

absolute india

VOL. 6, ISSUE 291, NEW DELHI | WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 30, 2023 | ₹5 | PAGE 08

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India to sweeten Rakshabandhan fest with packed mithais, chocolates

Conducted by the Kirana Club among 25,000 grocery shops, the survey, released here on Monday, found that besides the packed mithais and chocolate boxes, the next on the list of high-demand would be 'namkeens' (salty snacks) and ready-mixes.

Accordingly, the grocery stores are now stocking up these items ahead of the festival, including soan-papdi, pedhas, barfi, laddoos, gulab-jamuns, rasgullas, etc.

India has over 1.30 crore retail grocery stores ranging from the traditional brick-and-mortar local shops to suank modern retailers operating chains across the country.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

This Rakshabandhan could see consumers flocking to buy packed Indian 'mithais' (sweetmeats), chocolate boxes as the top favourites for the festival symbolising the bonds of love between brothers-sisters, falling on Wednesday, revealed a survey among the neighbourhood grocery shops across the country.

The Kirana Club survey covered states like Maharashtra, Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, said its founder Anshul Gupta.

Kirana outlets in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar,

Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand have given a thumbs up to Indian sweetmeats as the flavour of the season, while those in Maharashtra, Haryana, Gujarat, Punjab and Delhi have opted for chocolate boxes as the next most coveted item.

Among cities, Indore, Jaipur and Lucknow people would crave for packed mithais, while the people of Pune, Nagpur, New Delhi, Gurugram, Patna, Panipat, Agra, Kanpur, Gopalganj, Meerut and Panchkula plan to gorge on chocolates.

The all-time favourites 'namkeens', ready-mixes and assorted biscuits shall also be moving quickly adding to the festive delight at the kirana shops and adorn festival tables at homes.

In fact, the mouth-watering dry 'namkeens' like chivda, bhujia, sev, farsan, chips, mixes, etc. have been ranked among the top three categories by kirana shops in Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

Incidentally, biscuits ranked lowest in Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, while ready-mixes are at the bottom of popularity charts in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana, and few would opt for packed sweetmeats in Delhi.

The Kirana Club has over 15 lakh grocers onboard in 10 states and 16,000 pincodes, besides several regional, national and international brands also active on the platform.

Is there some timeframe for restoration of J&K's statehood: SC asks Centre

RESTORATION OF DEMOCRACY

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked Attorney General and Solicitor General to seek instructions from the Central government over the timeframe to restore statehood of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir which was downgraded into two union territories in 2019.

A Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, hearing pleas challenging the abrogation of Article 370, remarked that the erstwhile state cannot be a "Union Territory in permanence. We understand that these are matters of national security. We understand that ultimately preservation of the nation itself is an overriding concern. But without putting you in a bind, both you (SG) and Attorney General may seek instructions on the highest level - is there some timeframe in view?"



orally asked CJI Chandrachud. The top court made the observation after Solicitor General Tushar Mehta - appearing for the Centre, told the bench that the move to bifurcate the state into union territories of J&K and Ladakh was a "temporary measure" and that its state-

hood will be restored in the future. The Supreme Court also asked if Article 370 can be used to amend Article 370 itself. "Article 370 can be used to amend other provisions but can it be used to amend Article 370 itself? That's the heart of the matter," the court observed.

UT NOT PERMANENT FEATURE: CENTRE

New Delhi: The Central government on Tuesday told the Supreme Court that the "union territory is not a permanent feature" after it asked Attorney General (AG) and Solicitor General (SG) to seek instructions from the Centre over the timeframe to restore statehood of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The state was downgraded into two Union Territories (UTs) in August 2019 -- J&K and Ladakh.

"The instructions are -- UT is not a permanent feature. But, I will make a positive statement the day after tomorrow (regarding Jammu and Kashmir)," said Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, adding that Ladakh would remain a UT. SG Mehta clarified that he will meet the functionaries in the government along with the AG to seek more instructions to make a statement.

Union Cabinet approves Rs 200 cut in LPG cylinders

Team Absolute | New Delhi

With eyes set firmly on the forthcoming elections, the Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved reduction in prices of LPG gas cylinders by Rs 200 for all connection holders. In addition to this, the Cabinet also cleared the proposal to give 75 lakh new LPG cylinders connections under the Ujjwala scheme, thus taking the total beneficiaries to more than 10 crore across the country, Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur told mediapersons after the Cabinet briefing. As of now, the price of domestic LPG, which is used in the kitchen for cooking purposes, is Rs 1,103 per 14.2-kg cylinder in New Delhi. This will now come down by Rs 200 per cylinder.

Domestic LPG cylinder prices were last revised on



March 1, when they were hiked by Rs 50 per cylinder. The decision comes with Assembly elections scheduled

in four states in December and Lok Sabha polls are to be held next year. Oil marketing companies (OMCs) have been reporting heavy under-recoveries due to lack of hike in prices of domestic cooking gas. Under the Ujjwala scheme, the government provided free LPG connection to women beneficiaries in rural households.

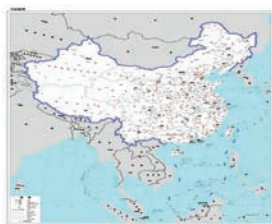
Sins of nine years cannot be washed away: Kharge

New Delhi: Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday took a veiled dig at the BJP government for Centre alleging that the election gifts started rolling out after fearing a dip in the vote and said the saffron party had mercifully looted the people for last nine and half years and their sins cannot be washed away. "When the votes started decreasing, then the election gifts started getting distributed. The merciless Modi government, which looted the hard earned money of the people, is now showing feigned goodwill towards the mothers and sisters. For 9 and a half years, by selling Rs 400 LPG cylinders for Rs 1,100, they kept destroying the life of the common man, then why didn't any 'affectionate gift' come to mind?" Kharge wrote on X.

China releases new map; shows Aksai Chin, Arunachal as its territory

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In what could lead to yet another diplomatic flare-up, China has released what it called the "2023 edition of the standard map" of the country showing Aksai Chin -- one of the two large disputed border areas between India and China -- and whole of Arunachal Pradesh within its territory, according to reports quoting local Chinese media. The map was released on Monday by China's Ministry of Natural Resources, the reports said. The latest development has come four months after Beijing had announced in April that it will



"standardise" names of 11 places in Arunachal Pradesh. Also the release of the map has come at a time when the New Delhi G20 summit is less than a fortnight away, which the Chinese President Xi Jinping is also expected to attend. The G20 summit is scheduled to be held between September 9 and 10.

Mere inclusion of territories doesn't mean anything: Jaishankar

New Delhi: India on Tuesday dismissed a 'standard map' released by China on Monday (August 28), showing parts of Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh within its territory.

External affairs minister S Jaishankar during an interaction with a television channel was quoting as saying said that China has a "habit" of releasing such maps and mere inclusion of territories belonging to other countries in its maps does not mean anything.

Bihar Education Dept suspends 55 teachers, cuts salaries of 6,000 others in 2 months

Patna: In a span of just two months, the Bihar Education Departments has suspended 55 teachers due to negligence or not being present in the schools, as well as slashed the salaries of 6,000 others for various teaching violations.

Soon after K.K. Pathak took charge as the Department's Additional Chief Secretary in June, he started inspections of different schools from July 1.

He has given strict directions to District Magistrates and district education officers to inspect every school twice or thrice a week and take action against the offenders.

MAHA RULING ALLIANCE TO HOLD TWO-DAY CONCLAVE FROM THURSDAY

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The ruling alliance of Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party-Nationalist Congress Party (AP) and other allies will hold a two-day convention here on August 31-September 1, party officials said here on Tuesday.

BJP Spokesperson Prasad Lad said that the meeting will be held at the NSCI complex in Worli to carry out a review of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections to the 48 seats in the state which will be contested by the alliance partners jointly.

Interestingly, the ruling allies' poll meet will coincide with the upcoming National Opposition I.N.D.I.A. bloc's meeting scheduled here for two days.

The state meet will include a dinner hosted by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde at his official residence on August 31 for



all the elected leaders who will be present at the conclave. On Friday, there will be a series of regional review meetings at the NSCI Dome which will be addressed by Shinde and Deputy CMs Devendra Fadnis and Ajit Pawar, besides other senior leaders of the three parties and other allies and elected representatives from across the state. The meetings will carry out a comprehensive analysis of

the 48 parliamentary seats in Mumbai, Konkan, Marathwada, western and northern Maharashtra, the prospects of the three parties, the respective strengths and weaknesses of the allies vis-a-vis the Opposition parties, etc. However, contrary to speculation in some quarters, alliance party sources rule out the possibility of any poll candidates being finalised at the two-day review meeting.

17% COVID PATIENTS STILL SUFFER HEALTH ISSUES, 6.5% LOST LIVES AFTER 1 YEAR: ICMR

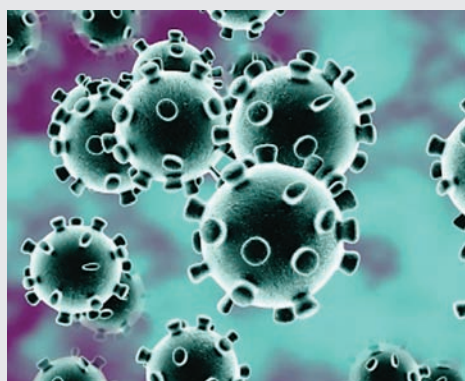
Younger as well as older age, male gender, moderate-to-severe disease and presence of comorbidities are associated with higher odds of post-discharge one-year mortality, revealed the study based on the data of 14,419 patients across 31 hospitals. Among the 14,419 participants who were followed up at least once between four weeks and one year post-discharge, 942 (6.5 per cent) had died, and the remaining 93.5 per cent were reported alive during one year of follow-up.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

About 17.1 per cent Covid-19 patients continue to suffer persistent or new onset symptoms, according to a new study by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). The symptoms of long Covid or post Covid condition (PCC) include fatigue, breathlessness or neurocognitive abnormalities. PCC was also linked with 2.7 times higher odds of post-discharge mortality.

The study led by ICMR's Clinical Studies and Trials Unit also showed that 6.5 per cent patients hospitalised due to Covid lost their lives a year post-discharge.

The odds of dying after the first follow-up between 4-8 weeks were higher among those with comorbidity and those who reported PCC.



"The odds of death after the first follow-up were lower among those who had a moderate-to-severe disease during initial hospitalisation and had

received anti-SARS-CoV-2 vaccination, although the association was not significant," the researchers said, in the paper published in the Indian Journal of Medical Research.

However, vaccination before the Covid-19 infection offered 60 per cent protection, the study showed. "Vaccination before the Covid-19 infection confers protection to post discharge mortality," it added. Multiple studies have identified increasing age as a risk factor for post discharge death.

The current analysis additionally showed that the participants younger than 18 years had 1.7 times higher odds of dying after discharge from the hospital. "Our earlier reports have shown that comorbidities among admitted children are more severe, such as malignancies, kidney disorders, haematological disorders and others.

Bank, Treasury and LIC employees in MP get first time holiday on Raksha Bandhan

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Banks, District Treasury (Treasury) and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) will have a holiday in Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday, August 30. For the first time, the state government has declared a holiday for these institutions on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan. About 50 thousand officers and employees of the state will be benefited by this.

Earlier, despite being a public holiday on Raksha Bandhan, there was no holiday in banks, treasuries, sub treasuries and insurance corporations. The United Forum of Bank Unions Madhya Pradesh had written a letter to Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on August 10, demanding the declaration of Raksha Bandhan as a public holiday in banks and financial institutions. Other employees' unions also raised this demand.

United Forum of Bank Unions Madhya Pradesh's co-ordinator VK Sharma said that



the state government was demanded that when banks and financial institutions in different states of the country can declare a holiday on Raksha Bandhan, why not in Madhya Pradesh? On December 19, 2022, the Madhya Pradesh government had declared 16 days holidays for the year 2023 in banks and financial institutions under the Negotiable Instrument Act. The festival of Raksha Bandhan was not included in this list.



EDITOR'S SPECS

BSP leader sings paeans to Rahul Gandhi

In a clear indication of changing moods on the eve of Lok Sabha elections, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) leader Imran Masood has started praising Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, much to the chagrin of his own party. Masood, an influential Muslim leader from Saharanpur district in western Uttar Pradesh, did not attend a meeting of party leaders and office bearers chaired by BSP chief Mayawati at the state unit office in Lucknow on August 23. Instead, he said that "it was good to have worked with Rahul Gandhi. He can understand the problems of even ordinary party workers". "I committed a mistake by deserting the Congress before the 2022 Assembly elections. Under pressure from my supporters, I left the Congress. Even after leaving the Congress. I have a good relationship with Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Vadra. I respect both the leaders." Talking about having skipped the BSP meeting, he said: "I was not invited to the party meeting held in Lucknow. At present, I am a member of the BSP and, on the direction of party chief Mayawati, I am preparing for the Lok Sabha elections. I will contest the Saharanpur seat." Haji Fazlur Rehman had won the Saharanpur Lok Sabha seat in the 2019 on a BSP ticket, defeating BJP candidate Raghav Lakhanpal. Before the 2022 Assembly election, Imran Masood had defected from the Congress to the Samajwadi Party, while his brother Noman Masood joined the BSP. Noman contested the Assembly election from the Gangoh seat in Saharanpur, whereas the SP fielded BJP rebel Dharam Singh Saini from the Nakur seat. Imran Masood was also in the race for the SP ticket for the Nakur seat. He had alleged that SP dumped him for the BJP rebel.

RAKSHA BANDHAN: FESTIVAL OF PROTECTION AND LOVE!

Lalit Garg

India has many religious-cultural traditions and festivals; every festival here has its own purpose and colour, which brings different religions, societies and people closer to one another. Raksha-Bandhan also is one such unique cultural festival. The thread of Rakhi is not just a thread of sacred love and protection of a sister, but it is an infallible means of religious, social and familial unity and solidarity. The Rakhi is a festival of providing equality and security to women, because if you look closely, women folk are now touching miraculous heights with their amazing work style in areas full of difficulties and challenges. Be it the army, flying fighter jets, or the wrestling arena, everywhere the whole world welcomes them with thunderous applause. The inspiration to liberate women from bondage, oppression and neglect is woven in the threads of Rakhi. Rakshabandhan is that invaluable bond of affection, which cannot be repaid even by giving everything, let alone money. This festival is a symbol of unbreakable love between brother and sister, and it is an assurance of protection to the woman who has been constantly struggling for security and self-esteem. Through Rakhi, sisters pray for the well-being of their brothers, while brothers take care of their sisters throughout their lives, whether it is a blood relation, or a non-kin sister! Surely, the festival of Rakhi, associated with women's identity and existence, is a monument of ideals and a step of resolutions. Raksha Bandhan is a festival of threads of love, which not only in every house-hold, but in the society and the nation, infuses new energy in human relationships. It infuses excitement and enthusiasm among the sisters, they are eager to tie



rakhi on the hands of their beloved brothers. This festival, which is very decent and pure, is centuries old - till now it continues to be a unique festival focused on women's respect and safety. Apart from real brothers and sisters, many emotional relationships are also tied to this festival, which are beyond the boundaries of religion, caste and country. This festival is a festival of strengthening relationships with the bond of intimacy and affection. Raksha Bandhan is the bond of human emotions even amongst non-kinds. It is a bond of love, sacrifice and duty. Once tied in this bond, it is very difficult to break it. There is so much power in these threads, which is not even in iron chains. To understand this unprecedented festival of Rakhi, it is very important to understand its historical context; otherwise the color of this festival will remain incomplete. This festival is described in the Bhavishya Purana that when the war started between the gods and the demons, then the demons started dominating. Lord Indra got scared and went to Sage Brihaspati. Indra's wife Indrani was sitting there listening to the conversation. She purified the silk thread with the power of mantras and tied it on her

husband's hand after which Indra was victorious. There are many historical contexts of this festival as well. When the Rajputs used to go to fight, women used to apply Kumkum Tilak on their forehead, as well as tie Rakhi in their hands. During the Mughal period, when the Mughal emperor Humayun went to attack Chittor, Rana Sanga's widow Karmavati took a promise of protection by sending a rakhi to Humayun. Accepting this, Humayun removed the thought of attacking Chittor from his heart and in spite of being a Muslim, in order to protect Chittor, he protected Karmavati and Mewar state by fighting on behalf of Mewar against Bahadur Shah. Similarly, Alexander's wife tied a rakhi to her husband's Hindu enemy Puru and made him her brother-in-law and took a vow not to kill Alexander during the war. Puru gave life to Sikandar, honouring Rakhi tied in his hand during the war and the promise given to his sister. Alexander also returned Porus's kingdom through keeping the dignity of the defense formula, and behaving like a warrior. Rakhi is a thread of love, which gives this festival a cosmic significance, this thread further strengthens the brother-sister relationship,

which not only gives the message of love and belonging, but also gives a sense of duties. Seeing the thread of Rakhi, every brother realizes his duties towards his sister. The festival of Rakhi is celebrated on the last day of the month of Sawan. It is also mentioned in the Mahabharata that when the eldest Pandava Yudhishtira asked Lord Krishna how he could overcome all the difficulties, then Lord Krishna advised him to celebrate the festival of Rakhi to protect him and his army. He used to say that this silk thread of Rakhi has the power with which you can get rid of every objection. There is another story of Shri Krishna and Draupadi related to Raksha Bandhan in Mahabharata itself. When Shri Krishna killed Shishupala with his Sudarshan Chakra, his index finger got hurt. At that time Draupadi tore her sari and tied a bandage on his finger. It was the full moon day of the month of Shravan. Shri Krishna later repaid this favour by increasing her saree at the time of tearing. In this way, with the two threads of Rakhi, there has been a deep connection not only between brother and sister, but also with the entire human sensibilities. The festival of Rakhi was earlier more important in North India. Today it is celebrated with great enthusiasm all over India. In Maharashtra, it is celebrated as Narali Purnima. People offer coconuts to Varuna Raja in the sea. The three eyes of the coconut are considered to be the three eyes of Lord Shiva. In South India, it is known as Avani Avittam. In Skandha Purana, Padmapurana and Shrimad Bhagwat, the context of Raksha Bandhan is found in the story called

Vamanavatar. The story goes something like this- When Danvendra Raja Bali tried to snatch away the kingdom of heaven by completing 100 yagas, then there was panic among the deities like Indra and they all came to pray to Lord Vishnu. Then Lord Vama disguised himself as a Brahmin and went to King Bali to beg for alms. Even after the refusal of his Guru, Bali donated three steps of land. God measured the entire sky, underworld and earth in three steps and sent King Bali to the abyss. In this way, because of Lord Vishnu shattering the pride of King Bali, this festival is also famous as Bolev. These popular stories about Rakhi force us to think that how great were those people with principles and human sensibilities, under whose supervision a whole tradition took birth and continues unabated till date. Today the tradition may be continuing, but that depth of feeling and love is not visible in it. Now he has got the mite of performance. Instead of celebrating the festival with simplicity, the sisters are more concerned about their decorations and in the greed of getting something from the brother on the pretext of Rakhi. Instead of taking a pledge to protect her and remove the crisis, the brother also lightens his pocket, and considers it his. Now the tide of brother-sister love is not visible in Rakhi, which might have once been there. That's why on this auspicious festival of Rakhi, brothers are expected to take an oath to protect and respect not only their sister, but the entire women folk. Only then this festival of Rakhi will become meaningful and the love between brother and sister will remain eternal!

international

ISLAMABAD HC SUSPENDS IMRAN'S SENTENCE IN TOSHAKHANA CASE, ORDERS RELEASE

Hamza Ameer | Islamabad

In a major relief to Imran Khan, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday suspended the former Prime Minister's sentence in the Toshakhana case and ordered his release from jail. A division bench of the IHC, comprising Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Tariq Mehmood Jahangir, announced the short order, declaring the conviction of in the case as suspended. As per the order, the former premier has been directed to submit surety bond worth 100,000 PKR and a guarantee of at least one person for his release. Addressing mediapersons outside the IHC, Khan's lawyer Babar Awaz said that after suspension of the trial



court verdict, his position as the chief of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party has also been reinstated. "After the suspension of trial court order, Imran Khan can no longer be kept at the

Attock Jail. Also, after the court order, Imran Khan's position as the party chief also stands reinstated. After this, PTI and Imran Khan will move towards elections," Awaz was quoted as saying.

Khan was arrested on August 5 from his Zaman Park residence in Lahore after a trial court issued its verdict in the Toshakhana case, finding the PTI chief guilty of opting to corrupt practices for personal gains using his office and its powers. It sentenced him to three years in jail and imposed a fine of 100,000 PKR. The trial court verdict also added that Khan would serve at least six-months more jail term if he fails to pay the fine. In the wake of Tuesday's verdict, the PTI leadership and supporters are in celebration mode as they termed the decision of the IHC as their victory. However, legal experts say that the IHC has not cancelled Khan's conviction or

disqualification, but has suspended it and issued a bail, adding that trouble was not yet over for the former Prime Minister. "The IHC has suspended Imran Khan's sentence. It has not cancelled the case, nor has it ended the Toshakhana case against him. The suspension of the trial court means that there would be a re-trial into the case and PTI would file an appeal in the same case as well. Therefore, Imran Khan's disqualification and conviction still stands and would be later decided in the re-trial proceedings", said Hafiz Ahsan Ahmed Khokar, a senior advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. The IHC verdict is based on the merits of the case and its trial at the session court.

Major outage hit UK air traffic control systems, over 1200 flights cancelled

London | Agencies

Thousands of air passengers have been left stranded after a major outage hit UK air traffic control systems. More than 1,200 flights were reportedly cancelled due to the outage. People are stuck in the UK and abroad after National Air Traffic Services (Nats) on Monday limited the number of planes landing, the BBC reported. Airlines and airports warned there were still "significant delays" despite the issue being fixed within hours. Holidaymakers - many of whom were returning from holidays and due to return to work on Tuesday - were braced for the chaos to continue as airlines struggle to clear the backlog. There have been warnings that some knock-on disruption could last for days. Heathrow said late on Monday evening that schedules remained significantly disrupted, adding that people travelling on Tuesday should contact their airline before heading to the airport, the British news broadcaster reported. Gatwick Airport said it was planning



to operate a normal schedule on Tuesday, but advised passengers to check the status of their flight with their airline before going to the airport. London Luton Airport also said on Monday evening that flights across UK airspace remained subject to delays and cancellation, and people should check with their airline for the status of their flight. Nats confirmed that it had identified and remedied the issue. It said that "it will take some time for flights to return to normal". Several UK airports and airlines including British Airways, Virgin Atlantic and TUI, were hit by delays and cancellations on Monday.

Indian-American dentist admits stealing \$500k Covid relief money

New York | Agencies

A 46-year-old Indian-origin doctor of dental surgery in California has pleaded guilty to stealing \$500,000 Covid-19 relief money and using it for personal expenditures, such as investments. Ranjan Rajbanshi, who ran a dental practice in Bakersfield and Santa Barbara, received over \$850,000 in Covid relief money from the Small Business Administration (SBA) and the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) from April 2020 through February 2022. He represented to the government that he would only use the relief money for specified business purposes such as facility costs, payroll, and protective equipment for him and his staff, a release by US attorney's office for Eastern District of California stated last week. Rajbanshi subsequently used \$500,000 of the relief money for improper personal expendi-



tures such as investments. He has agreed to pay that money back to the government before his sentencing. He is scheduled to be sentenced by US District Judge Ana de Alba on December 4, and faces a maximum statutory penalty of 10 years in prison and fine of

\$250,000. The actual sentence, however, will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of any applicable statutory factors and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables.

Powerful players expected to arrive in Ukrainian arms market: Defence Ministry

Kiev | Agencies

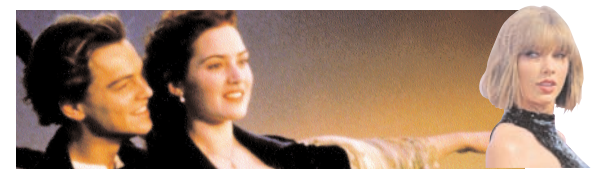
Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov said that "powerful players" were expected to arrive in the war-torn nation's arms market. Addressing a news conference on Monday, he said: "By the end of this month or at the beginning of September, there will be good news about powerful players arriving on Ukraine's arms market. Several agreements will be signed." Ukraine plans to hold an industrial defense forum around the end of September or the beginning of October, CNN quoted the Minister as saying. "The participation of about 50 powerful players of the arms market is planned," Reznikov added. He further said that Ukraine has "significantly increased the production of domestic weapons", such as 155 mm artillery shells that have already passed tests. "The contract is being executed. The first orders are already in place,



we will immediately transfer them (artillery shells) to the Armed Forces. And we plan to increase the number for their production."

Reznikov noted that while the 125 mm artillery shells are still currently being tested, there are difficulties with producing 122 mm

artillery shells. Ukraine has several missile and anti-missile programs and is discussing "how to use the funds more appropriately in this direction", CNN quoted the Minister as saying. "A lot of money is needed so that these programs can be put into effect in 2024-2025. That's why we are having a discussion: whether to spend money and buy shells now from foreign manufacturers or invest it (at home) and have missiles approximately in a year," he explained. In his nightly address to the nation, President Volodymyr Zelensky echoed Reznikov's comments, noting that Ukraine is "maximising production capacity" of domestic weapons. "Artillery made in Ukraine. Shells made in Ukraine. Drones, missiles, armored vehicles. We are maximising production capacity. Ukraine can do it. Funding is available. Our defence industry will yield better results," Zelensky said.



Selena Gomez underwent surgery after breaking her hand

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-actress Selena Gomez has had to have surgery after breaking her hand. She shared that she recently suffered an injury and had to undergo an operation but "doesn't care" about the sales of her new single 'Single Soon' and instead insisted she is "happy" just creating music with those closest to her, reports aceshowbiz.com.

Writing in the comments section of a promotional post for her new single, she wrote: "Broke my hand and had surgery. I don't care about selling anything. I'm just happy to make music with my friends."

Gomez did not elaborate any further on her injuries. The song is about plotting how to break up with an ex. However, the former Disney Channel star, who has also had relationships with fellow pop singer Justin Bieber and was briefly linked to former 'One Direction' star Zayn Malik, has shared that the track is not about The Weeknd, whom she dated for 10 months between 2016 and 2017.

The lyrics include, "Should I do it on the phone? Should I leave a little note in the pocket of his coat? Maybe I'll just disappear. I don't want to see a tear. And the weekend's almost here." She goes on, "I know I'm a little high maintenance, but I'm worth a try. Might not give a reason why. We both had a lot of fun, time to find another one. Blame it all on feeling young." Commenting underneath Hollywood Life's article about some of her fans believing it to be aimed at The Weeknd, she wrote, "Couldn't be more false." The chart-topping star, whose last studio album was 2020's

'Rare', shared that she is switching things up with the overall mood of her next project.

Asked if more new tunes are on the way following the release of the single from her Apple TV+ documentary of the same name,

'Selena Gomez: My Mind & Me', Selena said on 'The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon', "That's accurate. Finally."

Adele reveals plans to have children with fiancé Rich Paul

Los Angeles | Agencies

English pop star Adele has revealed that she has already planned to have children with her fiancé Rich Paul, hoping to start a family together soon, admitting that she has already chosen a number of names for their unborn baby.

"The Easy on Me singer", who shares 10-year-old son Angelo with her ex-husband Simon Konicek - said she and fiancé Rich Paul plan to have a baby together very "soon" mirror.co.uk reported.

During a recent concert amid her hit Las Vegas residency, Adele shared her hopes of expanding her family as she stopped the show to speak to a pregnant fan who was having difficulty choosing a name for her unborn child. Adele gushed over the pregnant woman as she told her that she often writes down baby names on her notes app on her phone amid hopes of having another child soon.

While speaking to the pregnant fan, Adele said, "I really want to be a mum again soon, so every time I see a name I like, I write it down on my phone." To which the fan replied: "We have two names and we've been going back and forth. I can't, for the life of me, decide. I like boy names for girls. The first name is Parker or Spencer."

After hearing the options, Adele replied: "I can't say Parker because Rich likes that name. I'll say Spencer. I love Ray for a girl as well, spelled like the boy's name."

This is not the first time that Adele has discussed her dream of being a mum again. Last year she appeared on The Graham Norton Show and said she'd love to have a second baby in 2023.

At the time, she told BBC viewers: "I want a baby next year. I have plans for next year. I have plans. Imagine if I have to cancel the shows because I'm having a baby."



POP VETERAN CHER SCRAPS BIOPIC, STARTS PROJECT FROM SCRATCH



Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-actress Cher is re-writing her biopic because it "wasn't working out."

The 77-year-old pop veteran has been developing a movie based on her life for two years, but the project has now been scrapped and she is starting from scratch so she can make some changes to ensure the film is exactly how she wants it, reports aceshowbiz.com.

"We are kind of starting again. It just wasn't working out, and we needed to adjust some of the things," she told The Hollywood Reporter.

However, the film is going to face further delays because work can't resume until after the strikes by the writers and actors unions which have brought Hollywood to a standstill. Cher added, "We're going to have to wait (until after the strikes). I'm not going to go against my people."

When asked whether the film is going to be a "jukebox musical" which showcases her hits, Cher insisted she still hasn't decided which direction to go in.

She explained, "I can never decide what I want to do. The thing about my life is that there's too much. It's hard to capture it and all the things I've done. So it's really a lot. The biggest problem is trying to get the story into a decent time period."

The singer previously confirmed she was working on the biopic alongside producers Judy Craymer and Gary Goetzman - the team behind 2008 ABBA movie-musical "Mamma Mia!" and its sequel "Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again" which featured Cher in a supporting role.

'Rebel Moon' team is glad that film did not end up being a 'Star Wars' IP

Los Angeles | Agencies

Director Zack Snyder, who is currently focused on releasing his upcoming sci-fi epic film 'Rebel Moon', had in fact earlier intended the movie to be a part of the 'Star Wars' universe. However, the movie became its own thing eventually, and the team behind 'Rebel Moon' have said they are glad the film did not end up becoming a 'Star Wars' IP.

Zack Snyder had originally conceived 'Rebel Moon' as a 'Seven Samurai' inspired 'Star Wars' movie that he pitched to Lucasfilm shortly after Disney acquired the studio in 2012 for \$4.05 billion.

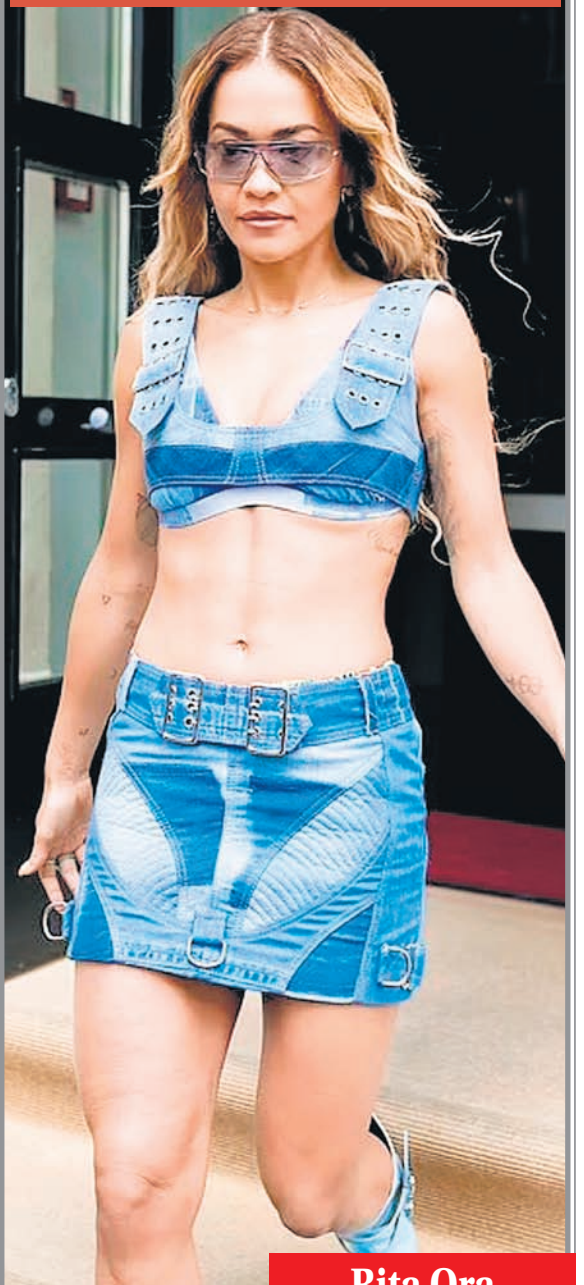
The director wanted to create original characters and he pushed for an R-rated script, which ultimately led 'Rebel Moon' to become its own property outside of the 'Star Wars' franchise after being deemed to be too dark and melancholic.

According to 'Variety', Deborah Snyder recalled "Once, it was a 'Star Wars' film, and I never wanted it to be. I remember, I said to Zack, 'I just feel like your hands are going to be tied so much in what that IP is,' even though it kind of lived outside of it. So I was kind of happy when that fell apart, because I always felt like it was better."

"We learned so much with all our years working with the superheroes and creating those worlds, and to do something now that's wholly original... we say it's a science fantasy more than science fiction, and to take all those skills that Zack has been honing, and to do something in this space, just seemed really exciting," Deborah added.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Rita Ora



SRK rocks out dance floor with Nayanthara



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Just days ahead of the release of the official trailer for 'Jawan', Bollywood megastar Shah Rukh Khan has released the full version of the song 'Not Ramaiya Vastavaiya' in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu. The upbeat dance track sees King Khan rocking it out on the stage alongside south superstar Nayanthara.

The song features booming production with great sound design,

letting all the instruments shine though there is a specific focus on the bass which is by far the loudest. Mixing up electronic, techno, film music, EDM, a bit of folk and even the flair of item numbers, 'Not Ramaiya Vastavaiya' is a pure dance on the floor track.

SRK is seen dancing on the floor with actress Nayanthara and a bunch of other backup dancers really going at it, just having fun and is in a pure mood for joy, celebration and bring-the-house-down kind of partying, dancing

with all the vigour and passion of a young man.

The track is further amplified by all the charm, attitude, vigour and swag that King Khan brings to the dance floor, showing that while he may appear to be aging, he is truly 'Jawan' both in spirit and style. As such, he suits the title of the film as well. 'Not Ramaiya Vastavaiya' has the modern touch given to the iconic track from Raj Kapoor's legendary film 'Shree 420' but is still very much its own entity, and rather than being just a remix,

remake it is something else entirely.

So when titled 'Not Ramaiya Vastavaiya' it is aptly titled so, because while it pays a strong tribute to an all time classic, it is still a new song and a very enjoyable one at that which is guaranteed to be a chartbuster.

Packing in all the swag, groove and attitude, SRK has brought the perfect dance track which only makes people more hyped for the trailer of 'Jawan' which will be releasing on August 31.

Sushmita on 'Rakshabandhan': It's a celebration where you embrace 'imperfect' bond

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Actress Sushmita Sen shared her thoughts about her on-screen brother-sister bond with Ankur Bhatia, portrayed in 'Aarya', saying Rakshabandhan is a celebration where you embrace 'imperfect' bond, promise to be each other's strength in tough times

From having each other's backs to fighting over the silliest things, brother-sister bond experiences all emotions possible. One such complex aspect of the relationship we witnessed in the fan-favorite series 'Aarya'. While Aarya (Sushmita) and Sangram (Ankur) do not share the perfect brother-sister relationship, the love and care for one another remain unwavered.

Opening up about the same, Sushmita said: "Sibling relationships are very difficult to put into words. They fight, they make-up, they fight again, it's a vicious cycle that we all enjoy going through. The bond between Aarya and Sangram is not the ideal one but what I love about their relationship is that they have accepted their bitter relationship and not let go of the love they have for each other; that's exactly what Rakshabandhan stands for."

"A celebration where you embrace this imperfect bond and promise to be each other's strength in tough times," added the actress.

'Aarya' is a crime-thriller drama co-created by Ram Madhvani and Sandeep Modi, who also directed the series, with Vinod Rawat, serving as the co-director. Produced by Madhvani under the banner Ram Madhvani Films, along with Endemol Shine Group, it stars Sushmita in the titular role, and is based on the Dutch drama series 'Penoza'. It is streaming on Disney+ Hotstar.

On the work front, Sushmita was recently seen in 'Taali', which throws light on the trials and tribulations of Shreegauri Sawant's (played by Sushmita) life - her daring transformation from Ganesh to Gauri, and the discrimination she was subjected to because of that, her fearless journey towards motherhood, and the audacious battle that led to the inclusion and identification of the third gender on every official document in India.

Created by Arjun Singh Baran and Kartik D Nishandar, and directed by Ravi Jadhav, 'Taali' is a story of courage and change. It is streaming on JioCinema.

AAMIR KHAN TO RETURN TO ACTING WITH CHRISTMAS RELEASE IN 2024



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan is all set to make a comeback into acting with a yet-untitled film, which has been locked for Christmas 2024 and will be clashing with Akshay Kumar's 'Welcome 3'.

Film trade analyst Taran Adarsh took to X, formerly called Twitter, where he announced the film. He even shared that the pre-production of the film is ongoing and it goes on floors on 20 January, 2024.

"#Xclusiv... AAMIR KHAN LOCKS CHRISTMAS 2024 FOR NEXT FILM... Aamir Khan Productions' Prod No. 16 [not titled yet], starring #AamirKhan in the lead role, to release on 20 Dec 2024 #Christmas2024. Pre-production of the film is ongoing and the film goes on floors on 20 Jan 2024... More details to follow soon," Adarsh tweeted.

Aamir hit the pause button from acting after the debacle of 'Laal Singh Chaddha'. The actor had also said at a press event during the trailer launch of Punjabi film 'Carry On Jatta 3':

"I haven't decided to do any film as of now. I want to spend time with my family right now. I'm feeling good about it because that's what I want to do right now. I'll do a film when I'm emotionally ready, for sure."

Akshay's 'Welcome 3' is reportedly titled as 'Welcome To The Jungle'. It will reportedly star Sanjay Dutt, Arshad Warsi, Suniel Shetty, Disha Patani, and Jacqueline Fernandez. It will also have Raveena Tandon.

I'm passionate about my health and fitness, as I am about my career: Navneet Malik

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Fitness and a healthy lifestyle are a way of life for model and actor Navneet Malik. He is passionate about his health and fitness, as he is about his career and craft. Navneet wouldn't compromise on his fitness and a healthy lifestyle for anything or almost anything.

"For fitness, I try to wake up early in the morning around 4-4:30 am, and try to finish my fitness routine like yoga and meditation very early in the morning. I try to own my first two-three hours of the day, everyday. And that's how I maintain my fitness," Navneet said. He said: "I'm as passionate about my health and fitness as I am about my career and craft. So, whether I need to gain weight for a portrayal or lose it to be in ship shape again, I do it all with all my might."

Did he always wanted to be an actor? Navneet, who is known for his appearances in projects like 'Heropanti 2', and 'Love Hostel' said: "No, I never thought of being an actor. I started my career with a job as a civil engineer in Delhi, and then I turned into a model, then a supermodel and did all big brands in India, and represented our country internationally. And then I got inclined towards acting."

"I started grooming myself, working on my craft, taking workshops, and theatre. Eventually it happened, but I never thought of it. But I am loving it right now, where I am and doing right now. It's like this is meant to happen," he concluded. On the work front, Navneet will be next seen playing the negative role of Mohsin in the riveting thriller series 'The Freelancer'. Helmed by Mohit Raina, the extraction series is directed by Bhav Dhulia, produced by Friday Storytellers and Neeraj Pandey is the creator and showrunner.



Abhishek Banerjee shares what he loves about working in crime thrillers

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Abhishek Banerjee, who is receiving a lot of positive response to his work in the recently released streaming crime thriller series 'Aakhri Sach', has shared that the thrill of knowing about the complexities of the human mind through the characters in a thriller always amazes him.

Abhishek said: "While working on a thriller, you are curious about the human mind itself as an actor because it's not always a twisted mind that commits a crime. Sometimes a perfectly sane person too can commit a crime in a fit of rage."

He went on to explain it with an example of a war which calls for soldiers at loggerheads to shoot at each other, under the orders from war strategists.

"Suddenly, a war takes place and people who were quite normal start shooting each other on the battlefield. For me as an actor, it's the fun of knowing other human beings and what makes them commit a crime," he added.

'Aakhri Sach' which also stars Tamannaah Bhatia as an investigating officer on a case which involves the suicide committed by 11 members of a family, is currently available to stream on Disney+ Hotstar.



INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Neeti Mohan