hill state. In Mandi district, 14 people died due to rain-related disasters. Four people are missing. Two houses and a cowshed were damaged at Majhwar village, where two persons are reported to be missing.

Shimla | Agencies

In the third major rain-related tragedy in less than 24 hours in Himachal Pradesh, flash floods have swept away seven people. Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu shared a video clip from the Sambhal village in Mandi district, saying, active rescue, search, and relief operations are currently in progress to address "this dreadful situation". More than 50 people have died in the last two days in incidents linked to incessant rainfall in the hill state. "Disturbing visuals have emerged from Sambhal, Pandoh - District Mandi, where, as reported, seven individuals have been swept away by flash floods. Active rescue, search, and relief operations are currently in progress to address this dreadful situation," he tweeted. The video shows water gushing downhill with great force, and the person behind the camera could be heard repeatedly saying "oh God" in a distressed tone. Earlier, 16 people were killed in two separate incidents related to heavy rains. Seven people died after a cloudburst incident in the Solan district last night, while nine others were killed in a landslide at a Shiv Temple in Summer Hill area of Shimla city. Union Home Minister Amit Shah said teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) are engaged in relief and rescue operations in rain-hit Himachal Pradesh, and termed the loss of lives due to



the deluge as "extremely distressing". Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has appealed to the people to stay indoors, and avoid going near drains or rivers. "I pray for those killed and want to assure the affected families that the government stands with them in this hour of calamity. All affected families would be provided all possible help by the government," the Chief Minister said. 15 to 20 people were feared buried in two landslides in Shimla city, Deputy Commissioner of Shimla Aditya Negi said. The other site is in the Fagli area, where several houses were buried under mud and slush. Six people were rescued after the cloudburst at Mamligh village of Kandaghat subdivision in Solan. Two houses and one cowshed were washed away.

According to the state emergency operation centre, 752 roads were closed in the state because of the calamity. The heavy rains in Himachal Pradesh, and neighbouring Uttarakhand, are due to a fresh spell of Western Disturbance, the Indian Meteorological Department said. "The location of the Monsoon trough lies along the foothills of the Himalayas, and hence the South-westerly Arabian Sea monsoon winds are hitting the Himalayan foothills," the weather department said. Himachal Pradesh has been the worst affected state in the country due to the floods and landslides with officials announcing on Sunday a staggering loss of Rs 7020.28 crore due to the monsoon's devastating impact.

WORLD HERITAGE KALKA-SHIMLA TRACK DAMAGED



Shimla: The Kalka-Shimla track, a world heritage site, was damaged on Monday in the Himachal Pradesh capital owing to caving in of a portion of the hill following heavy rainfall, an official said here. According to officials, a major part of the track between Jutogh and Summer Hill railway stations in Shimla was washed away. It hanged down the hill. The movement of trains between Kandaghat-Shimla has been cancelled. Toy trains, as they are popularly called, run on the century-old Kalka-Shimla rail line. Each train has seven coaches and can accommodate nearly 200 passengers. The 96-km-long narrow gauge railroad, originally built to ferry Europeans to Shimla, the then summer capital of British India, was chosen by the Unesco as a world heritage site in 2008.

Dwarka Expressway cost 14 times more than approved amount: CAG

New Delhi: The cost of the Dwarka highway built under the Centre's Bharatmala Pariyojana phase-1 has exceeded the amount approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) in 2017 by 14 times, the government's top auditor Comptroller and Auditor General or CAG has found. The report said the Expressway, prioritised to de-congest NH-48 between Delhi and Gurugram by developing it into a 14-lane national highway running parallelly, was built at a "very high" per km cost of Rs 250.77 crore against the CCEA approved per km cost of Rs 18.20 crore. The report quoted the Ministry of Road Transport and Highway's response on this from April 2022, saying the "Dwarka Expressway was decided to be developed as an eight-lane elevated corridor with minimal entry exit arrangements to allow smooth movements of inter-state traffic". This was cited as a reason for the high cost. But the Comptroller and Auditor General of India said there was no justification on record for planning/construction of eight lanes (elevated lanes) for average daily traffic of 55,432 passenger vehicles. Only six lanes (at grade lanes) were planned/constructed for the average annual daily traffic of 2,32,959 passenger vehicles. This is not the only highway



with a mismatch of approved and actual costs. The report revealed that across India, the sanctioned cost under the Bharatmala Pariyojana were 58 per cent higher than the approved cost. The sanctioned cost of 26,316 km of project length was Rs 8,46,588 crore (Rs 32.17 crore/km) as against CCEA approved length of 34,800 km at cost of Rs 5,35,000 crore (Rs 15.37 crore/km). Despite the increasing cost, the 2022 deadline for completing 34,800 km of national highways has not been met. Only 13,499 km of national highways length has been completed till 31 March 2023, which is 38.79 per cent of CCEA approved length. This includes the construction undertaken during the COVID pandemic. About the stark increase in costs, the report said significant changes were made in the scope of projects and cost estimates. Also, richer project specifications adopted have pushed up the sanc-

tioned cost of projects awarded under Bharatmala Pariyojana Phase 1. This has resulted in a cost increase of ? 10 crore per km of construction. CAG said here were cases of successful bidders not fulfilling tender condition or bidders being selected on basis of falsified documents. Work has been awarded without there being approved detailed project reports or was based on faulty detailed project report. It added that implementing agencies were still awarding projects without ensuring availability of requisite land, resulting in delayed commencement of projects construction and their completion. Also, many Bharatmala projects were being implemented without environmental clearance in contravention of prescribed procedure. It added that safety consultants too were not ensured at all stages of construction. Due to wrong computation of price-adjustment formula in case of some projects, contractors/concessionaires were paid excess price adjustments to the tune of Rs 99.16 crore. There was diversion of funds to the tune of Rs 3,598.52 crore from escrow accounts for HAM/BOT projects, the report added. But the report added that the pace of per day project length constructed under Bharatmala Pariyojana has improved from 1.04 km in 2018-19 to 12.37 km in 2022-23.

RUPEE DECLINES BELOW RS 83 AGAINST US DOLLAR

Chennai: A day before Independence Day, Indian Rupee on Monday declined below Rs 83 to an US dollar, the lowest since October 2022. The strengthening of the dollar against the Indian rupee is attributed to an increase in the US dollar index to 103 and the US bond yield to about 4.18 per cent. Increasing demand for crude oil also added pressure on the Indian currency. The rupee traded in the morning at Rs 83.06 against the previous closing price of Rs 82.84 and later touched Rs 83.11. Last October, the Indian currency touched a low of Rs 83.08. The rupee later recovered to Rs 82.95 possibly with the intervention of the public sector banks that sold dollars.

Woman of Kishanganj saved around 50 teenage girls from child marriage

Patna | Agencies

A woman of Bihar's Kishanganj district claimed to have saved as many as 50 teenage girls from child marriage in Seemanchal region of Bihar. Roshni Parveen, a 23 year old social worker, who underwent the plight of child marriage when she was just 14 and now she has an eight year old son, is working to prevent the child marriage. She is also planning to meet Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to fight against the social evil. "At the age of 14, my parents have got married with a middle-aged man. When

other children were planning for higher study, I was pregnant. After two years of marriage, I finally got divorce with my husband. Then I decided to save other girls from the pain I underwent and lost my childhood," Parveen said. "I went village to village in Muslim dominant Kishanganj, Araria, Purnea, Katihar, Khagaria and other districts whenever I learnt about any child marriage. I saved them from child marriage either through district administration or convincing them personally. I managed to save around 50 girls especially from Muslim community," she said.

"I underwent the pain of child marriage and I don't want other girls to experience the same plight. Hence, I decided to work for this social cause in rest of my life," Parveen said. "I am associated with Nguvu Collective, a social welfare organisation, and creating awareness personally and virtually in the region. Now, I want to meet Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to launch statewide awareness programme against the social evil. I am hoping that he will give me time so that I could tell my horrible story and many horrifying stories of other teenage girls," Parveen said.

NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister

Eknath Shinde
Chief Minister

मेरी माटी मेरा देश
(MERI MAATI MERA DESH)

MITTI KO NAMAN, VEERON KA VANDAN

Various programs organized in commemoration of immortal martyrs during the campaign...

9-30 August 2023

Dedication of Silaphalakam | Panch-Pran Pledge

Vasudha Vandan | Veeron Ka Vandan | Flag Hoisting & Rashtragaan

Happy Independence Day!

Devendra Fadnavis
Deputy Chief Minister

Eknath Shinde
Chief Minister

Ajit Pawar
Deputy Chief Minister

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'INDIA HAS CONVERTED CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES': PREZ MURMU IN I-DAY EVE ADDRESS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

President Droupadi Murmu on Monday hailed the country's resilience during turbulent times, saying that India also served as a beacon of hope for others.

Addressing the nation on the eve of the 77th Independence Day, the President in her speech said that India has converted challenges into opportunities, and has recorded high GDP growth.

She also cited the country's role as the G-20 leader.

President Murmu also touched upon the advancements in the fields of education and science pointing to the National Education Policy 2020, and the successful launch of Chandrayaan-3.

"As the G-20 represents two-thirds of the world population, this is a unique opportunity to help shape global discourse in the right direction. With the G-20 presidency, India can nudge decision-making in trade and finance towards equitable progress. Beyond trade and finance, matters of human development too are on the agenda," she said in her address.

The President added: "There are many global issues that concern all humanity and are not limited by geographical boundaries. I am confident that with India's proven leadership in



dealing with global issues, member-nations will be able to advance effective action on these fronts.

"What is notable in India's presidency of G-20 is the way this diplomatic activity has been taken to the grass-roots. There has been a first-of-its-kind campaign to encourage people's participation. It is delightful to see, for example, students enthusiastically participating in diverse contests organised in schools and colleges touching upon the themes of G-20. All the citizens are enthusiastic about events related to G-20," the President noted. Inflation, the President said, at

the global level remains a cause for worry. "But in India, the government and the Reserve Bank have managed to contain it. The government has succeeded in protecting the common people from high inflation while also providing a more extensive security cover to the poor. The world looks up to India for global economic growth," the President said.

She said the continued economic progress is driven by a two-pronged strategy.

On one hand, there is a sustained push to unleash the forces of enterprise by making it easier to do busi-

ness and generate job opportunities. On the other, proactive and expanded welfare initiatives for the needy have been taken in various domains. Giving priority to the deprived remains the focus of our policies and actions that have lifted a large number of people out of poverty in the last decade, Murmu said. Touching upon the prevalent issue of climate change, the President said: "Extreme weather events affect all. But their impact is far more severe on the poor and the marginalised. Cities and hilly terrains especially need to be made more resilient. The larger point here is that the culture of greed takes the world away from nature. We now realise the dire need to return to our roots. I know that there are still many tribal communities who live very close to nature and in harmony with it. Their values and lifestyle offer invaluable lessons for climate action." The secret of the survival of the tribal communities through ages can be summarised in one word. That single word is 'Empathy'.

The President said they have empathy for all Mother Nature's fellow children, flora and fauna alike.

Sometimes, however, the world seems to be suffering from a deficit of empathy. But history shows that such periods are only aberrations, and kindness is our fundamental nature, the President noted.

After 18 months, Nawab Malik out on bail, gets a hero's welcome from rival NCPs

Team Absolute | Mumbai

After 18 months in jail, former minister Nawab Malik walked out on bail to a rousing reception by both factions of the Nationalist Congress Party, here on Monday evening.

Malik was granted two months' conditional bail on medical grounds and was set free from a private CritiCare Asia Hospital in Kurla where he was undergoing treatment since May 2022.

NCP (Sharad Pawar) sources said that now he is likely to continue his medical treatment at home under the care of his family members.

After the Supreme Court order granting bail on Friday, Malik's legal team started the relevant formalities which were completed late this evening and the ex-firebrand minister finally walked out to temporary freedom.

Appearing weary but relieved, Malik was received by his family



members, then hundreds of supporters from the rival NCP factions greeted him, raising slogans in his favour and he got into a vehicle.

He was escorted to his car where he stepped out of the sunroof, greeted all with a smile and folded hands, but strictly declined to make any comments to the media as per the bail conditions.

Among the prominent persons who received him were NCP MP Supriya Sule who said that finally "justice has been done to Nawab-bhai".

Malik was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Feb. 23, 2022 in a case pertaining to alleged money-laundering arising out of a tainted deal in Kurla involving the mafia.

Surjewala stirs controversy by dubbing supporters of BJP as 'demons'

Kaithal (Haryana) | Agencies

Congress General Secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala stirred a huge controversy after he said that those who vote for the BJP and those who support the saffron party are like 'rakshas (demons)'.

Hitting out at the BJP-JJP government in Haryana over the alleged paper leaks in recent days, Surjewala while addressing a public meeting in Kaithal on Sunday, said, "The papers and future of the youths are being sold by Manohar Lal Khattar and Dushyant Chautala. They are selling the papers openly in the market by bidding them. That is the reason why people are urging them not to give us jobs but at least give



us an opportunity to sit in exams. But they are also snatching the opportunity," he said.

The Congress leader said, "The people of the BJP and the JJP... you are all demons. Those who vote for BJP and those who support the BJP have tendencies of demons."

He did not stop here and also said that he was cursing them from the land of Mahabharata.

"If you have to ask, then ask the fathers and mothers of the children who could not sit in exams and demand for opportunities," Surjewala remarked.

WITH DAUGHTER ON SHOULDER, MAN SHOT AT IN UP; CRITICALLY INJURED

Shahjahanpur | Agencies

In a shocking incident, a young man, carrying his one-and-a-half-year-old daughter on his shoulder, was shot by a criminal.

The video capturing this horrifying event has gone viral on the social media.

The video clip shows a young man Shoaib carrying his daughter on his shoulder when suddenly an armed assailant approaches and shoots him in the head at close range.

After the attack, the two culprits, who were waiting on a motorcycle, flee the scene.

This incident reportedly took place late on Sunday night in the Babuzai area under the Chowk police circle jurisdiction.

The sound of the gunshot alerted the victim's family members, who rushed outside. Chaos ensued at the scene, and the severely injured young man was promptly taken to the hospital. His condition remains critical.



He is now being treated in a hospital in Delhi.

The child, however, is safe having

suffered only minor injuries.

Based on the written complaint, the police have registered a report

against three suspects, including the alleged shooter, Tariq.

Two of the accused have been apprehended, while efforts are underway to locate the third.

Investigations have revealed that the accused shooter's brother was initially engaged to the same woman Chandni who later married the victim.

However, their engagement was called off, which infuriated the shooter. Feeling humiliated by the broken engagement, he orchestrated this incident as an act of revenge.

Tariq had expressed intentions of seeking revenge for the perceived humiliation multiple times within the community.

According to SP Ashok Kumar Meena, a murder case has been filed against three individuals in this matter. "Based on the video evidence, the suspects have been identified. Efforts are underway to locate and apprehend them. We have four teams dedicated to this investigation," he said.

Shifting of people from relief camps to temporary homes to start on I-Day: Manipur CM

Imphal | Agencies

The Manipur government will start shifting of violence-hit displaced people, now sheltered in relief camps, to the prefabricated temporary homes from the Independence Day (Tuesday) onwards, Chief Minister N. Biren Singh said on Monday.

The Manipur Chief Minister had earlier announced that 4,000 prefabricated temporary homes would be constructed in different districts for the people displaced by the ethnic violence, which broke out in the state on May 3.

Speaking at a function on Monday, Singh said that shifting of displaced people to prefabricated homes would start from Tuesday at a few places of the state.

"Construction of temporary homes



is now underway in full swing in many districts, and shifting of people

will be done in a phase manner as and when the construction works are

completed," Singh said, adding that the government is also planning to build permanent residents for the affected people who lost their homes due to the violence.

The Chief Minister said that regular meetings of ministers, MLAs and officials are being held to ensure that all the measures of the government are properly executed.

Scholars and prominent public figures should refrain from narrating distorted history which could hinder the peace-building process and create confusion among the people, he cautioned.

In view of the ethnic strife in Manipur, approximately 50,650 men, women and children of different communities have been displaced and are now sheltered in 350 camps, set up in schools, government buildings and auditoriums.

GJM joins hand with two separatist forces demanding separate statehood for North Bengal

Kolkata | Agencies

The Bimal Gurung-led Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) on

Monday joined hands with two other separatist forces -- Kamtapur Progressive Party (KPP) and Beer Birsha Munda Unmilan Samiti (BBMUS) -- extending the ambit for the proposed Gorkhaland state.

GJM spearheads the movement for separate Gorkhaland state proposed to be carved out of the hills of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong and the plains and Terai and Dooars in North Bengal.

The demand is for a separate statehood carved out of the eight north Bengal dis-

tricts -- Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Cooch Behar, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar and Malda.

A formal announcement on this count was made by the GJM leadership after a meeting with the two other separatist forces in Darjeeling on Monday.

The meeting was attended by GJM President Bimal Gurung and General Secretary Roshan Giri, KPP President Adhir Roy and Vice President Budharu Roy, and BBMUS Convenor Kishore Brojo. It has been decided that the joint movement in support of a separate state carved out of the eight North Bengal districts will start before the big battle of 2024

Lok Sabha polls, thus making it a poll issue.

Budharu Roy told media-persons that while the beginning of the movement on this issue will be made by these three parties, constant attempts will be on to rope in other political forces which are also in favour of separate statehood for North Bengal.

The demand for separate statehood is not new. In fact, in the recent past, this demand has also been raised by a number of BJP Lok Sabha members and legislators from North Bengal.

Now with GJM focusing on widening the ambit of a separate Gorkhaland state, a new dimension in separatist politics seems to be taking shape in the state.

The intersection of creativity and fan-fuelled participation will drive the next wave of success for India's creator economy: YouTube

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Commemorating its 15 years since its localized version launched in India, YouTube shared unique insights on how the ingenuity of Indian creators coupled with evolving preferences of fans have shaped significant trends in creation, consumption and pop culture. Since 2008, driven by an expansion of creation tools and increasing preference for personalized viewing, India's creative entrepreneurs have explored and conquered new frontiers of creative expression.

Today, as the digital video landscape is at a cusp of significant shifts taking place in technology, creativity and pop culture, YouTube continues to expand creative tools, ways to monetize and help them engage with newer audiences in meaningful ways, while giving creators and viewers a safe experience to create, discover and connect.

Ishan John Chatterjee, Director, India, YouTube, "Digital video has always had the uncommon ability to break down literacy and geographical barriers. YouTube's journey in



the country, in many ways, mirrors India's own digital transformation journey. 15 years in, YouTube has taken on many avatars - a place of discovery for trends moving the world, and a reflection of a curious, connected and vibrant India, that has embraced video as its language."

"The beating heart of YouTube is and will always be its creators, artists and partners and we're committed, as ever, to supporting the success of this ecosystem. We will continue to be laser focused on making YouTube the best platform for long-term success," he added.

Shops and business establishments proposing to operate 24x7 in Delhi have got major boost during last 10 months

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena on Monday said that he has approved the proposal for 29 more establishments to operate on a 24x7 basis in the city, taking the figure to 498, during the last one year.

Saxena has given a major boost to shops and business establishments proposing to operate 24x7 since he took over as Delhi's Lieutenant Governor in May last year.

There had been a lull in such approvals 2016 onwards with the first proposal getting cleared in 2022, after 2016.

"The establishments approved today include Hotel and Restaurants, Food, Grocery, Dairy and FMCG Products, Readymade Garments, Provision Stores, Logistics and Warehouses, Sports Goods. Saxena has been pushing for promoting ease of doing business and had set the ball rolling by approving in October last, 314 such



applications and in June this year he approved a file proposing such exemptions to 155 establishments.

Taking the momentum further, the Lieutenant Governor, who had directed the Labour Department to

expeditiously develop a 'Single Window System' as an integrated portal for granting approval of applications related to shops and business establishments proposing to operate 24x7 in the Capital, cleared fresh proposals for 29 such applications," the LG office said.

It said that with these 29 new approvals, Saxena has given the go ahead to 498 such establishments by way of exemptions under Sections 14, 15 and 16 of the Delhi Shops and Establishments Act, that enables commercial establishments to operate on a 24x7 basis, subject to certain conditions that entail welfare of the workers and security.

While approving the latest proposal of the Labour Department, the Lieutenant Governor noted that his direction to expedite the process of developing a 'Single Window System' for the registration, amendment and exemption, has already been taken up with the Industries Department which is the Nodal Department for the SWP.



AS 27 DEATHS STRIKE THANE HOSPITAL, CM ORDERS PROBE, REPORT BY AUGUST 25

With reports of another four patients dying in the past 24 hours, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has announced a time-bound probe into the unusually high death toll at the civic-run Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharashtra Hospital in Thane.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Officials declined to comment on the latest four fatalities - coming a day after 27 patients died on Saturday-Sunday night - at the Thane Municipal Corporation's 500-bed hospital located in the CM's hometown.

As a major political row erupted over the large number of deaths, Shinde ordered the setting up a 9-member committee of medical experts and to investigate the probable causes and submit its report by August 25.

Locals claimed that another 4 patients have succumbed since Sunday night at the hospital, taking the toll to 27, after the first six deaths were reported on August 9.

Top Opposition leaders including Congress state President Nana Patole, Leader of Opposition (Assembly) Vijay Wadettiwar,



Nationalist Congress Party President Sharad Pawar, Supriya Sule, MP, state President Jayant Patil, General Secretary Dr. Jitendra Awhad, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut, Leader of Opposition (Council) Ambadas Danve and others attacked the state government for various lapses leading to the multiple fatalities. Among the reasons cited by the

Thane Municipal Corporation (TMC) authorities are a sudden surge in the number of patients from far-flung areas, including neighbouring district of Palghar, lower intake capacity owing to shifting of some wards, and some patients admitted who were already critical, were rushed here from other hospitals.

Not convinced, the Opposition has slammed the ruling Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party-NCP government alleging lapses on various counts, insufficient resources, lack of adequate medical, nursing and para-medical staff at the CSMH and an inept administration as responsible for the tragedy.

An agitated Sharad Pawar demanded to know what the government was doing while Danve said the CM is responsible for the multiple deaths of innocent patients in the past few days.

NCP not joining BJP: Sharad Pawar

Team Absolute | Pune/Mumbai

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) President Sharad Pawar on Monday reiterated that there was no question of his party joining the BJP as it "does not fit with the national policy of NCP".

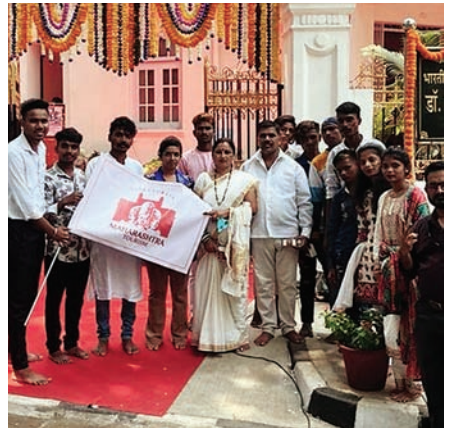
Addressing reporters, the 83-year-old NCP chief made it clear that nobody from his faction would go with the BJP, scotching all speculation on this count in the past couple of days.

"Some of our colleagues have taken a different stand on this issue... Our 'well-wishers' are making such efforts... As the national president of NCP, I state that NCP will not go with the BJP," declared Pawar.

He also said that the NCP state President Jayant Patil's relative was served a notice from the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to push him to the BJP.

"The central agencies are being misused... Patil's kin has been sent an ED notice to pressurise him...", Pawar said.

The NCP leader's statements came after he and Patil had separate meetings with NCP (AP) leader and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar over the weekend, sparking political rumours. Sharad Pawar said that Ajit is his nephew and he met him as the father-figure of the family and wondered why it should become the topic of such baseless discussions in the media.



The meetings elicited sharp reactions from Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) partner Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut who rued that such repeated actions "create confusion" among the allies and the political workers down the line. Sharad Pawar said with a tone of finality that the MVA is united and there is no cause for confusion among the allies -- Congress and Shiv Sena (UBT) -- as its ideology is opposed to the BJP.

The NCP supreme arrived in his hometown of Baramati on his first visit nearly six weeks after the party split with Ajit Pawar going separately on July 1, and joining the ruling Shiv Sena-BJP government as a Deputy Chief Minister on July 2.

'I got offer to join BJP', confirms MNS chief Raj Thackeray

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) President Raj Thackeray on Monday confirmed that he has got an offer to join the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), but he has not yet taken a final call on it, here on Monday.

Speaking at a party meeting here, Raj Thackeray -- the estranged cousin of former Chief Minister and Shiv Sena (UBT) President Uddhav Thackeray -- did not reveal who made the offer, or when.

However, he mentioned that he did not take any decision as the Shiv Sena faction of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) group led by Deputy CM Ajit Pawar are part of the Shiv Sena-BJP government in Maharashtra headed by Eknath Shinde.



"As Shinde and Ajit Pawar are with the government, and since the BJP has not clarified what will be done with Ajit Pawar, I have not been able to take any decision on this," Raj Thackeray said.

He further contended that Ajit Pawar has gone to the BJP with the blessings of NCP President Sharad Pawar, and very soon the remaining faction of the NCP will also join Ajit Pawar.

The MNS chief said that since 2014, Sharad Pawar has

always adopted a 'pro-Narendra Modi' stance and predicted that after the Ajit Pawar group, the Sharad Pawar camp will also join the state government.

Ruling Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Shirsat and others welcomed Raj Thackeray's statements on the BJP offer and said that if he took it, "that will be beneficial for the MNS" and the three-party alliance in power, while NCP MLA Rohit Pawar, the grand-nephew of Sharad Pawar, rubbished the MNS leader's forecast.

Raj Thackeray added that he addressed the party workers and leaders on the 2024 Lok Sabha and Assembly elections, though he expressed doubts whether the planned civic elections are likely to be held anytime soon given the current political scenario in the state.

Shabana Azmi hoists the Tricolour in Melbourne to celebrate Independence Day

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Veteran actress Shabana Azmi hoisted the Indian flag at the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne 2023.

As the Tricolour fluttered against the Melbourne skyline, the shared emotions of patriotism and unity resonated strongly with attendees.

Commenting on the ceremony, Shabana said: "To be having this honour to hoist the Indian flag, the flag that I'm so proud of, the flag all of us present today are proud of in Melbourne is an honour I never believed I could have."

"I would like to reiterate that we are here to celebrate Indian cinema in Melbourne, and I truly believe that art knows no boundaries and cinema can be an instrument for social change."

The Indian Film Festival of Melbourne 2023 continues to be a significant platform for showcasing the vibrancy and diversity of Indian cinema on the global stage and the festival started on 11th August and will



conclude on 20th August.

The IFFM 2023 also feted many Indian personalities for their contribution. Rani Mukerji was named the Best Actress In Film (Female), Vijay Varma as Best Actor (Male) In Series took home the top honours at the 14th edition of Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IFFM).

Rani won for 'Mrs Chatterjee Vs Norway' and Mohit Agarwal took home the award for Best Performance in Film (Male) for 'Agra'.

While 'Sita Ramam' was announced the Best Film, 'Agra' the Best Indie Film, Kannada Filmmaker Prithvi Konanur was feted with Best Director.

Vijay Varma for 'Dahaad' and Rajshri Deshpande for 'Trial By Fire' were named as Best Performance (Male) and Best Performance (Female) in a series respectively. Period Drama 'Jubilee' starring Prosenjit Chatterjee, Aparshakti Khurana, Sidhant Gupta, Aditi Rao Hydari, Wamiqa Gabbi and Ram Kapoor was tagged as the Best Series.

MAHARASHTRA HOUSING ALLOTMENT LOTTERY WON'T BE PAUSED OVER QUOTA REQUEST

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bombay High Court has refused to pass any urgent orders on a plea seeking for the Special Backward Class (SBC) to be included as a reserved category in the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development (MHADA) lottery for housing allotments.

The petitioner, Deepal Shahu Shirvale, had sought that the lottery, to be declared on Monday, be stayed pending hearing of the plea or for the SBC to be included in the reserved category.

A division bench of Justices Gautam Patel and Neela Gokhale in their order on August 11 refused to pass any orders granting interim relief on the plea, noting that there was no urgency.

MHADA's advocate Uday Warunjkar opposed the plea and said the housing body has the power to frame rules and regulations.



He said there are 11 reserved categories at present and the SBC category is not one of them. The bench while refusing any

urgent relief observed the plea has not challenged the MHADA rules.

"We do not know how we can require the insertion of a special reserved category in an advertisement that otherwise follows the rules framed by MHADA absent a challenge to the vires of the Rule itself," the court said.

"The petitioner will have to establish that there is a right to the inclusion of that category in the Rules and this will have to be answered on merits," the bench added.

The court also said the petition does not lend itself to an interim order of the kind the petitioner seeks.

It also ordered the petitioner to delete the names of the Chief Minister and Housing Minister as party respondents in the plea, noting they are unnecessarily joined.

The petitioner was at liberty to file an application challenging the rule, the High Court said, adding the plea shall be heard in due course.

Maha Congress briefs Rahul Gandhi on Sharad Pawar-Ajit Pawar rendezvous

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Congress President Nana Patole has briefed senior leader and MP Rahul Gandhi on the weekend meeting between Maha Vikas Aghadi ally Nationalist Congress Party President Sharad Pawar with NCP breakaway faction's Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, here on Monday.

The Pawar uncle-nephew rendezvous duo has ignited a political row among the MVA allies with both Congress and Shiv Sena (UBT) taking umbrage at the developments which creates confusion in the peoples' minds.

Patole told mediapersons that this morning, he had given Gandhi an update on the closed-door meet of the Pawars in Pune over the weekend. "Such private meetings lead to doubts in public minds... If they are relatives they can visit each other's homes, why conduct a secret meeting," demanded Patole.

He said that matter was discussed even with Sena (UBT) President Uddhav Thackeray



and the Congress high command as well as Gandhi, coming barely a fortnight ahead of the National Opposition I.N.D.I.A. conclave here on Aug. 31-Sep. 01.

"We are closely watching the political developments in the state and the matter will be discussed at the INDIA conference later," said a grim Patole.

MAN ARRESTED FOR FLASHING MINOR IN LOCAL TRAIN NEAR MUMBAI

Thane: Police have arrested a 24-year-old man for allegedly flashing a minor girl when she was travelling with her mother in a local train in Maharashtra's Thane district, an official said on Monday.

The incident took place on Saturday night in the air-conditioned local train, senior police inspector Pandhari Kandhe of Thane Government Railway Police (GRP) said.

When the train left from Kalwa, the accused, who was sitting opposite to the woman and her daughter, allegedly flashed the girl and made some gestures, the official said.

The girl's mother raised an alarm following which the accused was caught and handed over to the Thane GRP, he said.

The accused, identified as Krishna Rathod, was booked under relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, the official said.

MAHA DOT LAUNCHES MUMBAI 'FREEDOM FIGHTERS TOUR CIRCUIT'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Coinciding with the I-Day celebrations, the Maharashtra Department of Tourism has organised a unique five-day long 'Freedom Fighters Tour Circuit-Unveil the Untold Story', traversing prominent locations in Mumbai connected with significant historic moments in India's Freedom Movement, an official said here on Monday.

The DoT along with the Tourism Guides Association (TGA) and FRS Tours & Travels, launched the circuit on Sunday and it will continue till August 17.

"The initiative has garnered a good response and it will improve over the next three days," said an excited TGA President Farhan Shaikh, terming it as a 'must visit' for lovers of history desiring to peep into some glorious aspects in the struggle for the country's Freedom from British Rule in Mumbai.

The circuit covers: Rajgruha, Raghavji Road, August Kranti Maidan, Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit

Pathshala, Ajit Villa, Mani Bhavan, Girgaum Chowpaty, Imperial Cinema, Sardar Gruha, Asiatic Library and the Gateway of India, all in south Mumbai, said Shaikh.

Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit Pathshala is the place where the foundations of the 'Indian National Congress' were laid in 1885, making it one of the most important aspects of the entire Freedom Struggle that started with the First War of Independence in 1857.

Rajgruha in Dadar was the residence of the Chief Architect of Indian Constitution, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, where he spent many years.

Raghavji Road was the home of the legendary Yusuf Meherally who came up with the most iconic slogans of the freedom movement like 'Quit India' and 'Simon Go Back', which are remembered even today.

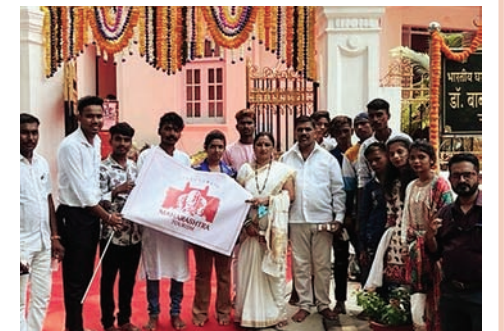
Ajit Villa was one of the locations of 'Secret Congress Radio' launched by a fiery 22-year-old girl, Usha Mehta in mid-August 1942, just five days after Mahatma Gandhi's historic 'Quit India' call to the British.

The Imperial Cinema with its lush gardens was the venue for 'The First Satyagraha' and the maiden meeting between Mahatma Gandhi and Mohammed Ali Jinnah, later the Founder of Pakistan.

Gowalia Tank, now August Kranti Maidan enjoys a special place in Indian history as the venue from where Gandhiji and other top Congress leaders gave the ultimatum to the British Raj with the 'Quit India' call on August 8, 1942, plus hoisted the Tricolour for the first time.

Most of the top leaders were arrested from there but the struggle fructified exactly five years later, when, on August 15, 1947, India got Independence. Sardargruha was the abode of Bal Gangadhar Lokmanya Tilak who lived in Room No. 198 on the 4th floor during his visits to Mumbai from Pune, and also the place where he spent the last few years of his life till his death on August 1, 1920. Girgaum Chowpaty is the venue where Tilak was accorded a public funeral with over two lakhs paying their last respects.

The Freedom history is also closely entwined



with Mani Bhavan, or Gandhi Museum, where Gandhiji had strategized many of his struggles, like 'Non-Cooperation Movement' (1920-1922), 'Satyagraha', 'Khadi Movement' (taking forward the Swadeshi Movement of 1903 on a mass-scale), 'Khilafat Movement' (1919-1922), etc.

The imposing Gateway of India is the monument from where the last British regiment marched out after the country gained Independence on August 15, 1947.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Market consolidating at higher levels in absence of any positive trigger

After a tepid start, Nifty made a gradual recovery during the day as buying emerged at lower levels in index heavyweights, Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services, has said. Domestic equities had weak handover from its global peers as high US inflation and mounting trouble in China's real estate market dented the sentiments. Even on the domestic front, IIP data came at 3 months low. The index closed with minuscule gains of 6 points at 19,435 levels. Except for IT, FMCG, and Media, all sectors ended in red, he said. Caution was seen in the market today on account of fragile global factors and ahead of India's CPI data that would be released later on Monday. Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services said following weak performances in Asian markets, the domestic indices commenced the day with a negative bias, prompted by discouraging domestic industrial data along with concerns over demand from China. However, the indices managed to recover from their initial losses, ending the day on a relatively neutral note. India's wholesale inflation persisted in negative territory, albeit moderating to -1.36 per cent, as the decline in fuel prices was counterbalanced by higher food costs. India's CPI inflation, due to be released on Monday, is anticipated to exceed the RBI's tolerance level of 6 per cent due to mounting pressure from elevated food prices, he said.

MINISCULE PRESENCE OF INDIA PARTIES IN NE GIVES BJP A HEAD START

Sujit Chakraborty

The Congress led Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) is yet to get any ally in the eight northeastern states even though the grand old party governed almost all the states for decades. In contrast, as many as eleven parties from the eight northeastern states are the allies of the BJP led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) making it the dominant alliance in the region with a total of 25 Lok Sabha seats and 498 assembly seats in eight states.

Of the 498 MLAs in eight states, the Congress has only 48 members (9.63 per cent) while the BJP has 183 members (36.74 per cent). Of the 25 Lok Sabha seats, 14 are currently with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) while the Congress has four and seven seats are held by state parties and Independents.

The Assam's All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) in Assam, Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) in Nagaland, Mizo National Front (MNF) in Mizoram, National People's Party (NPP) in Meghalaya, Naga People's Front (NPF) in Manipur, Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) in Sikkim and an Independent (Naba Kumar Sarania) in Assam have one seat each.

Of the 25 Lok Sabha seats, Assam has 14 parliamentary constituencies, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura have two seats each, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim have one seat each.

The Congress after governing most of the northeastern states for many decades lost Assam in 2016 and Manipur to the BJP in 2017. In 2018 it was defeated in Meghalaya by the NPP led alliance and in the same year in Mizoram by the MNF. With the Congress slipping in its stronghold, the eight northeastern states are now dominated by the BJP and the state parties, which are indispensable for the national parties to govern the region.

The saffron party in alliance with the other parties is now running governments in Assam (since 2016), Arunachal Pradesh (since 2016), Manipur (since 2017) and Tripura (since 2018).

Meghalaya's NPP, Nagaland's NDPP, Mizoram's MNF and Sikkim's SKM with a solid political base are governing their respective states and are allies of the BJP led NDA.

The NPP, headed by Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma, however, has a substantial base in Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and a reasonable number of MLAs in these three northeastern states besides Meghalaya, where the party is dominating the Meghalaya Democratic Alliance (MDA) government.

In the NDA meeting held on July 18 in New Delhi, as many as eleven parties from the eight northeastern states took part.

The parties include, NPP, NDPP, MNF, SKM, Indigenous People's Front of Tripura, Naga People's Front, Asom Gana Parishad, United People's Party Liberal, Kuki People's Alliance, United Democratic Party, Hill State People's Democratic Party.

After attending the NDA meeting in New Delhi, the top



leaders of these parties expressed the confidence that the BJP-led NDA would do well in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls in the northeast. On the other hand, no party from the northeastern states took part in the two-day meeting of the opposition alliance -- Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) -- in Bengaluru.

The parties, which have a substantial base in the northeastern states and are not part of either grouping, NDA and INDIA, are Assam's All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), Tripura's Tipra Motha Party (TMP), Mizoram's Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) and Manipur People's Party (MPP).

The Muslim based party AIUDF, headed by Lok Sabha MP Badruddin Ajmal and former royal scion Pradyot Bikram Manikya Deb Barman led TMP have a strong base in their respective areas and might pose a challenge to both the BJP and the Congress in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

The AIUDF has 15 members in the 126-member Assam assembly.

The ZPM with six MLAs in the 40-member Mizoram assembly is the main opposition party in that state.

Founded in 1968, the MPP, which is considered one of the oldest regional parties in India, is currently weakened due to many reasons including factional feud. It has formed governments in Manipur in three different regimes in 1972-73, 1974 and 1990-1992.

The TMP, after capturing the politically important Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) in April 2021, has been demanding elevation of the areas of the autonomous body by granting a 'Greater Tipraland State' or a separate state status under Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution.

Highlighting the 'Greater Tipraland State' demand and

throwing a challenge to all the national parties -- BJP, CPI (M), Congress and Trinamool Congress -- the TMP, the first tribal-based party in Tripura since 1952, emerged as the principal opposition in the state in the February assembly polls and is now the main stakeholder of the vote share of tribals, who always played a vital role in the electoral politics of Tripura.

Before next year's parliamentary poll, eyeing the 14 Lok Sabha seats in Assam, the Congress like its previous efforts, has initiated moves to form a 'Mahagathbandhan' (grand alliance) with the like-minded smaller and state parties.

The Congress held a meeting of 11 opposition parties excluding the AIUDF, Aam Aadmi Party and Trinamool Congress in Guwahati recently.

Assam Congress president Bhupen Bora, who called the meeting, had said that they would check the division of votes in next year's Lok Sabha polls in Assam as the BJP always gets electoral mileage due to the division of votes among the non-BJP parties. In the past nine years, many prominent leaders in the northeast left the Congress, including Himanta Biswa Sarma, Sushmita Dey, Ripun Bora, Pijush Hazarika, Jayanta Mallabarua, Pallab Lochan Das (Assam), Manik Saha and Ratan Lal Nath (Tripura), N. Biren Singh (Manipur), Pema Khandu (Arunachal Pradesh), Neiphiu Rio (Nagaland), and Mukul Sangma and Ampareen Lyngdoh (Meghalaya), dealing a severe blow to the party. The chief ministers of five northeastern states -- Himanta Biswa Sarma (Assam), Manik Saha (Tripura), N. Biren Singh (Manipur), Pema Khandu (Arunachal Pradesh), and Neiphiu Rio (Nagaland) -- are all former Congress leaders.

international

HAWAII'S MAUI ISLAND WILDFIRE DEADLIEST IN CENTURY AS DEATHS NEAR 100

Kahului (Hawaii) | Agencies

The raging wildfire that swept through Lahaina town on the Hawaiian island of Maui this week has killed at least 93 people, making it the most deadly US fire in a century.

Maui County officials said early Sunday that firefighting crews are continuing to extinguish flare-ups in the Lahaina and Upcountry Maui fires. In the Upcountry Maui fire, three structures in Olinda and 16 structures in Kula were destroyed, CBS News reported.

Earlier on Saturday, Hawaii Governor Josh Green warned that the death toll could rise "significantly" as forensic work continues to identify the victims, the BBC reported.

"It will certainly be the worst natural disaster that Hawaii ever faced... We can only wait and support those who are living. Our focus now is to reunite people when we can and get them housing and get them health care, and then turn to rebuilding," Green reportedly said Saturday as he toured the devastation



site. It is thought that more than 2,000 buildings have been damaged or destroyed since the fires broke out. The majority of these were homes in the Lahaina area, the British news broadcaster reported.

The death toll surpassed 2018's Camp Fire in California, which killed 86 people.

Multiple media reports said that the Hawaii emergency management records do not indicate the warning sirens sounded before the fire hit the town.

Fighter jet crashes at US air show, 2 people eject safely

Washington: Two people ejected safely from a fighter jet that later crashed during an airshow in the US state of Michigan, the media reported.

Shortly after 4 p.m. on Sunday evening, the two occupants parachuted from the MiG-23 fighter jet south of Willow Run Airport, near the city of Ypsilanti, and landed in Belleville Lake, CBS News quoted the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as saying.

In a statement, the Wayne County Airport Authority said that neither of the two men suffered significant injuries but both were taken to a local hospital as a precaution, CNN reported. The aircraft then crashed in the parking lot of a nearby apartment complex and struck unoccupied vehicles, the Authority said, adding that no one in the apartment complex was injured as a result.

Organisers of Thunder Over Michigan, a two-day event of airshows, said they would stop the show after a "situation", but did not share further details.

"Please make your way into your vehicles and calmly make your way out of the airfield. Please be patient as we control traffic around the area," it announced in the social media post.

The incident will be probed by the FAA and the National Transportation Safety Board.

Over 2,000 war-era explosives found buried in Cambodia school

Phnom Penh | Agencies

The Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC) experts have recovered more than 2,000 pieces of war-era unexploded ordnance (UXO) buried in a school campus in Kratie province, an official said on Monday.

"Within a three-day period of operations on August 11-13 at the Queen Kosamak High School in Kratie province, CMAC's Remnants of War team has cleared 2,116 pieces of unexploded ordnances as the remnants of war," CMAC's director-general Heng Ratana told Xinhua news agency.

Those unearthed UXO included 2,033 M79 grenades, 63 DK75 rounds, 18 Fuze M48 shells, one H107 bullet and one B40 bullet, he said.

"According to our experts at the site, there still be many more pieces of unexploded munitions within this area," Ratana said, adding that the school will be closed temporarily for a few more days for a clearance operation.

He said the explosive munitions were discovered after the school



cleared land to expand a garden.

Cambodia is one of the countries worst affected by landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERWs).

An estimated 4 million to 6 million landmines and other munitions had been left over from three decades of internal conflicts and a US bombing campaign.

According to Yale University, between 1965 and 1973, the US had dropped some 230,516 bombs on 113,716 sites in Cambodia.

According to the government's latest report, from 1979 to June 2023, landmine and ERW explosions had claimed 19,821 lives and either injured or amputated 45,205 others in Cambodia.

The Cambodian government has vowed to clear all landmines and unexploded artillery by 2025.

Indian-American economist awarded top Harvard University prize

New York | Agencies

Indian-American economist Raj Chetty was awarded Harvard University's coveted George Ledlie Prize for using big data to uncover myths, barriers to achieving the American Dream. Chetty is the William A. Ackman Professor of Economics at Harvard University and director of Opportunity Insights -- a group of economists based at Harvard who study inequality. "Raj's groundbreaking work on economic mobility and his efforts to share this data with policymakers are making the American Dream more accessible to all," said University Provost and Chief Academic Officer Alan M. Garber.



from poverty. Chetty said he became interested in this work because of his own background, coming to the US from India with his parents when he was nine-years-old. He said he saw the disparities not only between New Delhi and the US, but also between himself and his cousins.

He added that it was common at that time in developing countries that a family would pick only one child to get advanced education because they couldn't afford to educate all the kids. The work of Opportunity Insights is focused on helping policymakers and economists understand the real-life factors behind economic mobility and pave the way for new approaches to make the American Dream available to all.

His work applies a big-data approach to the science of economic opportunity -- providing granular insights in much the same way that a microscope does for the biological sciences.

Chetty said one of the most impactful outcomes they've been able to observe is the role geography plays in children's outcomes.

In a historic win, Sikh graduates US Marine boot camp with articles of faith

New York | Agencies

A Sikh army recruit, who fought a two-year-long legal battle to keep his articles of faith, has graduated from the US Marine Corps recruit training with his turban, beard and unshorn hair, paving way for religious freedom in the American military.

Jaskirat Singh, who was shipped off for boot camp in May, graduated on August 11 after three months of hard training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego. "I am honored to serve my country in the Marine Corps, and proud that I was able to do so while respecting my Sikh faith," Jaskirat was cited as saying in a Sikh Coalition release.

"I hope that my graduation sends a clear message to other young Sikhs who are considering military service: Your faith does not have to be a barrier to any career," he said.

"He was a squad leader throughout training," Major Joshua Pena, a spokesman for the Marine Corps Training and Education Command, told Military.com.

"He met all the standards. He's a Marine... We're really excited to see what he does with his career,"



Major Pena added, Jaskirat, along with Aekash Singh and Milaap Singh Chahal, had sued the US government in April last year after the Marine Corps offered an accommodation that would require Sikhs to surrender their turbans and beards while at boot camp. They argued that allowing Sikhs to wear religious beards would disrupt troop uniformity and appearance among the recruits, ultimately threatening national security.

In a historic move last December, the District of Columbia Circuit Court of Appeals ultimately

granted a preliminary injunction to allow Jaskirat to attend recruit training with his articles of faith.

The court cited that the present Corps' boot camp rule of cutting hair and shaving beards as a violation of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). "Singh (Jaskirat) is the latest in a long line of Sikhs to prove that turbans and beards pose no barrier to honorable and capable military service. Now, with a forward-looking policy change, the Marine Corps can ensure that it continues to welcome more capable recruits from all faith backgrounds," Amandeep S. Sidhu from Winston & Strawn LLP, said.

"His achievement is yet another testament to the simple fact that no one should be made to choose between any career and their religious beliefs," Giselle Klapper, Deputy Legal Director of the Sikh Coalition, said.

Jaskirat's case was represented by the Sikh Coalition, Winston & Strawn, the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, and BakerHostetler.

Other branches of the US military -- the US Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard -- already accommodate the religious requirements of Sikhism.



Assembly polls

BJP STRUGGLES TO CONTROL RIFT AMONG TOP LEADERS



Praveen Dwivedi | Bhopal

Internal differences among the top leaders of the Madhya Pradesh BJP unit continue to intensify even though the central leadership took full command of the poll preparations and has appointed two Union Ministers -- Bhupendra Yadav and Ashwini Vaishnav -- as election in-charge beside appointing the seniormost state-based leader and Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar as the convener.

dents against the tribals and ST/SC communities, especially Sidhi's pee-gate issue last month in this upper caste dominated area, have escalated the resentment of people belonging to both the upper and lower castes ahead of the assembly elections due around four months later.

Already struggling to counter anti-incumbency against its nearly two decades (except a brief period of the Congress government) of rule, the ghar-wapsi episode of former MLA couple from Rewa district Abhay Mishra and his wife Neelam Mishra recently has not just surprised the party workers, but the development has also annoyed two-time former minister and BJP leader of the Vindhya region - Rajendra Shukla.

Abhay Mishra, who runs a liquor business in Rewa and has imposed his own rules there, had won the assembly election on a BJP ticket in 2008 from Semaria constituency. His wife Neelam Mishra was also elected MLA from the same seat in 2013. However, the power tussle between Rajendra Shukla and Abhay Mishra came to the fore in 2018 when the latter's wife and the then sitting BJP MLA Neelam Mishra had broken down in the House and had staged a dharna in the well, alleging that her family was fac-

ing threats to life from her own party leader.

After that incident, the Mishra couple shifted to the Congress. Abhay Mishra had contested the assembly election against Rajendra Shukla in 2018 and lost by a margin of more than 18,000 votes. Mishra was positioning himself as the contender for the ticket either from Rewa or Semaria, however, aware of his image among the people after back to back survey reports, Congress state president Kamal Nath, who is in search of winnable candidates, denied him a ticket.

Subsequently, Mishra, who has already tried his best to get a ticket either for his wife or for himself from any political party such as the BSP or the AAP, and has a good bonding with state Home Minister Narottam Mishra, finally made his ghar-wapsi last week. "What annoys Rajendra Shukla is that Mishra's ghar-wapsi happened with the consent of chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. Further, Mishra made a statement that the state BJP leadership has tasked him to win the Rewa and Samaria assembly seats," a Rewa-based senior BJP leader told IANS on condition of anonymity. The sitting BJP MLA from Semaria, K. P. Tripathi who is close to Rajendra Shukla, had won the election in 2018 with a margin of 7000 votes against the Congress' Triyugi Narayan Shukla. Mishra's ghar-

wapsi has also upset sitting BJP MLA Tripathi as both belong to Semaria and do not let go any chance to belittle each other.

"People of Vindhya region were already annoyed with the party leadership because despite winning 24 out of 30 assembly seats under the leadership of Rajendra Shukla in the Vindhya region, he wasn't given a place in CM Chouhan's cabinet. It is really very shocking for all of us that despite knowing the image of Mishra, why did the state leadership not find a better person instead of him. If this issue is not resolved, the BJP would pay the price in at least four assembly seats in Rewa district," said a source who has been closely monitoring Vindhya's politics for the last one decade and is associated with the RSS.

Four-time MLA and two-time minister Rajendra Shukla, who was once the favorite of CM Chouhan, has positioned himself as a prominent Brahmin political face in the Vindhya region after former assembly speaker Srinivas Tiwari, who died in January 2018. Sources aware of the development told IANS that Rajendra Shukla and K. P. Tripathi reached Bhopal on Monday and they are likely to meet CM Chouhan and the Union Ministers appointed as the MP BJP's election in-charge team to raise their voice.

CM CHOUHAN WILL UNFURL THE FLAG AT THE STATE LEVEL INDEPENDENCE DAY CEREMONY

Bhopal : Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will be the chief guest of the state level Independence Day ceremony on August 15 at Lal Parade Ground in Bhopal. CM Chouhan will hoist the flag at the main function at 9 am and take salute of the parade.

There will be National Tune, Parade Salute and Parade Inspection on the occasion. CM Chouhan will deliver a message to the people of the state. The live telecast of the main function will be made on Doordarshan Madhya Pradesh, regional news channels and social media.

MP BJP hits out at Congress over Surjewala's remark

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Congress leader and Rajya Sabha MP Randeep Surjewala's alleged derogatory remark 'Rakshas' (demons) for BJP supporters has sparked a nationwide political controversy.

The BJP in poll-bound Madhya Pradesh, which has been facing relentless attacks from the Congress over alleged 'corruption' charges, has found ample opportunity to hit out at the opposition.

Surjewala's controversial remark came just four months before the assembly elections where he has been appointed as a senior observer for Madhya Pradesh. Hence, the BJP leadership has launched a scathing attack on Surjewala and the Congress. Responding to Surjewala's alleged remark on BJP supporters, chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said the Congress leader calls people 'Rakshas'. "Congress leaders call people Rakshas. It is the Congress' real face. I want to ask Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi whether they consider the people of this country Rakshas," Chouhan asked.

Hitting out at the central Congress leadership, Chouhan said those who claim to run the 'shop of love' consider the public as demons. "Are crores of people who voted for the BJP Rakshas as the Congress leader is say-



ing? Madhya Pradesh is my temple, the people living in it are my God and their priest is Shivraj Singh Chouhan," the CM added.

Addressing the Congress 'Jan Akrosh' rally in Kaithal (Haryana) on Sunday, Surjewala had said, "Don't give a job, at least give a chance to sit in the job. People of the BJP and the JJP are 'rakshas' (demons) and those who vote for the BJP and support them are 'rakshas' too. Today, I curse them from this land of the Mahabharata."

Man arrested for pelting stones at Vande Bharat Express

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Railway Police on Monday arrested a man for pelting stones and damaging windows of Bhopal-New Delhi semi-high speed Vande Bharat Express in Morena area of the state.

Railway officials said that the incident occurred at Banmore railway station in Morena district on Sunday. The accused has been arrested by the Railway Protection Force (RPF).

Railway officials said after examining the CCTV footage, the police arrested a man, identified as Firoz Khan (20) in connection with the stone throwing and booked him under provisions of the Railways Act.

Officials said that during interrogation, the accused admitted to have committed the offence.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched three Vande Bharat Express trains for Madhya Pradesh,



The first one from Bhopal to New Delhi was launched on April 1.

Two Vande Bharat Express trains - Bhopal to Indore and Bhopal to

Jabalpur were launched in July this year.

MP govt changes Collector on first day of newly-formed Mauganj district

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Soon after Mauganj became the 53rd district of Madhya Pradesh, the new District Collector was suddenly changed within a few hours of his appointment and a new officer immediately put in place.

The Madhya Pradesh government issued a gazette notification on Sunday regarding the formation of Mauganj as a new district as had been promised by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan in March this year. Announcing that the headquarters of the new district will be Mauganj, the state government also appointed a new District Collector and the Superintendent of Police (SP). However, the newly-formed Mauganj district added an interesting chapter

on the very first day of its existence -- that the district collector was changed within a few hours of the appointment. Soniya Meena, a 2013 batch IAS officer, who is posted as a director with the tribal welfare department, was appointed as the first collector of Mauganj, but was cancelled soon after.

However, a few hours later (during late Sunday night), the state government issued a notification mentioning that Ajay Srivastava, a 2013 batch IAS officer will be the first collector of Mauganj. Srivastava was earlier posted as additional commissioner in the Scheduled Tribe and Finance Corporation tribal in the Madhya Pradesh government. "Ajay Srivastava, (additional commissioner Scheduled Tribe and Finance Corporation of MP

govt.) has been appointed as collector of Mauganj until the next order. Soniya Meena's appointment as collector of Mauganj has been cancelled," a notification issued by the General Administration Department (GAD) read. IPS officer Veerendra Jain, who was previously commandant of the 8th Battalion in Chhindwara district, was assigned as the Superintendent of Police (SP) of Mauganj.

According to the government orders, three tehsils from the Rewa district -- Mauganj, Hanumana and Devalab will in Mauganj district, while the nine tehsils, namely -- Huzur, Huzur Nagar, Jawa, Teonthar, Raipur Karchuliyan, Mangawan, Semaria, Sirmaur and Gurh will remain in Rewa district.

GOVERNOR PATEL EXTENDS GREETINGS AND GOOD WISHES TO THE CITIZENS ON INDEPENDENCE DAY

Bhopal : Governor Mangubhai Patel has extended greetings and good wishes to the citizens on 15th August Independence Day. Governor Patel has paid tributes to the revolutionaries, patriots and brave martyrs who sacrificed their lives for freedom.

Governor Patel has said in his message that the whole world is looking at India with hope and possibilities in every field. "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" is being proclaimed all over the world. He said that the Independence Day is an occasion to take inspiration from the sacrifices of the martyrs and to make a commitment to move towards new horizons.

Along with CM Chouhan about 100 Ladli Bahnas of Bhopal plant saplings Extended greetings on Independence Day

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of different species in Smart Garden along with about 100 Ladli Bahnas, residents of different localities of Bhopal city. CM Chouhan extended Independence Day greetings to the Ladli Bahnas. He not only planted saplings with the sisters, but also inquired about the well-being of their families. Chief Minister Chouhan asked the sisters, how are the preparations for Rakhi going on. All is well at home. He said to the Ladli Bahnas "Be happy and make progress."



BJP MLA's son absconding after firing at tribal man arrested

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh police on Sunday arrested Vivekanand Vaishya, the son of BJP MLA Ramlallu Vaishya, for allegedly shooting at a tribal man on August 3.

Ramlallu Vaishya is the sitting MLA from Singrauli, the hub of coalmines in Madhya Pradesh. Vivekanand (40) had allegedly fired at Surya Khairwar on August 3 in the Morbi area following an argument with a group of persons near the Budhi Mai Mata temple.

"Vivekanand Vaishya was arrested from the Chatka Basti area under the Morba police station limits at 1 a.m. on Sunday," said SDOP Krishna Kumar Pandey.

Vivekanand was absconding since the shooting incident, prompting the police to announce a reward of Rs 10,000 for anyone providing information leading to his arrest. The police had booked him for on charges of



attempt to murder, criminal intimidation and other offences under the Indian Penal Code and Arms Act, as well as the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

The police said that in June last year, Vivekanand had allegedly assaulted a forest guard named Sanjeev Shukla. He was later released on bail.

Supplier of illegal weapons arrested in Delhi

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Bhopal

Ahead of Independence Day, the Delhi Police's Special Cell has arrested an inter-state arms and ammunition supplier and recovered five illicit pistols from his possession, an official said on Monday.

The officials said that the accused, Anil Sharma a.k.a Bhopali (24), a resident of Kharagone in Madhya Pradesh, used to procure the illicit pistols from his state for supplying the same to different criminals in national capital and its peripherals.

The Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Pratiksha Godara said that in view of the use of illegal firearms in various crimes in Delhi and adjoining states, the police team was working round-the-clock to thwart the nefarious designs of such anti-social elements.

"On August 9, we received specific inputs regarding an arms trafficker, Anil in Delhi and subsequently, he was apprehended along with five illicit pistols of .32 bore," said the DCP.

On interrogation, Anil revealed that he had completed his BCA and D-Pharma courses in the year 2022 in Madhya Pradesh and during his studies,



he came into contact with bad elements and got involved in the supply of illegal arms in Kharagone to meet his daily needs. "His relatives are living in Bahadurgarh, Haryana, and therefore he visits Bahadurgarh on a regular interval. There, he came into contact with the local criminals of Haryana and Outer Delhi. To earn quick money, he also started selling pistols in the area. He used to procure pistols from a supplier

based in Kharagone, Madhya Pradesh," said the DCP.

Anil further disclosed that he had come to Delhi to deliver this consignment of illicit pistols to one of his contacts at Ghevra Mod, Delhi.

"He also divulged that he would purchase an illicit pistol for Rs 10,000 to Rs 12,000 and sell the same to criminals for Rs 35,000 to Rs 50,000 per piece," the DCP added.

MISSING AFRICAN CHEETAH CAPTURED

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A South African female cheetah -- Nirva, who has been missing from the Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh since July 21, was captured on Sunday, an official said.

It came as a big relief to the officials associated with 'project cheetah'.

Two female cheetahs -- Nirva and Dhatri, had gone out of the radar and their radio collars also stopped working.

Dhatri was found dead on August 2.

The KNP officials, however, continued their search for Nirva relentlessly.

As per a press note issued by Chief Wildlife Warden of the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department on Sunday, Nirva was caught at around 10 a.m. in the Dhoret range of the KNP.

Veterinarians conducted a health checkup and her condition was found to be good, official said.

"Nirva is healthy and has been kept inside a boma (enclosure) for a further health check-up," the release added.



More than 100 field staff, including officers, veterinarians and cheetah trackers were searching for the cheetah day and night.

Besides the team on ground, two drones and a dog squad were also deployed in the search operation.

An area of 15-20 sq km was being searched, it said.

In addition to this, local villagers were also informed about Nirva. Any information received about the cheetah from the villagers was being checked and verified immediately, the release said.



ZACHARY LEVI CALLS OUT HOLLYWOOD FOR OUTPUT OF 'GARBAGE' CONTENT

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Zachary Levi was at a fan event where he called out the film industry for the "garbage" content they put out. "I personally feel like the amount of content that comes out of Hollywood that is garbage - they don't care enough to actually make it great for you guys. They don't," Levi said during the Chicago Fan Expo this weekend while voicing support for the writers and actors on strike, according to Deadline.

The star of 'Shazam! Fury of the Gods' continued: "How many times do you watch a trailer and go, 'Oh my god, this looks so cool!' Then you go to the movie and it's like, 'This was what I get?' They know that once you've already bought the ticket and you're in the seat, they've got your money. And the only way for us to change any of it is to not go to the garbage. We have to actively not choose the garbage. It'll help. It'll help a lot."

Levi recently clarified comments he made during a fan event about the SAG-AFTRA strike that impedes him from talking about his work as an actor.

The Chuck alum said that his comments were taken out of context adding: "I fully support my union, the WGA, and the strike. I remain an outspoken critic of the exploitative system that us artists are subject to work in since I started my journey in this business 25 years ago. This strike is necessary to protect ourselves, our writers, and all those working in production who make the industry move."

Levi also mentioned that during the strike he believes that actors shouldn't forget about their fans as "our business exists and succeeds because of the fans, and I think it's imperative we appreciate them for their support of our careers."



Doja Cat says 'it's true' to Illuminati rumours in trolling post

Thailand | Agencies

Singer Doja Cat continues to play along with rumours linking her to Illuminati.

Having been speculated to be part of the secret society, the Grammy Award-winning artiste has fueled the bizarre conspiracy theory with an Instagram post that showed off her graphic design skills, reports aceshowbiz.com.

The 27-year-old took to her social media account on Saturday, August 12 to share the snaps in which she appears to be hairless and her face is distorted.

In one of the mostly pink images, she is seen sitting on the side of a bed with her

arms thrown up in the air, a pink sparkly Care Bare sitting beside her and a stream of falling money on top of it.

"ILLUMINATITS," "I think my cat is Illuminati" and "I joined the Illuminati" all flash across the screen in obnoxious fonts.

Another picture has her flashing a "V" sign with an animated cigarette on her mouth while she sports a pink bikini in a Hello Kitty-themed room. A spaceship and an alien are added to the image with the words "Debunked by actual facts" flashing on the top part.

A third picture sees her throwing her hands in the air while sitting in an all-pink theater while declaring: "welcome to my profile" with a picture of cartoon figure of a pink cat, butterflies and a heart surrounding her. "it's true," she she simply captioned the post.

In the comments section, Doja's post was met with mixed response, with an irritated person saying, "This girl is definitely mentally unstable." Another alleged, "shes losing her fuccin mind," while a third seemed to believe Doja's claim as claiming, "She's hiding it in plain sight, smart move."

Others think that Doja was only trolling with the post, as one remarked, "Now this is trolling to the perfection! Only the weak-minded here would believe." Another declared, "The newly crowned queen of Trolling!"

Taylor Swift may reportedly star in 'Deadpool 3'

Los Angeles | Agencies

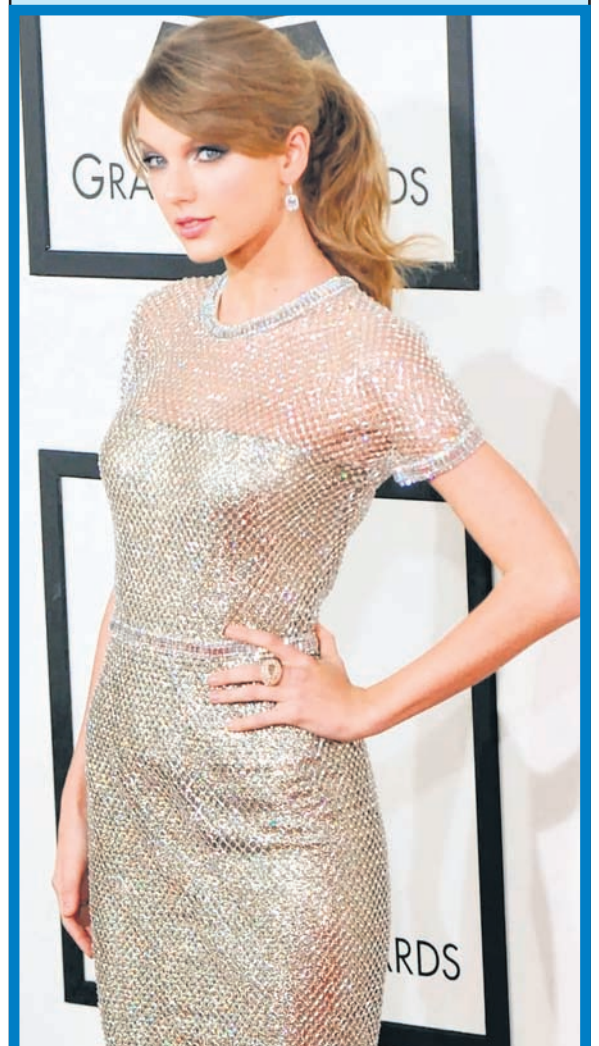
Singer Taylor Swift reportedly will make her Marvel debut in 'Deadpool 3'. The online report, courtesy of The DisInsider, claims that the award-winning singer/songwriter will make a cameo appearance as Dazzler in the upcoming movie. Dazzler is one of several 'X-Men' characters rumored to join Hugh Jackman's Wolverine in the movie, reports aceshowbiz.com.

Other names rumored to make appearance in the upcoming sequel are Taron Egerton as a Wolverine variant along with the returns of Famke Janssen and Halle Berry as Jean Grey and Storm respectively. None of these casting rumors has been confirmed, though.

Meanwhile, Marvel Studios boss Kevin Feige has long expressed that he's a big fan of Dazzler. Fandango's Erik Davis quote-tweeted the casting rumor while adding, "Many years ago I asked Kevin Feige if he were to ever direct his own Marvel movie, which character would he want to focus on. He said Dazzler. He's a big fan."

Of course, Swift is no stranger to acting. The Grammy Award winner has starred in star-studded romantic comedy film 'Valentine's Day' (2010), musical fantasy film 'Cats' (2019) and most recently in David O. Russell's 'Amsterdam' (2022). The 33-year-old star is currently on the road for her sold-out 'The Eras Tour'. She recently announced that '1989 (Taylor's Version)', her next re-recorded album, will be released on October 27. As for 'Deadpool 3', it had been filming in England before the SAG-AFTRA strike began. In addition to Ryan Reynolds, Jackman, Morena Baccarin, Leslie Uggams, Karan Soni, Brianna Hildebrand, Shioli Kutsuna and Stefan Kapicic, the movie will reportedly bring back Jennifer Garner as Elektra.

Disney has not addressed if the filming delay due to the ongoing strike will affect the currently planned May 3, 2024 release for the movie.



New promo for 'Star Wars' series 'Ahsoka' features Anakin Skywalker

Los Angeles | Agencies

The upcoming 'Star Wars' series 'Ahsoka' has released its new promo video 'Force', which for the first time features actor Hayden Christensen as Anakin Skywalker talking to his apprentice Ahsoka Tano (Rosario Dawson).

This will be the first time that the interactions of the popular Master and Padawan duo from the 'Clone Wars' series will be shown in live action.

The 42-second clip only connects the series more to the events of the animated 'Star Wars' shows 'Clone Wars' and 'Rebels', as well as featuring connections to 'The Mandalorian' live action series.

Before that, just a week ago, the show had released another video titled 'Master and Apprentice' which showcased Ahsoka Tano training 'Rebels' character Sabine Wren in lightsaber combat.

The 'Force' clip shows Ahsoka facing off against both Imperial Inquisitors, as well as her interactions with 'Rebels' character, the pilot Hera Syndulla while also facing off against Rogue force users, one of which is played by the late actor Ray Stevenson.

Hayden Christensen can be heard voicing Anakin Skywalker in the background talking to Ahsoka, as well as brief clips of him as both Anakin and later the nefarious Sith Lord Darth Vader.

The show will apparently feature different timelines, connecting threads from both the past as well as the present from the times of the Republic, to the Galactic Empire and now the New Republic which was formed after the events of 'Star Wars Episode VI: Return of the Jedi'.



Jungkook 1st Korean to be at Spotify Global Songs list No.1 for 4 weeks

Seoul | Agencies

K-pop boy band sensation Jungkook has been ruling the charts with his debut solo single 'Seven' featuring the American rapper Latto, it has now reached No.1 on Spotify's Top Global Songs Chart for four consecutive weeks, making him the first Korean artist to do so.

The report was given by the group's label, the South Korean company Big Hit Entertainment on Weverse, who also produced the track.

The track had gained over 35 million streamers on Spotify by August 12, outdoing various American pop artists such as Selena Gomez and Demi Lovato.

Since the song's release back in

July, 'Seven' has enjoyed an uninterrupted reign at the top of Spotify's global chart, and this week,

Jungkook set two impressive new records on the platform, which was an unprecedented step, making him the first Korean artist to stay on top of the Spotify charts for over 28 days.

In addition, the instrumental version of 'Seven' also gained the 65th place upon its debut since then occupying the Top 30 spot, while Jungkook's two other numbers, 'Still With You' and 'My You', ranked 54th and 113th on their debut on Spotify charts, respectively.

Since then, the streamers have only doubled, with both tracks inching close to Top 30 and Top 50 respectively.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Vanessa Bryant



132nd Durand Cup

CHENNAIYN FC BEATS TRIBHUVAN ARMY, BECOMES FIRST TEAM TO QUALIFY FOR QUARTERS

Guwahati | Agencies

Chennaiyn FC became the first team to qualify for the knockouts of the 132nd Durand Cup when they beat Nepal's Tribhuvan Army FC 3-0 in a Group E fixture at the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium here on Monday.

Farukh Choudhary opened the scoring for Chennaiyn while Rahim Ali doubled their lead through a penalty before Rafael Crivellaro completed the scoring.

Chennaiyn FC have six points from two matches and take the top spot and the automatic qualification place in the knockouts.

Chennaiyn FC Head Coach Owen Coyle named an unchanged starting lineup that had beaten Hyderabad FC while Tribhuvan Army FC Head Coach K.C. Megh Raj named one change to the starting lineup from the previous match with Basant Jimba coming in for Suroj Basnet.

Chennaiyn FC pressed hard from the start, giving no time for the Nepal side to settle and as a result dominated the possession. They could have scored inside the first 10 minutes with Connor



Shields setting up Farukh Choudhary, but the latter's effort went above the crossbar. Connor Shields missed a chance from the very next move.

Wingbacks Aakash Sangwan and K. Ajith Kumar were playing high up the field and swinging in good-quality crosses.

The Marina Machans broke the deadlock in the 22nd minute from a good combination move by Connor Shields and Farukh Choudhary. Farukh converted the cutback from Shields past Nepal goalkeeper Bikesh Kuthu. Chennai continued to keep possession and attack the Tribhuvan

box continuously.

Jordan Murray was fouled inside the penalty area by midfielder Sudil Rai, awarding a penalty for Chennaiyn. The penalty was converted by Rahim Ali giving a two-goal advantage for the Marina Machans. The best chance in the half for Tribhuvan Army came late into the half as Basant Jimba caught goalkeeper Debjit Majumder out of position, but his chipped attempt went wide.

Chennaiyn continued to play in the same way as Owen Coyle brought in the changes to freshen up the lineup. Their high pressing forced mistakes out of Tribhuvan's side as the Machans looked to increase the score line.

The best chance of the half came for the Nepal side as their captain Nawayug Shrestha forced Debajit Majumder to a good save. The Nepal side did a good job by not conceding in the second half, but their resilience was broken in the 84th minute. Brazilian Rafael Crivellaro applied the finishing touches to score the third goal for the side from Chennai and confirmed their place in the knockouts.

CHAMPIONS BENGALURU FC HELD BY IAF 1-1

Kolkata: Champions Bengaluru FC started their defence with a disappointing 1-1 draw with the Indian Air Force Football Team (IAFFT) in the 132nd Durand Cup at the Kishore Bharati Krirangan (KBK) here on Monday.

The Indian Air Force team pulled off what theoretically can be termed as an upset, earning their first point in the event.

Vivek Kumar put the Airmen ahead in the first half after a defensive error allowed Salam Johnson Singh to draw level in the second half.

This was BFC's first game in Group C, while the IAFFT will have one more to go, after having lost the first one to Gokulam Kerala, who currently top the group with two wins out of two.

BFC manager Bibiano Fernandez employed a 4-3-3 formation playing Edmund, Salam Johnson and Ashish Jha up front. IAFFT coach Priya Darshan also played three up front, giving Zico Zoram Thanga a start, but was also cautious enough to deploy a five-man defense.

Diksha finishes life best T-21 in a Major at Women's Open



Walton Heath | Agencies

Diksha Dagar finished a career-best T-21 in a Major at the AIG Women's Open. The two-time LET winner, Dagar, ended the tournament with another superb back-nine show.

After a 2-over front nine, she was 3-under for the back nine for a 1-under scorecard. With rounds of 74-71-72-71, she tallied even par 288 for four days. Aditi Ashok shot a second straight 75 to fall to T-40 with rounds of 72-69-75-

75. She was Tied-ninth at the halfway stage of the tournament but slipped over the weekend. Lilia Vu of the United States outplayed the field by six shots to win her second Major of the year at the 2023 AIG Women's Open. Vu, who shot 72-68-67-67 tallied 14-under for the week. Vu was six shots ahead of England's Charley Hull, who just could not get her putter to perform and ended with a 73 after being tied for the lead at the end of 54 holes. Diksha's result of T-21 was the best-ever by an

Indian women's player at a Major, bettering T-22 by Aditi Ashok at the 2018 Women's Open. Playing her fourth Women's Open this was the first time Diksha had made the cut after missing cuts in 2019, 2020 and 2022. This was her sixth Major overall and the first time she had made the cut.

Diksha's winnings of \$ 84,162 was also the highest of her professional career and it took her back into the Top-5 of the Ladies European Tour's Race to Costa Del Sol, where Aditi is lying third.

Baku World Championship

Indian shooters start campaign with sights on Olympic quotas

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Indian national shooting squad begins its campaign in the sport's blue-riband event of the year, the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Championships All Events, which officially begins in Baku, Azerbaijan, on Monday and runs till September 1.

Among the 53-member Indian contingent, 34 shooters will be participating in the 15 Olympic events while 19 will compete in non-Olympic events. The quadrennial showpiece is held at par or higher with the Olympics by the shooting fraternity and this edition has the added attraction of providing 48 Olympics quota places for Paris 2024, which will be won in basically seven days between August 17-24.

A first batch of 18 Indian shooters and 17 officials and



support staff have already arrived in Baku and have begun training. While the shotgun shooters had an 11-day camp in Italy, the rifle and pistol shooters had an eight-day national camp in Delhi ahead of the event.

India have won three Paris quotas so far and are looking to better their previous best of 15 quotas, which they won for the Tokyo 2020 games.

Rudranksh Balasaheb Patil in Men's 10m Air Rifle, Swapnil Suresh Kusale in Men's 50m Rifle 3 Positions

(3P) and Bhowneesh Mendiratta in Men's Trap are the three quota winners for India so far.

Among the Tokyo Olympians, Divyansh Singh Panwar, Aishwary Prapat Singh Tomar, Manu Bhaker and Angad Vir Singh Bajwa have made the cut, while Rio 2016 Olympian Kynan Chenai, is also part of the Men's Trap squad. Also, part of the Men's Trap squad is 46-year-old Zoravar Singh Sandhu, who first shot in a world championship 25 years ago.

London | Agencies

Chelsea and Liverpool played to a 1-1 draw at Stamford Bridge in an intriguing Premier League opener.

With Mauricio Pochettino making his Chelsea managerial debut and new additions to their squad, the Blues started slowly. Liverpool asserted dominance early, with a rejuvenated Luis Diaz capitalising on Mohamed Salah's precise cross from the right, reports Xinhua.

Chelsea gradually found their rhythm and equalized when Axel Disasi capitalized on questionable defending, netting a goal in the 37th minute. A potentially goal-bound effort from Ben Chilwell was later deemed offside. Both teams showed glimpses of brilliance, but their performances hinted at the need for more reinforcements before the transfer window closes.

While Brentford and Tottenham both missed key forwards, the teams showcased an exhilarating 2-2 draw, with all goals recorded in the first half. Tottenham's new coach Ange Postecoglou watched his side go ahead in the 11th minute, but Brentford responded swiftly with goals from Bryan Chilbeumo and Yoane Wissa. Emerson leveled for Spurs during first-half stoppage time, with the match surprisingly not seeing further goals.



Arsenal began their season with a 2-1 victory over Nottingham Forest at the Emirates Stadium, spurred by goals from Eddie Nketiah and Bukayo Saka. Despite dominating early on, Mikel Arteta's men conceded a late goal by Taiwo Awoniyi but managed to fend off further threats. Newcastle United dazzled in their season opener,

trouncing Aston Villa 5-1. New recruits Sandro Tonali and Harvey Barnes made their marks, while Alexander Isak netted twice and Callum Wilson also found the back of the net.

Brighton, despite notable player changes, outclassed newly-promoted Luton Town 4-1 at home. Solly March, Joao Pedro, Simon Adingra, and young talent Evan Ferguson tallied goals, with Luton's lone consolation coming from a Carlton Morris penalty.

Sheffield United got a taste of Premier League intensity, falling 1-0 to Crystal Palace, who dominated possession and ultimately found their winner through Odsonne Edouard in the 49th minute.

West Ham looked poised to secure three points against Bournemouth due to Jarrod Bowen's 51st-minute brilliance, but Dominic Solanke's timely 82nd-minute response ensured a draw on Andoni Iraola's managerial debut for Bournemouth.

Everton rued missed opportunities as Bobby Decordova-Reid's 75th-minute finish handed Fulham a 1-0 victory at Goodison Park.

Manchester City, with Erling Haaland netting twice, commenced their title defense impressively, defeating the newly-promoted Burnley 3-0. Rodri added the third, but Burnley's performance indicated they might be the most prepared among the promoted teams for Premier League challenges.

Injuries force England fast bowler Steven Finn to retire from all forms of cricket

London | Agencies

England fast bowler Steven Finn has announced his retirement from all forms of cricket. The three-time Ashes series winner called time on his career, following several injuries.

Finn suffered a knee injury that has kept him out of the game in 2023 and has now decided that it is time to call it a day on a magnificent 18-year career.

The 34-year-old seamer played 126 games for England between 2010 and 2017, taking 254 wickets. The paceman played domestically for Middlesex and Sussex.

He claimed 125 scalps in 36 Tests, with a best of 6-79 against Australia at Edgbaston during the 2015 Ashes, and a further 129 in 90 white-ball internationals.

"Today I am retiring from all forms of cricket with immediate effect. I have been fighting a battle with my body for the last 12 months and have admitted defeat to it.

Finn was part of the Ashes-winning squads at



home in 2013 and 2015 and also in Australia in 2010/11 as England won the urn overseas for the first time since 1986/87.

The paceman was ranked as high as number two in the ICC ODI bowling standings and number five in the T20 international rankings.

Barca held, Real Madrid win in La Liga opening weekend

Madrid | Agencies

FC Barcelona were held to a goalless draw by Getafe in their La Liga debut on Sunday evening.

Both sides finished with 10 players, after Raphinha's dismissal for allowing Getafe defender Esteban Alvarez in the first half, while Getafe's Jaime Mata received a red card after the interval, reports Xinhua.

Real Madrid secured a 2-0 victory against Athletic Bilbao on Saturday, thanks to first-half goals from Rodrigo and debutant Jude Bellingham. Rodrigo utilized open space to score in the 28th minute, followed by Bellingham's goal from a corner, despite missing his



shot, which fortuitously looped over Athletic's keeper Unai Simon.

Osasuna's two goals from Ruben Garcia and Moi Gomez spoiled Rafael Benitez's managerial debut for Celta Vigo, sealing a 2-0 victory at Balaídos Stadium.

Las Palmas, marking their La Liga return, drew 1-1 with Mallorca. Jonathan Viera scored with a 29th-minute penalty, and despite Vedat Muriqi's missed penalty for

Mallorca, Antonio Raulo ensured a draw with a goal in the 70th minute.

Rayo Vallecano, under new coach Francisco Rodriguez, had an excellent start, beating Almeria 2-0 on Friday evening, thanks to penalties from Isi Palazon and Nteka.

In a surprise result, Valencia outplayed Sevilla 2-1 on Friday. Despite their transfer inactivity, Valencia managed to claim the victory against the UEFA Europa League champions, with Mouctar Diakhaby and Javi Guerra's late goal after Sevilla went down to 10 men.

Atletico Madrid will play Granada, and Alaves are set to face Cadiz in Monday's fixtures.

Brazil's Serie A: Gremio beat Fluminense to rise to second

Rio De Janeiro | Agencies

Gremio climbed to second in Brazil's Serie A championship by coming from behind to secure a 2-1 home win over Fluminense.

German Cano gave the visitors the lead by firing into the top-right corner after Keno's assist, reports Xinhua. But the hosts equalised through Joao Bitello, who finished calmly after a perfectly weighted Luis Suarez through ball.

Aldemir Ferreira put Gremio ahead by combining with Fabio Silva before angling a shot past goalkeeper Fabio Maciel.

The result at Arena do Gremio leaves the Porto Alegre outfit with 33 points from 18 games, 14 points behind leaders Botafogo. Fluminense are fourth in the 20-team standings, two points further back.



In other fixtures on Sunday, Atletico Mineiro won 1-0 at home to Bahia, Goias clinched a 1-0 victory at America Mineiro, Corinthians eased to a 3-1 home win over Coritiba, Sao Paulo drew 1-1 at Flamengo, and Fortaleza romped to a 4-0 home win over Santos.

Glover wins back-to-back titles, Matsuyama among 5 Asians make it to second play-offs event

Memphis (USA) | Agencies

American Lucas Glover (69) triumphed for the second straight week after prevailing in a playoff in the FedEx St. Jude Championship against Patrick Cantlay (64) at TPC Southwind. Both players finished up on 15-under 265, one ahead of Rory McIlroy (65) and Tommy Fleetwood (68).

Glover, who won at last week's Wyndham Championship, earned his sixth PGA TOUR title with a par in the first extra hole after Cantlay made bogey, and moved up to fourth place in the FedExCup standings.

Five Asians made it to his second Playoff event -- Hideki Matsuyama played his last three holes in 3-under to squeeze in, Korea's Sungjae Im was the top Asian as he finished tied sixth after a bogey-free 68. He rose from 32nd to 28th on the FedExCup standings. It was the 25-year-old's eighth top-10 of



the season and puts him in the hunt to qualify for the TOUR Championship, restricted to the Top-30 players, for a fifth straight year.

Si Woo Kim, winner of the Sony Open in Hawaii in January, finished tied 16th after a 68 and moved one rung up to 17th place in the FedExCup race

while Tom Kim settled for tied 24th after a closing 72, dropping four positions to 18th place. The fourth Korean in the Playoffs, Byeong Hun An, settled for a share of the 37th position in Memphis and enters the penultimate Playoffs event in 38th position as he looks to qualify for the TOUR Championship for the first time in his career.

A fifth Asian in the second of the three Play-off events is Hideki Matsuyama, bidding to qualify for the TOUR Championships for a 10th time. He carded 65 to finish T-16 and rose to 47th and inside 50, which is the criteria for the next event.

Glover made three big putts just to stay in the game and then hit the most important shot to beat Patrick Cantlay on the first extra hole for his second straight victory. The 43-year-old Glover was No. 112 in the FedExCup two weeks ago and preparing for an early end to his season. Now he's assured the TOUR Championship at East Lake and perhaps the Ryder Cup.



SRK, Nayanthara bring the magic of love



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The makers of 'Jawan' have unveiled a new song 'Chaleya' from the upcoming film. It is pictured on superstar Shah Rukh Khan and Nayanthara.

Composed by the musical maestro Anirudh, 'Chaleya' boasts of soul-stirring vocals from Arijit Singh and Shilpa Rao. The song brings back the timeless magic of Shah Rukh Khan and Arijit Singh's collaboration which has given us some of the most roman-

tic and soulful numbers.

The heartfelt melody marks the triumphant return of romance, featuring the King of Romance himself.

Paired together for the first time, Shah Rukh Khan and Nayanthara bring forth a fresh and electrifying camaraderie that ignites the screen.

Choreographed by the inimitable Farah Khan the song has her signature style infusing it with grace and elegance that complements the heartfelt lyrics penned by the very popular lyricist Kumar, who has a string of latest hits to his credit.

Arijit Singh's emotive rendition adds an extra layer of emotion to SRK's portrayal of love, as Nayanthara's exquisite voice is beautifully delivered by Shilpa Rao.

The song captures the essence of the heart's deepest desires, celebrating the power of love in its purest form. 'Jawan' is a Red Chillies Entertainment presentation directed by Atlee, produced by Gauri Khan, and co-produced by Gaurav Verma.

The film will be released worldwide in theatres on September 7th, 2023, in Hindi, Tamil, and Telugu languages.



Disha Patani debuts as director for music video

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Mumbai: Actress Disha Patani is all set to now be seen in a new music video with 'Kyun Karu Fikar' and will mark her debut as a director.

Releasing the poster for the upcoming video Disha shared on her social media: "If you let go of the things you can't control, it will probably set you free 'Kyun Karu Fikar'". Sharing a sneak peek to our special project on August 16, 2023

on #PlayDMF official YouTube channel."

In the poster, Disha looks carefree and enjoys the soothing waves at the beach. She is wearing denim shorts with a turquoise blue top and like always, she is looking fabulous.

From 'Hui Malang' to 'Slow Motion' to 'Do You Love Me', Disha has always left us floored with her dance moves in her songs. As for 'Kyun Karu Fikar' feels like an anthem to being care free.

On the forefront Disha Patani will next be seen in 'Yodha' opposite

Siddharth Malhotra and also has

'Kanguva' and 'Suriya 42' in the pipeline. Disha began her acting career with the Telugu film 'Loafer' in 2015. She had her first Hindi film release with the biopic 'M.S. Dhoni: The Untold Story'.

She subsequently played the leading lady in the Chinese action comedy 'Kung Fu Yoga' (2017) and the Hindi films 'Baaghi 2' (2018), 'Bharat' (2019), 'Malang' (2020) and 'Ek Villain Returns' (2022).

'KBC' has become an integral part of my life, says Amitabh Bachchan

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Megastar Amitabh Bachchan, who is all set for the premiere of quiz-based reality show 'Kaun Banega Crorepati 15', said that it has become an integral part of his life as it helps him to connect with audiences, both inside the studio as well as those watching the show from their homes. With the promise of a #NewBeginning, 'Kaun Banega Crorepati' will capture the essence of the progress that India is making, bringing forth some remarkable changes that will make the gameplay tougher and far more engaging. 'KBC' has successfully entertained audiences for past 23 years. The perfect amalgamation of knowledge and entertainment, Big B hosts this reality show with elan and gravitas.

Talking about the new season, Amitabh said: "Kaun Banega Crorepati has always been gyaandaar, dhandaar and shaandaar, but in its 15th season, we will be ushering in a new beginning - representing an evolving India, its aspirations, and its citizens who dream big." He further said that the show has become an integral part of his life. "It's a platform for me to connect with audiences - both inside the studio as well as those watching the show from the comfort of their homes. I am really looking forward to welcoming and interacting with contestants from different walks of life who are such a huge inspiration not only to me, but also to those who want to be the change and fulfil their ambitions with the power of knowledge." Talking about 'badlav' in this season, one of the new additions to the show is the introduction of the 'Super Sandook', which adds thrill to the game, providing a much-required respite that allows the contestant to revive what has been lost.

The second significant change is 'Desh Ka Sawal', which will drive more audience participation. Along with 'Video Call a Friend' and 'Audience Poll', a new lifeline called 'Double Dip' has been added to the format and this season also brings back the adrenaline-pumping 'Fastest Finger First' feature. The show also has a large partnership deal with the Reserve Bank of India.



RASHMEET KAUR: 'HEARING, SINGING PATRIOTIC SONGS WAS BEAUTIFUL PHASE OF MY LIFE'

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Ahead of Independence Day, singer and songwriter Rashmeet Kaur said the melodies of patriotism that celebrate our nation's freedom are a huge part of the foundation of her musical journey.

Rashmeet's musical journey started with Gurmat sangeet, and harmonium learning from her mother at the age of six. Talking about the Independence Day, she said: "When I was a kid, I used to rehearse all the patriotic songs well before Independence Day. My first ever performance on stage was 'Ae Mere Watan Ke Logon' when I was in class third which left the audience teary eyed."

"The melodies of patriotism that celebrated our nation's freedom became a huge part of the foundation of my musical journey. As a little girl, I understood what pride in one's country meant through songs, and I began considering what it must have cost our heroes," she said.

Rashmeet further said "Where words fail music speaks", this saying has been true for her. "Listening to and singing patriotic songs was a beautiful phase of my life. I hope music continues to inspire children and the generations to come," she added.

Rashmeet had participated in 'Sa Re Ga Ma Pa' 2012. In 2018, she became the first winner of "The Remix" - Amazon Prime Originals music reality show, performing for judges Sunidhi Chauhan, Nucleya and Amit Trivedi. She is known for songs like 'Thumkeshwari', 'Bajre Da Sitta', 'Jee Karda' title track, 'Ghana Kasoota', 'Janiye', and her latest song 'Dil Khanjar'. Rashmeet is currently the part of stunt reality show 'Khatron Ke Khiladi 13'. The show hosted by filmmaker Rohit Shetty airs on Colors.

Rajinikanth visits Badrinath to celebrate 'Jailer' crossing Rs 200 cr mark

Mumbai | Agencies

Superstar Rajinikanth has visited the Badrinath Temple in Uttarakhand to celebrate the massive success of his latest film 'Jailer', which has crossed the Rs 200 crore milestone in box office collections.

A video which went viral on X (formerly called Twitter) shows the Tamil superstar greeting devotees, fans, policemen, pandits and was seen donning a casual blue sweater, showing his humble and modest nature.

The actor stayed inside the temple complex for over 30 minutes and participated in the Vishnu Sahastranam ritual.

Rajinikanth is known for his deeply-spiritual nature and he frequently visits grand temples across India, be it Somnath, Badrinath or Brihadesvara.

Fans, priests and policemen were both humbled and honoured upon meeting the superstar, while Rajinikanth also greatly enjoyed himself, casually talking to people and offering his 'namaskaram' to the pandits.

After he offered prayers inside the temple, the priests offered him a garland of tulsi

leaves and some prasad, which he humbly accepted. After that he attended the evening rituals and met with the head priest of the temple, seeking his blessings.

Directed by Nelson Dilipkumar, 'Jailer' has become a massive success, going past all projections by grossing Rs 100 crore in just two days. The film has grossed more than Rs 200 crore so far, with lifetime expectancy currently being over Rs 500-600 crore. The movie exploded in South India where it earned most of its revenues. It is also doing well in certain Hindi markets such as in Delhi, Mumbai, Gujarat and Punjab. Even internationally, the movie has performed splendidly, earning great sums and positive response in the US, Canada, Australia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, the UAE and the UK.

'Jailer' also marks a grand collaboration as Rajinikanth has worked for the first time with veteran Malayalam actor Mohanlal along with Bollywood star Jackie Shroff, which hyped it up further.



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Kangana Ranaut