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TORRENTIAL RAIN CLAIMS 15 LIVES IN MAHA; ARMY, BOATS PRESSED INTO SERVICE

Team Absolute | Mumbai/Pune

At least 15 persons were killed in rain-related incidents as heavy rain wreaked havoc in Pune, Mumbai, Thane, Raigad, and adjoining regions in the past 24 hours, with the Indian Army helping civil agencies in the rescue operations, officials said here on Thursday.

Large parts of Pune and the district were submerged in flood waters as the state's academic, IT, and cultural capital witnessed incessant heavy rain overnight, with schools shut and boats deployed to help out the people.

The city Fire Brigade, police, SDRF, and NDRF teams along with other agencies were rushed to many areas to rescue people who woke up on Thursday to find themselves surrounded by 3-5 feet deep waters.

The rescuers deployed rubber dinghies and ropes to bring out scores of people stuck in their homes or shops or rooftops with the waters inundating their dwellings up to the ground floor ceiling in some buildings, while almost all local reservoirs, big and small dams were overflowing, with most rivers in spate.

The NDRF launched a major rescue operation in Nimbaj Nagar, Deccan Gymkhana, and Sinhadag Road areas which were among the worst-hit as water rushed into homes, shops, and other establishments as the city received over 200 mm rain in the past 24 hours.

The situation was compounded by



over 40,000 cusecs water being discharged from the overflowing Khadakwasla Dam, said Union MoS for Civil Aviation, Murlidhar Mohol, who is the Pune MP.

Angry locals slammed the government for allegedly opening the Khadakwasla Dam floodgates to the Mula-Mutha River basins at around 4 a.m. without prior notice which could have enabled the people to rush to safer areas. Almost across the city, roads, streets, and lanes were littered with two-wheelers and four-wheelers, uprooted trees or branches, and other debris stuck in the flood waters with people wading in waist-to-neck deep water, frantically attempting to save their belongings. Major thoroughfares like the Bhide Bridge, Holkar Bridge, Sangam Bridge, the Khillare Complex near Garware College, and a bridge

opposite the PMC office were shut for traffic as the rivers below were in a raging flow.

Elsewhere, the twin hill stations of Khandala-Lonavala, Pimpri-Chinchwad, Mulshi, Khed, Bhor, Maval, Haveli, Baramati, and the elite Lavasa city, among others, received very heavy rain measuring over 300 mm in the past 24 hours.

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar spoke with Collector Suhas Diwase, and spent several hours visiting some of the worst-hit areas where he encountered angry citizens, some in tears as they recounted their losses and how some had not eaten even a morsel since Wednesday night.

At least 15 persons lost their lives in different rain-linked tragedies in Mumbai, Thane, Raigad, Pune, and Chandrapur during the day, said offi-

cial.

Three persons were killed in Pune city following electrocution while another three are feared to have perished in their posh villas after a hill-slide in the Lavasa city in Mulshi.

Another person was crushed in a landslide at Maval in Pune district, a man drowned in Raigad, a man was killed in a fire ignited by a short-circuit in a Mumbai building, a man was killed in a landslide, three others were killed in lightning strikes in Chandrapur, while two persons drowned in the Barvi dam in Thane.

The victims in Pune have been identified as Shiva Jidbahadur Pariyar (18), a Nepali youth, Akash V. Mane (21), and Abhishek A. Ghanekar (25).

A youth named Kamalakar Mhatre drowned in Raigad; a senior citizen named Mahendra Shah (70) lost his life in the Mumbai incident, while the identity of those killed in Chandrapur and Thane are yet to be ascertained.

In a major disaster, a hillside triggered by heavy rain in Lavasa city buried three villas on Thursday morning, in which at least three persons are feared to have perished under the debris even as the NDRF launched a rescue effort. Amid the tragedies was the miraculous rescue of two persons - who were trapped in a car in flood waters and screaming for help - using a crane in Panvel town in Raigad, while large areas of Kalyan and Ulhasnagar (both in Thane) were submerged under 2-4 feet water as rain lashed the region.

BJP-RSS wants to destroy India's education sector: Kharage

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Continuing his criticism of the Union Budget, the Leader of

Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge, on Thursday slammed the Centre for slashing the higher education budget by a "whopping Rs 9,600 crore".

"BJP-RSS wants to destroy India's education sector by a thousand cuts! Budget for higher education has been slashed by a whopping Rs 9,600 crore, the interim budget also slashed it by 16.38 per cent," Kharge posted on X.

The Congress President also highlighted that the Budget for IITs and IIMs has been cut for the second consecutive year, while the UGC too received a "massive" 61 per cent cut.

"UGC is a statutory body, and was supposed to be the only grant-giving agency in the country, but Modi Govt has snatched its power, thereby trampling upon its autonomy," Kharge said.

He also asserted that the UGC's functioning of 'granting' funds has been usurped by the Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) - a venture between Canara Bank and the Ministry of Education.



"This will not only compel colleges and universities to introduce more self-financing courses, but also increase the financial woes of SC, ST, OBC, and EWS students. Modi gov't's 5-pronged attack on India's education system continues unabated

in the form of controlling universities, strangulating the funds of autonomous institutions, undermining their autonomy, destroying public education through cronyism and betraying the youth," Kharge said while slamming the Budget.

Public assets will be better managed: Dr. Mohan Yadav

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav said to optimize and effectively manage state government assets both within Madhya Pradesh and beyond. During a Board of Directors meeting of the Madhya Pradesh Asset Management State Company Limited at Mantralaya on Wednesday. Dr. Yadav instructed that a thorough study and assessment of these assets should be conducted to inform timely and strategic decisions regarding their utilization. He stressed the importance of ensuring that each asset serves the state's interests and directed that necessary improvements



be implemented to enhance their management and functionality.

In the meeting, post-facto approval was given to proposals worth Rs 1899.55 lakhs of Agar-Malwa, Dhar, Satna, Gwalior, Indore, Ujjain, Narmadapuram, Chhindwara, Jabalpur,

Narsinghpur, Shahdol, Katni, Damoh, Khargone districts under the District Incentive Scheme. In the meeting, the Board of Directors approved the financial statements of Madhya Pradesh State Asset Management Company Limited for the financial year 2023-24.

Delhi CM Kejriwal's judicial custody extended till Aug 8

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A court here on Thursday extended, till August 8, judicial custody of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in connection with the alleged liquor policy scam.

Special Judge Kaveri Baweja of Rouse Avenue Court passed the order upon the expiry of the previously granted judicial custody.

Last week, the Delhi High Court reserved its verdict on a plea filed by CM Kejriwal challenging his arrest by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the corruption case.

A Bench of Justice Neena Bansal Krishna also reserved its verdict on his plea seeking release on interim bail.

The Supreme Court, on July 12, ordered CM Kejriwal



to be released on interim bail in connection with the money laundering case linked to the excise policy case. However, he was not able to walk out of jail since he was arrested by the CBI.

Digvijaya questions govt over US advisory against travel to J&K, Central India

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh raised concerns on Thursday regarding the safety of tourists in certain parts of India, citing a recent Level-4 travel advisory issued by the US State Department.

During a discussion on the Union Budget and the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), Digvijaya Singh stated, "The US State Department has updated its travel advisory, placing some parts of India under Level 4 due to rising terrorism and violent crime. This includes J&K, the Indo-Pak border, Manipur, and parts of central and eastern India."

In response, Minister of Tourism and Culture Gajendra Singh Shekhawat dismissed these concerns, asserting that J&K has seen "significant growth" in tourism.

"I am not aware of any such advisory from the US. However, I can confirm that J&K has experienced a substantial increase in tourism following the abrogation of Article 370. Tourists are visiting without fear, and we are committed to further developing tourism



in the region," Shekhawat said. Additionally, Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar urged members to avoid relying on newspaper reports and instead provide official documents to support their claims.

"I would not permit any newspaper report to be a basis for discussion... This House should discuss credible and authentic information," Dhankhar stated.

On Wednesday, the US State Department issued a travel advisory, labelling J&K, the Indo-Pak border, Manipur and parts of central and eastern India under their 'Level 4: Do not Travel' column.

Membership of Two Jharkhand MLAs terminated under anti-defection law

Ranchi | Agencies

In a significant development, the membership of two Jharkhand MLAs -- Jaiprakash Bhai Patel and Lobin Hembrom -- has been terminated due to defection.

The decision was announced on Thursday by Speaker Rabindranath Mahto's Tribunal after hearing complaints under the 10th Schedule of the Constitution.

The decision will be effective from July 26. Notably, both legislators were affiliated with the ruling coalition.

Jaiprakash Bhai Patel, who represented the Mandu constituency and was originally from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), joined the Congress just before the Lok Sabha elections which he contested from Hazaribag seat on a Congress ticket.

Similarly, Lobin Hembrom of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), representing the Borio constituency, contested against his party's candidate from the Rajmahal Lok Sabha seat. Both, however, lost the elections.

The BJP filed a complaint against Jaiprakash Bhai Patel, while the JMM lodged a complaint against Lobin Hembrom with the Speaker's



Tribunal. After two days of hearings, the Tribunal reserved its decision, asking for the debate copy to be submitted by noon on July 25.

During the hearing against Patel, BJP advocate Vinod Kumar Sahu argued that his switch to Congress and his candidacy from Hazaribag were documented by the Election Commission.

He said seeking evidence and time for response was an attempt to deliberately waste the Tribunal's time, as the case clearly fell under the 10th Schedule of the Assembly's anti-defection law. In Hembrom's case, advocate Anuj Kumar argued that it was an internal party issue rather than a defection case. Representing JMM, advocate Ankitesh Kumar Jha countered that Hembrom contested the Lok Sabha elections defying the party line, warranting the termination of his membership.

'Deshdrohi' charge on ex-Punjab CM after war of words in Lok Sabha

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Lok Sabha on Thursday witnessed a heated altercation between Congress leader & former Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, and Union Minister Ravneet Singh Bittu, who recently switched from the grand old party to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The war of words between Channi and Bittu also led to brief adjournment of the House. Moments later, Bittu released a video message and accused the former of misleading and misguiding the nation.

Ravneet Singh Bittu, the Union Minister of State for Railways and Food Processing Industries, said that the former Punjab chief minister was utterly wrong in claiming that the farmers were booked under NSA. He termed it an outrageous ploy to demean and mock the farmers.

"Today, a former Chief Minister (referring to Channi) behaved in an anti-national manner and misled the world through the Lok Sabha. He claimed that the NSA was imposed on the farmers, which is not the case. It was against the radical forces (Amritpal Singh) which wanted to break Punjab away from India," he pointed out.

Bittu also slammed the Congress leadership for backing Channi in the House.

"While he spoke, the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi was sit-



ting there, enabling these statements," he said.

Earlier, during a discussion on the Union Budget, Channi hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government and listed out 'instances of undeclared Emergency'.

"This government does not treat all citizens equally. They are only concerned with staying in power. The BJP is responsible for a financial emergency in the country. They only talk about past Emergencies, but today, there is an undeclared Emergency," Channi said.

He also advocated for Amritpal Singh, a pro-Khalistan leader and MP from the Khadoor Sahib Lok Sabha constituency, who has been imprisoned under the NSA.

He argued: "Twenty lakh people elected an MP, and he (Amritpal Singh) is being imprisoned under the NSA. Freedom of speech is being suppressed, and the people of his constituency cannot voice their concerns in this House. This is also an Emergency."

The heated face-off between Channi and Bittu also drew the attention of lawmakers.

During the discussion on Union Budget, Channi referred to the assassination of Bittu's grandfather and former Punjab CM Beant Singh. The alleged personal remarks left the Union Minister infuriated, who shot back by saying, "my grandfather sacrificed his life for the nation and not for Congress party".

Raghav Chadha compares India's taxation to England, services to Somalia

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha on Thursday voiced strong criticism of the Union Budget 2024, presented by the NDA government in its third-consecutive term, and said, "India is paying taxes like England and receiving services like Somalia."

During the general discussion on the Union Budget in the Rajya Sabha, he described the budget as disappointing, claiming it "failed to satisfy any section of society, including BJP supporters and voters."

Chadha remarked, "Usually when a Union Budget is presented, some sections of society are happy while others are not. However, this time, the government has managed to displease everyone. Even BJP supporters are unhappy."

Highlighting the burden of taxation, the AAP leader stated, "In the last 10 years, the government has been taking around 70-80 per cent of the public's income through taxes such as Income Tax, GST, and Capital Gains Tax. What does the public get in return?"

He went on to question the quality of services pro-



vided by the government, saying, "We pay taxes like in England but receive services like in Somalia. What kind of world-class healthcare, transportation, and education is the government providing us?"

Commenting on the BJP's performance in the recent Lok Sabha elections, the Rajya Sabha MP noted, "In 2019, the BJP government had 303 seats, but the people of the country imposed a GST of 18 per cent on those seats, bringing them down to 240." He attributed the BJP's reduced seat count to economic issues, stating, "The primary reasons for this decline are economy, economy, and economy."

Chadha pointed out that rural income growth is at a "decadal low" and that real wages have been "consistently declining" over the past 25 months.



CHANDRABABU NAIDU COMPARES JAGAN REDDY TO PABLO ESCOBAR

Amaravati | Agencies

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday launched a scathing attack on his predecessor Y.S. Jaganmohan Reddy, comparing him to late Columbian drug lord Pablo Escobar.

Speaking in the state Assembly while releasing a White Paper on law and order, Naidu said in his 40-year political career, he has not seen a politician like Jagan Reddy as he went on to compare him with Escobar.

Naidu's attack came a day after a protest by the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leader in Delhi over what he called deteriorating law and order situation in Andhra Pradesh, and the attacks on YSRCP leaders and cadres after the formation of the TDP-led coalition government in the state.

"Pablo Escobar was a Colombian drug lord... he was a narco-terrorist. He turned politician and then



launched his cartel to sell drugs. He earned \$30 billion at that time, which is now worth \$90 billion," Naidu said.

The Chief Minister added that Escobar was arrested in 1976 and in 1980, he became the richest drug lord in the world. "One can become rich by selling drugs as well," he said. "Jagan Mohan Reddy aimed to become richer than Tata and Ambani. That's why I always say few have needs, few have greed and few have mania and these maniacs can do anything," he said.

Naidu also spoke in detail about the life of Escobar, who became an MP in 1982. He mentioned that Escobar resorted to retaliatory attacks when he was barred from politics. The drug lord was killed by Colombian police in 1993. "A series was also made on Escobar's life. I want people in the state to watch it," he said.

TDP leaders have been claiming that Andhra Pradesh became the drug capital of the country during Jagan Reddy's rule.

Over 4.25 lakh perform Amarnath Yatra in 26 days

Jammu | Agencies

The number of pilgrims performing the Amarnath Yatra during the last 26 days has crossed 4.25 lakh while another batch of enthusiastic 3,089 devotees left Jammu on Thursday for Kashmir.

Officials of Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB) headed by J&K Lt. Governor Manoj Sinha manage the affairs of the annual Yatra.

Last year, only 3.50 lakh Yatris performed the Amarnath Yatra during the entire period while this year, in only 26 days, 4.25 lakh pilgrims have already had 'darshan' inside the holy cave shrine.

On Thursday, the batch of 3,089 Yatris left the Bhagwati Nagar Yatri Niwas in Jammu for the Valley in two escorted convoys. Officials said that both escorted convoys left at 3.25 a.m. for the Valley.

The first escorted convoy left carrying 1,286 pilgrims in 43 vehicles for the North Kashmir Baital base camp. The second escorted convoy left carrying 1,803 Yatris in 63 vehicles for the South Kashmir Nunwan (Pahalgam) base camp. The cave shrine houses an ice stalagmite structure that waxes and wanes with the phases of the moon. Devotees believe that this ice stalagmite structure symbolises the



mythical powers of Lord Shiva.

The cave is situated at an altitude of 3,888 metres above sea level in the Kashmir Himalayas. Devotees approach the cave shrine either from the traditional South Kashmir Pahalgam route or the North Kashmir Baital route.

The Pahalgam-Cave shrine axis is 48 km long and takes Yatris 4-5 days to reach the shrine. The Baital-Cave shrine axis is 14 km long and takes one day for the pilgrims to have 'darshan' and return to the base camp.

This year's Yatra will conclude after 52 days on August 19 coinciding with Shravan Purnima and Raksha Bandhan festivals.

MUDA case: Consent for CM Siddaramaiah's prosecution to be sought from K'taka Guv

Bengaluru | Agencies

In a major development, activist TJ Abraham has announced that he will seek the Governor's consent for prosecution of Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday in connection with the MUDA case.

In a statement Abraham said, "I am scheduled to meet the Governor of Karnataka at 11.30 A.M. on Friday at Raj Bhavan, to seek his sanction for prosecution of CM Siddaramaiah in accordance with Section 218 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, Section 17A and 19 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988."

He added that this step was being taken after filing a complaint with the Lokayukta Police in Mysore, on July 18 in connection with the alleged illegal allotment of 14 alternative compensatory sites in Vijayanagar, of Mysore District, to BM Parvathi Siddaramiah's wife on January 5, 2022, causing a loss of Rs.44.64 crore to the state exchequer.

The irregularities allegedly involve several persons including CM Siddaramaiah, his wife Parvathi, his M.L.A son S Yatindar, MUDA Commissioner DB Natesh, MUDA Chairman HV Rajeev, the then Sub-Registrar of Mysore North SK Siddiah, the then DC Mysuru G



Kumar Nayak (currently the Congress MP from Raichur), the then DC of Mysuru S Selvakumar and other people.

Abraham is the president of the Anti-Graft/Corruption and Environmental Forum.

During the tenure of Yediyurappa as the CM, prosecution consent was given by then Governor late Hansraj Bharadwaj in the denotification case, following which an FIR was lodged and the senior BJP leader had to face trial and was jailed in 2011.

Rashtrapati Bhavan's Durbar Hall and Ashok Hall renamed as Gantantra Mandap and Ashok Mandap

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a significant development, two iconic halls of the Rashtrapati Bhavan have been renamed by President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday.

Durbar Hall will now be known as 'Gantantra Mandap' while Ashok Hall has been renamed as 'Ashok Mandap'.

The renaming of the halls has been done to drop their British semblance and 'bring them closer' to the Indian cultural values and ethos.

"Rashtrapati Bhavan, the office and the residence of the President of India, is a symbol of the nation, and an invaluable heritage of the people. Continuous efforts are being made to make it more accessible to people. There has been a consistent endeavour to make the ambience of the Rashtrapati Bhavan reflective of the Indian cultural values and ethos," said a press communique from the President's House.

While 'Durbar Hall' is the venue of



important ceremonies and celebrations such as the presentation of National Awards, Ashok Hall served as a ballroom.

"The term 'Durbar' refers to courts and assemblies of Indian rulers and the British. It lost relevance after India became a Republic, that is, 'Gantantra'. The concept of 'Gantantra' is deeply rooted in Indian society since ancient times, making 'Gantantra Mandap' an apt name for the venue," the press note further said.

Ashok Hall was originally a ballroom. The word 'Ashok' connotes someone who is "free from all sufferings" or is "bereft of any sorrow". Also, Ashoka refers to Emperor Ashoka, a symbol of unity and peaceful co-existence.

"Renaming Ashoka Hall as Ashok Mandap brings uniformity in language and removes the traces of anglicisation while upholding the key values associated with the word 'Ashok'," it said.

Rajasthan paper leak case: ED finds money laundering link, arrests one

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has established money laundering links in the Rajasthan Paper Leak case related to the recruitment of teachers and apprehended a person named Anita Meena.

Anita Meena, also known by the name of Anita Kumar was arrested under the provisions of the Money Laundering Act in the paper leak case of a Senior Teacher 2nd grade competitive examination. She has been remanded to two-day ED custody.

As per the ED probe, the accused Anita Meena colluded with Anil Kumar Meena, a broker accused of leaking question papers in the teachers recruitment examination 2022. Anil Kumar Meena along with Rajasthan Public Service Commission member Babulal Katara were earlier



held by the agency for alleged role in the question paper leak.

Anita Meena may prove to be a 'key link' in the money laundering investigations as she colluded with the paper leak accused and also bought properties with the proceeds

of crime. The ED investigations have found that Anita Meena is a close friend of Anil Kumar Meena and she was in regular touch with him during the crime period. She actively assisted Anil Kumar Meena in the generation of Proceeds of Crime (PoC),

received huge proceeds of crime in cash from Anil Kumar Meena and purchased an immovable property in her name.

The premier investigation agency has conducted a couple of raids in the competitive exam paper leak case and recovered incriminating documents.

It has also attached movable and immovable properties worth Rs 3.11 crore (approx.) of Babulal Katara, Anil Meena alias Sher Singh Meena and others vide Provisional Attachment Order dated August 18, 2023.

To date, a total of eight accused namely Babulal Katara, Anil Kumar Meena and Bhubendra Saran, Suresh Kumar alias Suresh Sau, Vijay Damore, Peearam, Pukhray, and Arun Sharma have been arrested in the matter. The trial is ongoing against all the eight accused after the police have filed a charge sheet.

CM Nitish Kumar has surrendered to BJP, says Lalu Prasad

Patna | Agencies

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad on Thursday criticised Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and accused him of 'surrendering' to the BJP.

Claiming that the Central government had failed to allocate substantial resources to Bihar in the Union Budget, Lalu Prasad said it was like giving only a 'Jhunjhuna (toy)' to the state.

Speaking to the media persons at the Patna Airport, the RJD chief stated, "Nitish Kumar has just cheated the people of Bihar on the special category status. He is repeating the statement of the Central government and does not have a stand of his own." "It is absolutely clear that the development of Bihar cannot take place with-



out getting the special category status of the state," Lalu Prasad further said.

Earlier on Tuesday, he criticised the Central government over the Union Budget,

saying that it had nothing for the poor and the farmers.

The former was in Delhi for a routine health check-up and was admitted to AIIMS for a few hours.

Priyanka Gandhi shares viral video: Firozabad DM dispels misinformation on healthcare

Team Absolute | New Delhi

A viral video circulating on social media purportedly shows oxygen being administered to a sick person lying on the roadside in Firozabad, Uttar Pradesh. This video prompted Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Samajwadi Party Chief Akhilesh Yadav to question the state of healthcare in Uttar Pradesh.

However, the District Magistrate of Firozabad, Ramesh Ranjan, has now clarified the truth behind the viral video. Speaking to the media, he stated, "There is neither any district hospital nor any government hospital visible in the video. This misleading video, created with deceptive intent, will be legally dealt with. The family of the patient had gone to a private shop to get a cylinder. They obtained the cylinder and returned home. There was no involvement of the government system in this incident. I categorically deny this misinformation and



request people not to share incorrect information."

Ramesh Ranjan further explained: "Today, we identified the patient at his home. His treatment was ongoing at home. Earlier, he was identified as a TB patient, and his treatment is being correctly

managed in Agra."

Earlier, Priyanka Gandhi shared the video on X with the caption: "This video from Firozabad, UP tells the story of our ailing healthcare system. The burden of expensive treatment is forcing the struggling public into poverty. According to a report, every year more than 6 crore people in the country fall into poverty due to high medical expenses. The current health budget is 73 per cent less than what is required to achieve the goals of the National Health Policy. The public demands - Save Lives, BJP's priority - Save Chair."

Prior to this, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav also questioned the UP Health Department on X, writing: "In Uttar Pradesh, the healthcare system is on the side-walk... there is nothing more to say because the rest is all conveyed by this picture. The BJP should understand that saving lives is more important than saving their chair. Is anyone listening?"

Jammu | Agencies

Two over-ground workers (OGWs) of Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) were arrested and legal action was taken against four people for supporting terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district, said police on Thursday.

A police statement mentioned, "In a significant breakthrough in our ongoing efforts to counter terrorist activities, Kathua Police at police station Malhar have arrested two OGWs for supporting terror-related activities. These individuals were also found to have purposefully withheld crucial information by not disclosing it to police in time. Both individuals deliberately chose not to disclose vital information to the police, thereby obstructing efforts to prevent terrorist actions."

"Over 100 individuals have



been questioned in connection with this case whereas preventive measures have been taken against more than 40 individuals to mitigate further risks and disrupt any potential support systems for terrorist activities," the statement read.

The two OGWs have been identified as Layaqat Ali alias Puwa, son of Gammil Ward No. 07, Kalna Dhanu Parole,

Tehsil Billawar, and Mool Raj alias Jenju, son of Uttam Chand of Bowli Mohalla Malhar, Tehsil Malhar in Kathua district.

"Accordingly a case FIR No. 18/2024 U/S 61(1), 113, 147, 150/ BNS 2/3 EIMCO Act was registered at PS Malhar whereas the further investigation is going on. The arrest of these OGWs is a testament to our resolve. We urge the public to remain alert

and report any suspicious activities to their nearest Police Station," the statement said.

Earlier, the officials said the two Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) workers had given strategic and logistic support to the terrorists involved in the Kathua terror attack. Five security personnel, including four soldiers and a local policeman, were killed when terrorists ambushed an Army vehicle in Badnota village, 150 away from Kathua town on July 10.

The presence of 40 hardcore foreign terrorists has been reported in the hilly districts of the Jammu division, including Rajouri, Poonch, Doda, Kathua, Reasi and Udhampur.

The Army has deployed over 4000 soldiers including the elite para commandos and those trained in mountain warfare to eradicate terrorism from the otherwise peaceful Jammu division.



INVESTMENTS GENERATE VALUABLE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE LOCAL POPULATION: CHIEF MINISTER MOHAN YADAV

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has invited industrialists from Southern part of India to set-up industrial units in Madhya Pradesh, highlighting the state's supportive facilities for entrepreneurs. He emphasized that such investments would not only capitalize on the available resources but also generate valuable employment opportunities for the local population.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav, today visited the Best Corp factory in Coimbatore (Tirupur), Tamil Nadu. During his visit, Dr. Yadav expressed his intent to explore industrial development opportunities for Madhya Pradesh by examining this prominent industrial region. He highlighted that inviting investors to Madhya Pradesh would be mutually beneficial, offering substantial advantages for both the investors and the state.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav emphasized the significant potential for growth in Madhya Pradesh's textile industry, expressing his admiration for the thriving unit in Tamil Nadu. He described this industrial success as a model for regions where employment opportunities, especially for



youth and women, are greatly needed. Dr. Yadav noted that the textile industry is particularly employment-focused, highlighting its role in providing jobs across India's diverse states. He acknowledged the dedication of workers from various regions, contributing to the nation's prosperity through their hard work.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that this industrial unit of Tamil Nadu is in a way a temple of labour, where workers earn their livelihood and the workers deserve congratulations. The clothes manufactured by them create India's unique identity in the world. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that a unit has also been established in

Ujjain by Best Corp Institute, and efforts will be made to set up such units at other places in the state. Other investors from Tamil Nadu are also being invited to invest in Madhya Pradesh. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav also discussed investment-related matters during dinner with leading industrialists.

Labourer digs diamond worth Rs 80 lakh from Panna mine

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Raju Gaud said when he set out in the morning to dig mud and sift through it, a daily routine in monsoon months for the past ten years, he hadn't imagined he would strike a fortune. 'I hope the amount earned (after the auction) will reduce my financial hardships and take care of my children's education,' Gaud said.

A labourer found a 19.22-carat diamond in a mine in Madhya Pradesh's Panna district on Wednesday which could fetch about Rs 80 lakh or more at the government auction, officials said.

Raju Gaud said when he set out in the morning to dig mud and sift through it, a daily routine in monsoon months for the past ten years, he hadn't imagined he would strike a fortune. "I hope the amount earned (after the auction) will reduce my financial hardships and take care of my children's education," Gaud said.



The labourer said he was exulted after finding the precious stone in a leased mine at Krishna Kalyanpur and promptly deposited it with the government authorities. The gem-quality diamond will be put for sale in the next auction, said Anupam Singh,

an official from the Panna diamond office. District Collector Suresh Kumar said the 19.22-carat diamond Gaud uncovered in a shallow mine could fetch Rs 80 lakh or more in the auction.

MP govt gears up for reforms to empower gram panchayats

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The BJP government in Madhya Pradesh is preparing to bring reforms in the administrative system of the gram panchayats to ensure effective implementation of the public beneficiary schemes of the Centre and state.

For this purpose, the Panchayat and Rural Development Department is preparing some guidelines which will be introduced after obtaining the Centre's approval.

The new system will empower the gram panchayats to design the development plans for their respective panchayats, which will have to be submitted to the state government for budget approval and allocation.

State Panchayat and Rural Development Minister Prahlad Singh Patel said the initiatives are being taken to make the panchayats strong and self-reliant.

"The state government is making efforts to strengthen



the internal administrative system of the gram panchayats," Patel said.

During a meeting with panchayat representatives in Bhopal, the Minister urged them to create a competitive atmosphere for development which will empower them.

Patel also said that the state government is striving

to ensure that every panchayat has a community centre and a building of their own.

Optimum use of the budget and the available financial resources under various schemes should be made, he said, adding that the ultimate objective is to make people happy and ensure their welfare.

School principal booked for 'stopping students from reciting Sanskrit verses'

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The principal of a convent school in Madhya Pradesh's Guna district has been booked for allegedly stopping some students from reciting a Sanskrit verse and forcing them to speak in English, police said.

According to police, an FIR was registered against Catherine Vattoly, principal of Vandana Convent School. Established in 1974 by the Sisters of the St. Elizabeth (CSSE), it is one of the oldest English medium schools in the district.

The FIR was filed by the complainant Saksham Dubey (26), an ABVP activist from Guna who alleged that on July 15 around 8-9 am, when three students tried to recite a Sanskrit shloka 'Sarve Bhavantu Sukhina', "Catherine got upset and snatched the microphone from the students and stopped them from giving the speech."

The FIR was registered under sections 196 (Promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, etc...) and 299 (Deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs) of the BNS. If convicted the accused face a maximum punishment of three years under these sections.

"Sister Catherine said all this shayari (poetry) will not be allowed and



asked to speak in English. The statement of Sister Catherine equating shokla to shayari has hurt our Hindu

religious sentiments. The students have to also face mental harassment. The seeds of missionary mentality

were sown by Sister Catherine, which affected all the students following Hindu religion," the FIR read.

Water supply must not be interrupted, due to damaged pipelines. Dr. Yadav

► CHIEF MINISTER DR. MOHAN YADAV EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF PROVIDING CLEAN AND SUFFICIENT TAP WATER TO EVERY HOUSEHOLD IN RURAL AREAS THROUGH GROUP WATER SUPPLY SCHEMES. HE URGED FOR THE IMMEDIATE RESOLUTION OF ANY OBSTACLES THAT MAY ARISE AND SAID THAT WATER SUPPLY MUST NOT BE INTERRUPTED, DUE TO DAMAGED PIPELINES. DR. YADAV INSTRUCTED TO IMMEDIATELY REPAIR PIPELINES DAMAGED DURING WORK CONDUCTED BY CONTRACTORS FROM OTHER DEPARTMENTS AND INSISTED ON CO-ORDINATED EFFORTS TO PREVENT SUCH DAMAGE.



Team Absolute | Bhopal

He also said to create a revolving fund for the prompt repair of pipelines. CM Dr. Yadav was addressing the 24th meeting of the Board of Directors of Madhya Pradesh Jal Nigam, held today at Mantralaya. The meeting was attended by Public Health Engineering Minister Smt. Sampatiya Uike, Chief Secretary Smt. Veera Rana,

Additional Chief Secretary Shri Rajesh Rajoura, Shri Malay Srivastava, and Shri Mohammad Suleman.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav directed to explore the use of private water sources to establish a permanent water supply arrangement. He emphasized the importance of community participation in the implementation of the plan, particularly

involving local residents to ensure cleanliness. Dr. Yadav highlighted the need to prioritize both the timeline and quality of water supply-related projects. During the meeting, various management issues, including annual accounts, were presented for consideration. Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister, Shri Sanjay Shukla, and Principal Secretary of Finance, Shri Manish Singh were present as well.

MP CM thanks Centre for allocating Rs 14,738 cr for railways in state

► MADHYA PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER MOHAN YADAV HAS EXPRESSED HIS GRATITUDE TO THE UNION GOVERNMENT FOR ALLOCATING RS 14,738 CRORE TO ENHANCE RAILWAY FACILITIES IN THE STATE.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The Chief Minister on Wednesday said that more than 80 railway stations in Western Central Railway (Zone) are currently under way, for which, the Union government has already sanctioned an amount of Rs 81,000 crore.

These railway stations are being developed under the Centre's scheme 'Amrit station'. Besides these, around 1,062 flyovers and roads under bridges have been constructed in the past 10 years.

"The recent budget includes a provision of Rs 14,738 crore specifically for the enhancement of railway facilities in the state. This substantial investment will benefit the citizens by providing new railway amenities and improved railway sta-



tions. It is the commitment of PM Modi for the people of Madhya Pradesh," CM Yadav said.

The Chief Minister also added that Madhya Pradesh used to receive around Rs 632 crore between 2009 and 2014, which has been increased to Rs 14,738 crore in the Union Budget 2024-25.

Madhya Pradesh has witnessed growth in the development of railway infrastructure, including new railway stations and train connectivity, in the past 10 years, CM Yadav said.

Madhya Pradesh has so far got four Vande Bharat Express trains, operating between the major cities -- Indore, Bhopal, Jabalpur, Rewa and also from Bhopal to New Delhi.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Union Budget 2024-25 in Parliament on Tuesday.

For the Financial Year 2024-25, the Union government has allocated a record capital expenditure of Rs 2,62,200 crore for the Railways sector, with gross budgetary support amounting to Rs 2,52,200 crore.



EDITOR'S SPECS

New institutes of pharma, medical technology

The Central government has earmarked Rs 700 crore to set up centres of excellence at the National Institutes of Pharmaceutical, Education & Research (NIPER) over the next five years to boost pharma and medical technology in the country. Of the Rs 700 crore, a sum of Rs 243 crore has been approved for 2024-25, according to a notice issued by the Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP), under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers. There are currently seven NIPERs spanning seven states in the country -- Mohali (Punjab), Ahmedabad (Gujarat), Hajipur (Bihar), Hyderabad (Telangana), Kolkata (West Bengal), Guwahati (Assam) and Rae Bareilly (Uttar Pradesh). These will broadly focus on research ranging from medical device manufacturing, bulk drug R&D, phytopharmaceuticals, biological therapeutics, and antiviral and antibacterial drug discovery and development. In 2023, a Parliamentary Panel recommended the government allocate more funds for new initiatives, such as the establishment of the National Institute of Medical Devices Education and Research (NIMERs) and Indian Council of Research & Development and Innovation in Pharma-MedTech Sector (ICPMR). It was mentioned that the DoP had asked for Rs 1, 286 crore for FY24, of which Rs 560 crore was to set up NIPERs, and the remaining amount to be used for new initiatives under the NIPER scheme, such as NIMERs (Rs 200 crore), Centres of Excellence (Rs 233 crore), ICPMR (?50 crore), and Promotion of Research & Innovation in Pharmaceutical Sector (Rs 243.00 crore). Meanwhile, as per media reports, a production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for domestic production of Glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) drugs -- used in the treatment of obesity and diabetes -- is also expected to be rolled out in India by 2026. It is important for the Indian population, with rising incidences of diabetes and obesity. The current formulations of GLP-1 drugs by the US' Novo Nordisk (Ozempic) and Eli Lilly (Zepbound) are unavailable in India.

Here's An Unlikely Combination: Narendra Modi and Billy Joel

Derek O'Brien

In the last ten years (2014-2024), Mr Modi has done all it takes to turn Parliament into a deep dark chamber. Early in 2024, after a long gap of 30 years, one of my fave singer-songwriters, the legendary Billy Joel, released a new song titled Turn the Lights Back On. That's the verdict after India Elections 2024. The Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha must not be allowed to be turned into a deep, dark chamber. Turn the Lights Back On.

Introduce a fixed calendar for the three sessions of Parliament with a minimum of 100 days of sittings a year for each House. The number of sittings per year for Lok Sabha has reduced from an average of 121 days (1952-1970) to 70 days per year since 2000. In 2019, your columnist introduced a Private Member's Bill seeking a fixed calendar for Parliament sessions and a minimum number of sittings of 100 days.

Article 93 of the Constitution says that the Lok Sabha shall choose two members of the House as Speaker and Deputy Speaker as soon as the case may be. The 17th Lok Sabha did not have a Deputy Speaker for its entire five-year term. The Deputy Speaker is not subordinate to the Speaker. The Speaker has to tender his resignation to the Deputy Speaker if s/he chooses to do so. Traditionally, the Deputy Speaker is appointed from the Opposition. The Deputy Speaker should be appointed in this session itself.

Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy was adopted in 2014 to ensure public consultation for all legislation. In the 17th Lok Sabha, nine out of 10 bills introduced in Parliament have been marked by zero or incomplete consultations. Each Minister, while introducing a Bill, should lay a copy of the summary of the consultations.

In the 14th Lok Sabha, six out of 10 bills were sent to various committees for scrutiny; in the 15th Lok Sabha, it was seven out of 10. This figure fell in the 16th Lok Sabha to four out of 10. In the 17th Lok Sabha, about one out of five bills was sent for scrutiny. Abysmal. The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (2002) recommended that all bills introduced in Parliament should first be examined by the relevant committee. Committees should also review the



implementation of laws passed by Parliament.

A joint constitutional committee from both Houses should be formed to review the constitutional validity of Constitution Amendment Bills before they are introduced.

Rule 267 gives Rajya Sabha MPs an opportunity to give a written notice to suspend regular business and seek an immediate discussion on an issue of national importance. It has been eight years since such a discussion has been permitted. At least one such notice should be admitted in each session.

The Prime Minister has not answered a single question on the floor of Parliament. His participation has been limited to monologues - speeches during Motion of Thanks, farewells, and special occasions. Narendra Modi needs to answer questions, take part in debates and discussions on national issues. (The UK Parliament has Prime Minister's Question Time every Wednesday where it is mandatory for the PM to answer.)

Following the Parliament security breach last year, the Committee on security in Parliament house complex should be reconstituted immediately, with the Deputy Speaker as the Chairperson.

A Parliamentary Committee on National Economy should be formed to produce annual reports on the state of the economy. The report should then be discussed in Parliament. The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (2002) noted that there is no system for Parliamentary scrutiny of public borrowing. Since it affects future governments, beyond certain limits, borrowing proposals should also be reviewed by the Parliamentary Committee on National Economy.

Funds should be allocated to provide research support staff to committees to conduct public hearings, inquiries, and collect data. Currently, the secretariat assists

with scheduling meetings and taking notes. The quality of output will improve if each committee is assigned a team dedicated to research.

Please open the door
Nothing is different, we've been here before
Pacing these halls
Trying to talk over the silence
And pride sticks out its tongue
Laughs at the portrait that we've become
Stuck in a frame, unable to change
I was wrong
Did I wait too long
To turn the lights back on?
- Billy Joel, Turn the Lights Back On.
(Derek O'Brien, MP, leads the Trinamool Congress in the Rajya Sabha. Views expressed are personal.)

international

CAMEROON LAUNCHES VACCINATION DRIVE TO CURB OUTBREAK OF YELLOW FEVER

Yaounde, |Agencies

Cameroon began immunising children and adults against yellow fever in the commercial hub of Douala as part of preventive response intervention after confirmation of cases.

The vaccination campaign, which will run until July 30, is carried out free of charge in all the nine health districts of Douala, said Cameroon's Minister of Public Health Manaouda Malachie, Xinhua news agency reported.

"The campaign comes at a time marked by an upsurge in confirmed cases and deaths of yellow fever since 2023 in our country. The situation as described, confirms an epidemic in urban areas with a very high risk of international spread," Manaouda said in a statement announcing the vaccination program.

The campaign targets children and adults aged between 9 months to 60 years except pregnant women, women breastfeeding infants under 9 months, and severely ill individuals. "A single dose of the vaccine provides lifelong immunity," Manaouda added.

Yellow fever, an acute viral hemorrhagic disease transmitted by infected mosquitoes, poses a significant public health threat. Characterised by symptoms such as fever, headache, jaundice, muscle pain, nausea, vomiting, and fatigue, the disease can lead to severe complications, with approximately half of the patients succumbing within seven to 10 days, according to the World Health Organisation.



OPEC receives compensation plans for overproduction from Iraq, Kazakhstan, Russia



Vienna |Agencies

The Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Secretariat said that it received compensation plans from Iraq, Kazakhstan, and Russia for their overproduced oil volumes in the first half of 2024.

OPEC said in a statement that the combined overproduction from the three countries totalled 2.28 million barrels per day (bpd) during the period. Iraq overproduced 1.18 million bpd, Kazakhstan 620,000 bpd, and Russia

480,000 bpd, Xinhua news agency reported.

Iraq and Kazakhstan will begin compensating for their overproduced volumes this month, while Russia will start in October this year. The three countries will fully compensate for their overproduction by September 2025, with their respective compensation cuts varying from month to month. In June, a meeting of oil ministers from OPEC and its allies, a group known as OPEC+, reiterated the importance of adhering to full conformity and the compensation mechanism.

TERRORISM THREAT TO SINGAPORE REMAINS HIGH: REPORT

Singapore: Terrorism threat to Singapore remains high despite no indication of an imminent attack, according to an official report Thursday.

The terrorism threat has been elevated since the Israel-Palestine conflict, with an uptick in anti-Singapore rhetoric on social media from regional extremist elements, according to the Singapore Terrorism Threat Assessment Report 2024. The primary threat driver in Singapore continues to be online self-radicalization. Singapore's Internal Security Department has dealt with three self-radicalization cases since last July. Two were boys, aged 14 and 16. The third was a 33-year-old female, the annual report showed, Xinhua news agency reported. The ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict triggered the radicalization of the 14-year-old and 33-year-old. The 16-year-old was radicalized by far-right extremist ideologies, according to the report. The Singaporean authority has dealt with 52 self-radicalized individuals, including 40 Singaporeans, since 2015.

DEATH TOLL RISES TO 257 IN ETHIOPIA LANDSLIDE, COULD REACH 500: UN

Addis Ababa: The death toll from Monday's landslide in southern Ethiopia has risen to 257, and could reach up to 500, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) said Thursday.

More than 15,000 affected people need to be evacuated, and the government is finalizing an evacuation plan, UNOCHA said in a situation report. The landslide in Geze Gofa District occurred Monday morning in the midst of a rainy season, which is expected to last until mid-September.

Some of the victims died in subsequent secondary landslides. Many remain unaccounted for, Xinhua news agency reported.

Seasonal rains occasionally cause deadly landslides in some parts of the East African country.

Cambodia court orders opposition leader to pay 1.5 million USD for defamation

Phnom Penh |Agencies

A Cambodian court on Thursday ordered opposition leader Teav Vannol to pay about 1.5 million US dollars for public defamation.

Vannol was sued by the Attorney Group of the Royal Government of Cambodia after he gave an interview to a foreign media outlet in February this year, accusing that Cambodia's democracy had been regressing since Prime Minister Hun Manet took office in August 2023.

The government said his allegations were untrue, Xinhua news agency reported.

"The Phnom Penh Municipal Court ordered Teav Vannol to pay 6 billion riels (about 1.5 million US



dollars) to the Royal Government of Cambodia, the plaintiff in this case," Presiding Judge Hok Pov pronounced the verdict.

The court also fined Vannol 10 million riels (about 2,500 dollars) to put in the state budget.

According to the verdict,

the 69-year-old opposition leader was charged with "public defamation" under the Criminal Code's Article 305. Under the kingdom's law, the convict has the right to appeal to an upper court against the guilty verdict within a month if he does not agree with it.

Death toll from Philippine floods, landslides rises to 21

Manila |Agencies

The death toll in the Philippine floods and landslides triggered by southwest monsoon enhanced by typhoon Gaemi has climbed to 21, police said on Thursday.

In a preliminary report, police said seven people died in the Philippine capital region Manila, three in Cavite province, five in Batangas province, and three in Rizal province. Police also reported that one died in Bulacan province and another two in Angeles City in Pampanga province.

The cause of death mainly was drowning, landslides, fallen trees, and electrocution, Xinhua news agency



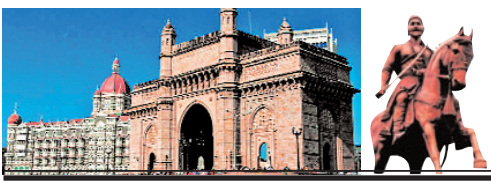
reported. The Philippines' national disaster agency has yet to report deaths due to the twin effects of southwest monsoon and Gaemi, which exits the Philippines on Thursday morning.

Gaemi, the third typhoon to lash the Philippines this year, has dumped rains, triggering flash floods and landslides in Metro Manila and many regions.

Aside from taking lives, Gaemi submerged and destroyed houses, primarily shanties in coastal and riverside communities, and swept away cars.

Displaced residents spent Wednesday night in covered courts, schoolhouses, churches, and other makeshift evacuation centers while waiting for the floodwaters in their areas to recede.

The Philippines is one of the most disaster-prone countries globally, mainly due to its location in the Pacific Ring of Fire and the Pacific typhoon belt. On average, the archipelagic country experiences 20 typhoons yearly, some intense and destructive.



NEPALI BOY AMONG 3 ELECTROCUTED IN FLOODED PUNE

Team Absolute | Pune

At least three persons, including a Nepali, were killed in Pune city and another three were trapped in their posh villas after a hill slide in Lavasa city in rain-related havoc here, the Pune Disaster Control said.

In the first incident, three mobile snack stall owners were electrocuted when they attempted to shift their handcart to safety from the flood waters near the Z bridge around 3 a.m.

They were rushed to a nearby hospital but succumbed during treatment, and are identified as a Nepali youth Shiva Jidbahadur Pariyar, 18, Akash V. Mane, 21, and Abhishek A. Ghanekar, 25, said the officials.

In the second disaster, a hill slide triggered by heavy rain in Lavasa city in Mulshi buried at least three villas, trapping around three persons this morning. An NDRF team has been rushed to the spot to carry out rescue operations, and the identity of the victims is not yet available.

The state's cultural, academic and IT capital has been clobbered by torrential rain since Wednesday night



leaving a trail of destruction, paralyzing normal life as the district administration ordered all educational institutions to remain shut for the

day. Parts of Pune have notched record figures of rainfall in the past 12 hours (since midnight Wednesday-Thursday), officials said. They are:

Lavasa (454 mm), Lonavala (323 mm), Nimgiri (233 mm), Malin (181 mm), Chinchwad (175 mm), Talegaon and Khadakwasla (168 mm), Lavale (167 mm), and other areas got between 50 mm-150 mm rain, while the average rainfall for Pune is 115 mm.

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy CMs Devendra Fadnis and Ajit Pawar are personally monitoring the rain crises in Pune, besides Raigad, Mumbai, Thane and other parts of the state and all agencies are in full preparedness to handle any eventuality.

Since dawn, the SDRF and NDRF teams along with Pune Police and Pune Fire Brigade have engaged in operations to rescue people stranded in floodwaters in the city areas like Nimbaj Nagar, Deccan Gymkhana and Sinhagad Road, which were among the worst hit as water rushed into homes, shops and other establishments. Boats were deployed in some areas to ferry the locals marooned in their buildings or rooftops as the city was littered with uprooted trees, branches, two-wheelers and four-wheelers plus other articles owing to the flood waters.

Names going missing from Voters' List must be investigated: Ashish Shelar

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A delegation of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders from Maharashtra on Wednesday appealed to the Election Commission to look into the matter related to the voters' names from the 2019 Voters' List 'going missing' in the 2024 list.

The delegation met the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar in Delhi and brought to his attention the errors in the voter registration process ahead of the Assembly elections in Maharashtra.

They also cited certain technical difficulties with regard to the photos, addresses and names of the voters during the registration process.

A detailed report of the voter registration campaign was presented to the commissioner. The delegation



submitted that the names of voters who had exercised their voting rights during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections went missing during the 2024 elections. "As a result, these voters could not cast their votes. Interestingly, there are a number of such voters in Maharashtra. Why did these names disappear? How did they disappear? At whose behest did they disappear?"

the delegation members wondered.

Mumbai BJP chief Ashish Shelar said that a thorough investigation must be carried out into this matter, adding the delegation urged the CEC to take measures to ensure missing names are included back in the list.

"The CEC gave us a favourable response," he added.

Maharashtra minister urges Jarange-Patil not to make 'biased remarks' on Maratha quota issue

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Industries Minister Uday Samant on Wednesday said that Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange-Patil should refrain from making 'biased comments', adding that the MahaYuti government has consistently maintained a positive stance regarding the Maratha reservation matter.

He, however, at the same, claimed that clarity is lacking from those who have not provided reservations or whose position on the issue remains ambiguous.

Samant has urged Jarange-Patil to question those who failed to attend the all-party meeting recently convened by the state government to discuss the reservation issue.

The minister expressed hope that Jarange-Patil's intentions were for the betterment of society but advised him against making prejudiced comments.

Samant also acknowledged the significance of Jarange-Patil's agitation, noting that as a result of it, many in the Maratha community have obtained certificates and records.

"The government has responded positively to the movement and attempted to address its



demands. This movement prompted the state government to conduct an extensive survey of the Maratha community. Nearly 1.58 crore households were surveyed at a cost of Rs 337 crore in just 12 days, a feat unprecedented in the world. Based on the survey's report, the state government announced a 10 per cent reservation for the Maratha community," he said, and asked Jarange-Patil to consider these positive actions by the government.

Samant also assured that the government would not discriminate against Maratha or OBC communities in granting reservations.

Marathi litterateur Fr. Francis D'Britto passes away; CM, MVA condole

Team Absolute | Palghar (Maharashtra)

Fr. Francis D'Britto, a well-known Marathi literary figure, environmentalist who founded the 'Harit Vasai' movement, and a Catholic priest, passed away following a prolonged illness at his home near Virar on Thursday.

A Marathi Sahitya Academy Award laureate (2013), he was 81 and a native of his birthplace Jeladi village in Nandakhal, under the Holy Spirit Church home parish of the Virar region.

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Congress state President Nana F. Patole, Nationalist Congress Party (SP) General Secretary Jitendra Awhad, Shiv Sena (UBT) National Spokesperson Kishore Tiwari and other dignitaries paid rich tributes to Fr D'Britto's literary prowess and contributions to environment.

In January 2020, he was elected the President of the 93rd All India Marathi Literary Conference held in Osmanabad, ranked as the most prestigious calendar event in the state literary world.

Among other works of literature, Fr D'Britto is renowned for his translation of the Holy Bible-New Testament, into lucid Marathi titled as "Subodh Bible-Nava Karar", a monumental work in a prose



format that took him over 13 years from 1997 to complete, which became an instant best-seller with over three reprints.

With this, Fr D'Britto became only the second person after a Britisher and 17th century missionary priest Fr Thomas Stephens (1549-1619) had translated the Holy Bible to Marathi, titled as "Krista Purana" in a poetry form.

Besides, he penned over four dozen books in Marathi and scores of columns and articles in various Marathi publications, while transforming a religious magazine, 'Suvarta' which he helmed as editor for many years. Educated in Palghar, he completed his priesthood training at the St. Pius College in Goregaon east and graduated from the University of Pune, before going to pursue his Masters in Theology from Gregorian University in Rome (Italy).

On return, he joined the Jeevan Darshan Kendra Trust in Vasai as a priest and later launched the 'Harit Vasai Sanrakshan Samiti' to prevent the 'ecological plunder' of the Vasai-Virar region in the 1980s-1990s by the realty sharks.

According to the Vasai Bishop House spokesperson, Fr Bernard Fernandes, Fr D'Britto's mortal remains were kept at his ancestral home in Jeladi where a large number of teary-eyed people, including many tribals with whom he worked in the social field, turned up to pay their last respects.

His final journey started from there to the Holy Spirit Church at Nandakhal and after the holy mass, the funeral rites were performed in the adjoining cemetery on Thursday evening.

MAHA CM REVIEWS RAIN IMPACT, SEEKS HELP FROM ARMY & NAVY

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Amid heavy and torrential rain in Maharashtra's Mumbai, Raigad and other districts, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Thursday said he has sought help from the Army and Navy to help with rescue and relief operations, especially in Pune and surrounding areas.

CM Shinde, who took an extensive review of the rainfall across the state, said the district and civic administration are on alert mode and in the field to conduct rescue and relief works in the flood-hit areas.

"There is no reason to worry, I appeal to citizens to venture out only if necessary. I also appeal to them not to panic," he said.

"I have spoken to the Army and Navy officials related to Pune. I have asked for deploying helicopters to rescue people trapped in various places due to floods," said Shinde.



"The units of NDRF, SDRF, Army, Navy, Police, Fire Brigade, Health System have been directed to coordinate with each other and lend help,"

said CM Shinde, adding that these agencies need to work as a team and shift the flood affected people safely, provide them with food packets,

arrange medicines and water. Instructions have been given to take the help of NDRF, Army, and Navy," the CM said.

"Pune, Maval and Mulshi have received heavy rainfall in the dam area, therefore Pune has been affected. There is also heavy rain in Mumbai city and suburbs. The administration is fully alert to deal with any calamity in Mumbai and I am in touch with Pune, Raigad, Mumbai Collectors and Municipal Commissioners," said CM Shinde.

In Mumbai, the work of clearing the rainwater in Kurla, Ghatkopar was underway through 255 pumps, he said.

CM Shinde said the Central Western and Harbor Railway systems have been put on standby due to increased rain in Mumbai. Holidays have been declared for schools and colleges in areas with rain and flood conditions.

Dy CM Ajit Pawar reviews situation as heavy rains lash Maha

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In view of the heavy rains continuing to lash Mumbai, Pune, Thane and other parts of Maharashtra, Deputy Chief Minister, Ajit Pawar, on Thursday visited the Emergency Control Room at the Mantralaya and reviewed the waterlogging and flood situation created by the downpour.

He also directed the officers concerned to maintain coordination and cooperation for rescue and relief operations.

From the Control Room, Ajit Pawar contacted the Municipal and Divisional Commissioners to gather information and instructed them to remain alert for rescue and relief operations. He emphasised the importance of staying in touch with NDRF officials to ensure that their assistance was readily available. The Deputy CM stressed that arrangements for shelter and food for affected citizens should be made and the state administration and disaster management agencies should work in coordination with district agencies.



Ajit Pawar also instructed that rescue and relief be provided to citizens immediately even as he urged citizens to take necessary precautions to protect themselves from heavy rains and floods. He urged the citizens to contact the nearest administrative agencies in emergencies, and to avoid going out unless it was absolutely necessary.

Ajit Pawar also called on local representatives and workers to actively assist citizens.

SENSEX TRADES LOWER ON NEGATIVE GLOBAL CUES

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Indian equity indices opened in the deep red on Thursday following negative cues from global markets.

At 9.43 a.m., Sensex was at 79,697, down 450 points or 0.56 per cent and Nifty was down 125 points or 0.51 per cent at 24,288.

Midcap and smallcap stocks are seeing less decline. The Nifty Midcap index is down 225 points or 0.40 per cent at 56,647 and the Nifty Smallcap index is at 18,672, down 50 points or 0.27 per cent. Among the sectoral indices, Metal, realty, pharma, IT, PSU bank and energy index are major laggards. FMCG and Media index are major gainers.

Banking shares are leading the fall. Nifty Bank is down by 551 points or more than one per cent at 50,756.

Twenty-four out of 30 Sensex stocks are trading in the red.



Axis Bank, JSW Steel, Tata Steel, ICICI Bank, UltraTech Cement, and Power Grid are the top losers. Tata Motors, L&T, HDFC Bank, and ITC are the top gainers.

Almost all markets in Asia are trading in the red. Heavy selling was seen in the US markets on Wednesday.

According to market experts, "Global cues have turned distinctly negative

with a sharp 3.64 per cent cut in Nasdaq, which is the worst cut in 2024. The tech stocks, which have been driving the rally in the US, are facing the brunt of selling due to worse-than-expected results and news."

"In India, too, the sentiments have turned a bit negative on the Budget proposals to raise the capital gains tax," They added.

Rain wreaks havoc in Pune, schools shut

Team Absolute | Pune (Maharashtra)

Large tracts of Pune city and the district were submerged in flood waters as the state's academic and cultural capital was pounded by heavy rain overnight, with schools shut and boats deployed to help out people, officials said here on Thursday.

The city Fire Brigade, police, SDRF and NDRF teams and other agencies were rushed to many areas to rescue people who woke up this morning and found themselves stranded in 3-5 feet deep waters.

The rescuers deployed boats and ropes to bring out scores of people stuck in their homes or shops with the waters inundating their dwellings up to the ceiling in some buildings.

The NDRF started a rescue operation in Nimbaj Nagar, Deccan Gymkhana and Sinhagad Road areas which were among the worst hit as the city received over 200 mm rains in the past 24 hours.

The situation was compounded by over 40,000 cusecs water being discharged from the overflowing Khadakwasla Dam, said Union



Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol, the Pune MP.

Angry locals slammed the government for allegedly opening the dam floodgates to the Mula-Mutha River basins at around 4 a.m. without prior

notice which could have enabled the people to rush to safer areas.

Almost across the city, roads, streets and lanes were littered with two-wheelers and four-wheelers that were stuck in the flood waters and

people wading in waist-to-neck deep water, frantically attempting to save their belongings.

Major thoroughfares like the Bhide Bridge, Holkar Bridge, Sangam Bridge and adjoining colony, Khillare complex near Garware College, a bridge opposite the PMC office, were shut for traffic as the rivers below were in a raging flow. Elsewhere, the twin hill stations of Khandala-Lonavala, Pimpri-Chinchwad, Mumbai, Khed, Bhor, Maval, Haveli, Marathi and other places, plus the fashionable and elite Lavasa city received very heavy rain measuring over 300 mm in the past 24 hours. In several areas of Pune city and other towns, the rescue agencies and police appealed to people to remain indoors, and those stranded in multi-storey buildings were urged to remain there, electricity in some areas was cut off as a precaution, compounding the problems.

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar spoke with Collector Suhas Diwase and said that an Orange Alert has been issued for Pune, all teams are on high alert and multiple efforts are underway to control the situation arising out of the flood situation.



JLo throws lavish 'Bridgerton'-themed party as she turns 55

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-actress Jennifer Lopez turned 55 and shared a video on her Instagram which showcased a montage of moments from her 'Bridgerton'-inspired birthday party.

The Bridgerton-themed party was held on July 20 in the Hamptons, New York but the legendary singer shared the video on Wednesday (Eastern Standard Time). The dramatic video montage was set to orchestral music, reports People magazine.

The video showed a collection of images of JLo throughout the night, as well as videos of guests, attendees and performers dancing as if they were at a 19th-century English ball, akin to Netflix's popular historical romance series. At one point in the video, Lopez can be seen singing into a microphone. As per People, the video ends with the 'Atlas' star blowing out the candles on a cake as sparkles fly behind her. "Dearest Gentle Reader... And a splendid evening was had by all," she wrote in a caption to her video.

Guests at her birthday party included her mother Guadalupe Rodríguez, who was seen arriving at the event with friends dressed in period-appropriate attire.

JLo's husband Ben Affleck did not attend the party. The pair have remained on separate coasts for much of this summer and recently spent another significant milestone apart — their second wedding anniversary, which fell on July 16.

The singer-actress has enjoyed her time in the Hamptons this summer, sometimes with Affleck's daughter Violet. The duo was spotted spending the day together in Southampton on Sunday, July 14, on a bike ride, shopping and having a meal with Violet's friend.

Christina Sandera Cause Of Death Revealed

Los Angeles | Agencies

Christina Sandera suffered a heart attack which led to her death.

After a long 10-year relationship, Clint Eastwood mourns the loss of his beloved girlfriend, Christina Sandera.

The 61-year-old passed away on July 18. According to the Monterey County Health Department, the cause of her death was a heart attack—specifically, she suffered cardiac arrhythmia.

The two met at the 94-year-old actor's Mission Ranch Hotel and Restaurant, where she worked, the couple kept their relationship low-key. Though private, they would attend events together,



especially those related to Clint's film releases or major events like the Cannes Film Festival.

Before his relationship with Christina, Clint welcomed eight

children with past partners, Dina Eastwood and Maggie Johnson. As a well-known actor who has traveled extensively for his career, Clint has always emphasized the importance of being a dedicated father. He told

The Telegraph via People, "My daughter [Morgan] takes precedence over everything...I go to all the softball games and look ridiculous out there because almost everybody's got a much younger father than me. But it's fun. I think you appreciate a lot more when you get to my age."

His son Kyle, who studied music at the University of Southern California, recalled his father's support. "I think he appreciates my music... We've written a few things together, and anytime we're in the same part of the world, he tries to come by and catch the band when he can. He's happy that I've found music and that I've dedicated myself to it," he told Belfast Telegraph

THE MATRIX' CHANGED MY LIFE: KEANU

Los Angeles | Agencies

John Wick may be a badass but he too has his fair share of vulnerable moments, especially when Keanu Reeves in him takes over. Recently, the Hollywood star choked up as he spoke about his film 'The Matrix' clocking 25 years. The realisation hit Reeves, as he went silent for 20 seconds while trying to find the right words to remember the film, reports Variety. He told Stephen Colbert during an



appearance on 'The Late Show': "'The Matrix' changed my life, and then over these years, it's changed so many other people's lives in really positive and great ways."

The actor mentioned as he gathered himself: "As an artist, you hope for that when you get to do a film or tell a story."

As per Variety, Reeves appeared to choke up while adding: "So when you say these years, the amount of people that I have met who have said to me and been touched by 'The Matrix' in such a positive way... It's the best."

While Reeves was already an established actor by the time 'The Matrix' came around, thanks to his roles in films like 'Speed', 'Point Break' and 'My Own Private Idaho', it was the Wachowski sisters' 1999 movie that made him a global superstar and an instant icon of the action movie genre.



Gigi Hadid is ready to feud with Suki Waterhouse

Los Angeles | Agencies

Gigi Hadid is ready to feud with Suki Waterhouse, according to a report from Life & Style, published on Tuesday, July 23. The model, 29, reportedly had a falling out with the singer, 32, based on a comment that seemed to be about her past relationship with Bradley Cooper, 49. Still, a source close to Suki revealed that she has no regrets about the comments.

Suki previously dated the A Star Is Born director from 2013 to 2015. The Memoir of a Sparklemuffin popstar addressed her split from Bradley in an August cover story for British Vogue. "I really will say that I'm pretty strong at this point, but when something very public happens to you and the story behind it is dark and difficult, and you're actu-

ally not doing well, and you can't explain yourself to the world, that's very isolating and disorientating," she said.

Suki also opened up about the "pretty sadistic" nature of relationships when she was in her 20s. "The love I experienced [then] was only ever a fetishisation, and I think when you only get loved in that way, you only get punished," she told the outlet. "When you get into your 30s you're almost instantly afforded a little bit more respect. It's kind of delightful and shocking at the same time."

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Rachel Pizzolato



KARLIE KLOSS REVEALS HER FAVORITE TAYLOR SWIFT SONG

Los Angeles | Agencies

There doesn't seem to be any bad blood between Karlie Kloss and Taylor Swift. During a new interview, the 31-year-old model was asked which one of Taylor's countless hits is her favorite.

"I mean, her music is classic," Karlie said during her interview with Yahoo Life earlier this week. "She's got so many hits. I definitely love 'Shake It Off.'" As for which track she loves from The Tortured Poets Department, the runway queen said, "I'd say the whole album."

Last summer, Karlie attended one of Taylor's Eras Tour shows at SoFi Stadium. However, rather than sitting in the celebrity VIP section, Karlie was spotted next to fellow fans. Nevertheless, Entertainment Tonight reported that the catwalk pro was "having a really good time" at the concert.

"[Karlie] initially was seated in the 200s sections, but at one point in the night, security took her to the VIP section," a source told the outlet at the time. "Fans were very surprised to see Karlie there. Karlie was recording some of Taylor's performances on her phone and singing along to some songs. She looked like she was having a really good time."

Scum of the earth : Billy Ray Cyrus calling his ex-wife Tish Cyrus

Los Angeles | Agencies

Multiple text messages and leaked audio have unveiled of Billy Ray Cyrus calling his ex-wife Tish Cyrus and now-estranged wife, Fierrose, several derogatory names. According to a screenshot obtained by Page Six on Wednesday, July 24, Billy Ray, 62, texted his manager Scott Adkins, and he apparently put Tish, 57, on blast. "Somebody went on a podcast... to promote their podcast... and came off like 'Sorry I'm Drunk' and accidentally told the TRUTH for a change," the "Achy Breaky Heart" singer wrote. "It's in her own words. She is a liar... she is a whore... and a cheat. Complete Skank. Scum of the earth. A fraud. Makes Deanna [sic] Lohan look like Mother Theresa

The outlet also obtained leaked audio of Billy Ray seemingly calling Tish a "devil" and a "skank" for having two children before marrying him in 1993.

"The other two children that were there, she was impregnated by two different men, and had those two children before she met Billy Ray," he was heard speaking in the third person in the leaked clip. "Just think if I said that. The truth... Brandi, Trace. Everyone knows devil's a skank."





Paris Olympics: Andy Murray withdraws from men's singles tennis

Paris | Agencies

Former World No. 1 Andy Murray has withdrawn from the men's singles event at the Paris Olympics. The two-time Olympic gold medalist, who is retiring from professional tennis following the conclusion of this year's Games, will partner Dan Evans in the men's doubles tournament as he bids to go out on a high with his third Olympic medal. "I've taken the decision to withdraw from the singles to concentrate on the doubles with Dan," Murray said in a statement confirming his withdrawal. "Our practice



has been great and we're playing well together. Really looking forward to getting started and representing GB one more time," he added. The Briton bagged his first Olympic singles gold in the 2012 London Olympics,

where he defeated Swiss legend Roger Federer in straight games. In Rio 2016 Games, he became the first male tennis player to win two Olympic singles gold medals, when he beat Argentina's Juan Martin del Potro.

ENG vs WI: Kevin Silchar ruled out of 3rd Test with injury, Joseph down with flu

Edgbaston | Agencies

Ahead of the third and final Test against England in Edgbaston on Friday, West Indies have suffered a double blow as spinner Kevin Silchar has been ruled out due to a fractured forearm while pacer Shamar Joseph is down with the flu. In Silchar's absence, spinner Gudakesh Motie will return to the playing 11 after missing the second Test due to illness. Interestingly, Silchar replaced Motie in the Windies playing 11 for the Trent Bridge Test after he fell ill on the match day. In the second Test, Silchar sustained a blow on his forearm while fending off Mark Wood's 148 kmph delivery which later turned out to be



a fracture and ruled him out of the third Test. On the other hand, Joseph is in doubt for Friday's clash after catching the flu. As per an ESPNcricinfo report, Akeem Jordan is on standby for a debut if he doesn't recover in time. Joseph failed to live up to the potential in his first England tour after his heroic debut in Australia earlier this year. He only bagged two wickets in the second Test after returning wicketless in the opening match of the series. England have a 2-0 unassailable lead in the series after winning the first two matches in the Lord's and Trent Bridge respectively. They have announced the unchanged side for the final match of the series.

PARIS OLYMPICS

Sumit Nagal to face France's Corentin Moutet in men's singles

Paris | Agencies

Indian tennis star Sumit Nagal is set for a challenging start at the Paris Olympics as he faces local hope Corentin Moutet in the first round of the men's singles event on the clay courts of Roland Garros here. In the men's doubles, India's seasoned pair of Rohan Bopanna and N. Sriram Balaji are also up for a tough opening round, facing the French team of Fabien Reboul and Edouard Roger-Vasselin. It could be a tough encounter for Nagal as his 25-year-old opponent had reached the fourth round in front of his home crowd at the French Open. He took a set off World No.1 Jannik Sinner before ending his campaign in the fourth round. But what will give Nagal hope is that they share a 2-2 head-to-head record. The release of the draw on Thursday also revealed that the two legends of the game Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal, who have faced each other 59 times in their illustrious careers, could meet as early as the second round. Djokovic, the top seed after World No.1 Jannik



Sinner pulled out with an injury, begins his campaign against Australian Matthew Ebden, known in India as Bopanna's partner when they won the Australian Open earlier this year. The unseeded Nadal, on the other hand, will play his first match against Hungary's Marton Fucsovics. Two-time Olympic singles gold medalist Andy Murray of Great Britain has withdrawn from the singles competition but will still participate in the doubles event alongside compatriot Daniel Evans. Second seed Carlos Alcaraz of Spain will play his first match against Lebanon's Hady Habib. The winner of this match will face either Dutchman Tallon Griekspoor or Great Britain's Cameron Norrie in the second round, promising further thrilling encounters. In the women's draw, top seed Iga Swiatek of Poland will return to her favourite venue to face Irina-Camelia Begu of Romania. Team USA's flag-bearer in the Opening Ceremony, Coco Gauff will play Ajla Tomljanovic (AUS) in the first round.

Abhinav Bindra feels honoured to carry Olympic flame

New Delhi | Agencies

Beijing Olympic gold medalist Abhinav Bindra feels honoured to carry the 2024 Paris Olympic flame and said he is humbled to be part of the sporting pinnacle. Bindra, who made history by simultaneously being the world and Olympic champion for the men's 10-metre air rifle event, joined the Paris 2024 Torch Relay event on Wednesday and was thrilled to hold the spirit of the Games. The former shooter became the first Indian athlete to win a first-ever individual gold medal in the 2008 Beijing Olympics. "Carrying the Olympic flame yesterday in the Paris 2024 Torch Relay was an honour beyond words. The



spirit of the Games lives in each of us, and I am humbled to be part of this incredible journey. Let's continue to inspire, dream, and achieve together! #Paris2024," Bindra posted on X. The Paris Olympics will take place from July 26 to August 11, with 117 athletes from India representing the country in the mega quadrennial event. Some of the biggest names from the Indian contingent include two-time medalist shuttler PV Sindhu, who will be the country's flag-bearer in the opening ceremony alongside table tennis veteran Sharath Kamal on Friday.

KERBER CONFIRMS RETIREMENT FROM TENNIS

New Delhi | Agencies

Three-time Grand Slam champion and Rio Olympics silver medalist Angelique Kerber of Germany has confirmed Paris 2024 will be her last professional tennis tournament. The 36-year-old German is scheduled to compete in both the women's singles and doubles competitions (with Laura Siegemund) at the Paris Games. Kerber will be competing at her first Games since the birth of her daughter in 2023. "The finish line. Before the @Olympics begin, I can already say that I will never forget #Paris2024, because it will be my last professional tournament as a tennis player. And whereas this might actually be the right decision, it will never feel that way. Simply because I love the sport with all my heart and I'm thankful for the memories and opportunities it has given me," Kerber wrote in an Instagram post. "The Olympics, I've participated in so far, have been more than just competitions as they represent different chapters of my life as a tennis player: the climb, the peak... and now, the finish line. "The Olympics in #London2012 came at a time, when I had my breakthrough season on the tour. I was climbing the rankings steadily and every win helped me overcome my doubts & strengthened my self-belief. It all felt like new beginnings and I was carried by excitement to new heights. The year before, in 2011, I had almost turned my back



on tennis and given up on my childhood dreams," she further wrote. "When I arrived at the Olympics in #Rio2016, I had just won my first Grand Slam title in Australia at the beginning of the year. My silver medal run was embedded in a rush of emotions that led to my second Grand Slam title in New York and the top of the rankings. The descent in the following year was hurtful, but I learned my lesson and Wimbledon 2018 was my biggest reward," the post read. "And now: #Paris2024 will mark the finish line of the most incredible journey I could have ever dreamed of growing up with a racket in my hand. There are many more things I want to say and people to thank, which I will do once I completed my last match...but for now, I will take the time and soak up every second of this final episode on court. Thank you all for your support - it means the world to me," it concluded. The draws for the 2024 Olympic tennis events will be made on Thursday.

Paris Olympics: Prakash Padukone predicts three medals from Indian shuttlers

New Delhi | Agencies

Badminton legend and ace shuttler PV Sindhu's mentor, Prakash Padukone believes that India has a strong chance of bagging three medals in badminton in the Paris Olympics including a hat-trick of medals for Sindhu. India has sent a seven-member badminton squad including the high-flying men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty and double Olympic medalist Sindhu. Padukone said Sindhu is faring well for her historic third consecutive Olympic medal in Paris. "That's what we are trying and hoping for. She has worked incredibly hard for that. However, at this level, one cannot commit for sure. Her preparations have gone well, and she is playing well in practice sessions. So, in terms of preparations, everything has been very good," he told JioCinema. The veteran shuttler, a former All-England champion and World's top player in his heydays elaborated that he is focusing on improving Sindhu's tactics and strategy on the court and



she has also improved a lot under his guidance. "I am focusing on tactics and strategy on the court, on what strokes to use when, and a little to do with the mind. About nine months ago, she was a little low on confidence due to frequent coaching changes and not being able to identify what was going wrong. We've worked on her mental strength and strategy, ensuring she makes better use of the right strokes. We've tried to cut down on mistakes and playing percentage badminton — knowing when to attack, defend, and play safe. So it is finally all coming through, but it remains to be seen if she can reproduce that form during the Olympics," said Padukone, who runs the Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy in Bengaluru. Despite Sindhu failing to win any title so far this year, Padukone feels that her ability to shine in crunch situations will help India's most successful woman sportspersons at the

Olympics bring the best out of her. Sindhu is the only Indian woman sportsperson to win two Olympic medals, a silver at Rio in 2016 and a bronze in Tokyo. "Definitely, she has not been at her best recently, this might reduce the pressure on her. Expectations are lower, and even reaching the quarter-finals will be seen positively. But I am looking beyond that. If she is able to reproduce the form, like what she's doing in practice, I think she'll do better than in past tournaments. "The difference between players at the top is so little and it is also about handling pressure in the Olympics, and Sindhu has an advantage as she has won two Olympic medals. We keep reminding her to focus on her game, and the result will be good," he said. "We are definitely contenders in these three events. Ashwini Ponnappa and Tanisha Crasto in women's doubles have a challenging draw, but if they can qualify further, that will be icing on the cake," he concluded. Badminton matches at the Paris Olympics will begin on Saturday (July 27).

SURYAKUMAR IS SOMEONE WHO'LL TAKE CAPTAINCY LIKE FISH TO WATER: R SRIDHAR

New Delhi | Agencies

As India prepares to enter a new era in T20 cricket following their World Cup triumph in June, there is a profound sense of anticipation regarding Suryakumar Yadav's role as captain in the upcoming three-match series against Sri Lanka at Pallekele, set to begin on Saturday. R Sridhar, who served as India's fielding coach and witnessed Suryakumar's entry into T20I cricket in 2021, is confident that the batter's composed demeanor and level-headedness will make him an excellent captain. "Surya has matured a lot from what I know of him from the earlier days, when I was at the National Cricket Academy (NCA), where he used to come as a young athlete, who was very aggressive and very upbeat. But now, if you see, he's much more mature. He's got a much more mellowed head on his shoulders,

and he's an astute thinker of the game." "I mean, he might not have led many matches over franchise cricket, or even for India - he's led about eight games. I remember doing commentary in one of the India-Australia series, where he did a tremendous job. He also did a fabulous job in South Africa in the very short rain-curtailed series which he captained. "Mind you, captaincy is not only about leading the team on the field. Captaincy is all about keeping your players in good space, even off the field, having those right conversations with them, and making sure that each and every player, who's not just only in the squad, but also outside the squad, on the fringe of making it to the eleven, they're also in good space, and they're also well taken care of. "So captaincy brings a lot more onto the table for Surya. It is going to be challenging initially, but I think Surya is someone who'll take it like fish to water,"



Suryakumar experienced his first taste of captaincy in the 2014-15 domestic cricket season when he was appointed as Mumbai's captain. But it turned out to be an underwhelming time and reports about his hot-headed avatar leading to indiscipline meant Suryakumar lost out on the leadership role at Mumbai. In 2019, Suryakumar, who had become calm and mellow, flicked a switch in his life, particularly in all matters related to earning that India cap, and Mumbai reinstated him as skipper. He would go on to lead Mumbai in 16 T20 games in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy from 2019 to 2021. Sridhar believes Suryakumar has what it takes to excel as a captain for India, but he must focus on effective communication and choosing the right playing eleven. "He's got all the wherewithal to be a successful captain. But now that the captaincy is a full-time

thing, with that comes more pressure, because his communication has to be more spot on. He needs to know what combination he needs. Obviously, he needs to gel with the new coach, Gautam Gambhir, who is also a no-nonsense person." According to Sridhar, serving as vice-captain to Gambhir at the Kolkata Knight Riders was beneficial for Suryakumar, as he was playing under Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli in the national side. "The fact that Surya knows Gautam Gambhir very well from his days in KKR, before 2017 and 2018, that should hold him in good stead." "The fact that he's played a lot of cricket under Rohit, and to an extent, under Virat, should have been a good learning for him. It should have been a good internship for him, watching them, observing them, how they go about captaincy. The India-Sri Lanka matchups would generally be low-key affairs, but with both teams hav-

ing new captains and coaches for the T20I series, sense of intrigue is in the air. "That's what makes this series very exciting I guess, because it's the beginning of a new chapter in Indian cricket. We must say this because, especially in the T20 format, not just the coach is new, the captain is (also) new. "We're not going to be having Kohli, Rohit and Jadeja anymore in this particular format. So it opens up the opportunity for many of our intern youngsters to kind of take the legacy forward going ahead in the next T20 World Cup (which) is in India (in 2026). "So they have a good two years to kind of gel and set a platform, play a certain brand of cricket, and have a certain philosophy with which they will play this particular format. That is what makes this series very interesting, because this is where the foundation is going to be laid for that philosophy and vision," concluded Sridhar.



I don't like 'Yes Men': Kareena Kapoor

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood star Kareena Kapoor Khan, who was recently seen in the heist movie 'Crew', has shared that producer and fashion designer Rhea Kapoor is one of her closest friends who is brutally honest with her.

The actress called Rhea very "sensible" despite being younger to her. She also commended Rhea's clarity of thought, and her quality of speaking what's on her mind.

Talking about Rhea, Kareena told 'The Week', "Rhea is also one of my closest friends, and I'm very lucky to have her in my life. If she feels that I'm being irrational or I'm going wrong, she tells me honestly that 'No you're being unfair'. That's the kind of relationship we have built. She is younger than me but she is also sensible." Rhea, who is the sister of actress Sonam Kapoor, has been Kareena's friend for a very long time. In fact, she is also one of the producers of 'Crew', and also produced 'Veere Di Wedding'.

Kareena also mentioned that she likes to have such people in her life, who can say things as they are, and are not "Yes Men".

"I like to have such people in my life. I don't like 'Yes Men'. I have those people around me who will tell me that I'm fab when I have done something amazing, and if I do something bad, they will size me down," she added.



Akshay Kumar breaks into 'nagin dance'



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood superstar Akshay Kumar is gearing up for the release of his upcoming film 'Khel Khel Mein'. This eagerly anticipated flick is set to captivate audiences with its lively track 'Hauli Hauli', which will release shortly. Taking to Instagram, Akshay Kumar recently shared a BTS

video of the shoot of the song. He wrote: "Mehnat, Muskurahat... Aur saare unit ki Mohabbat... Yeh sab ikattha kar ke aap ko saunp raha hoon! Aaj! Jaldi aa raha hoon. Trailer se pehle gaana, bajao! #HauliHauli song drops today at 5 p.m. #KhelKhelMein #GamelsOn."

In the video, Akshay Kumar, Vaani Kapoor, Ammy Virk, Taapsee Pannu, Aditya Seal, and Pragya Jaiswal, can

be seen dressed in festive ethnic attire. With the song playing in the background, the star cast can be seen grooving to the tunes of the song. At the end of the video, Akshay does 'Nagin Dance', which makes all his co-stars laugh and also elicits a funny reaction from all his fans.

The song 'Hauli Hauli' is sung by Garry Sandhu, MellowD, and Neha Kakkar.

Diljit Dosanjh collabs with the American rapper NLE Choppa



Team Absolute | Mumbai

Punjabi superstar Diljit Dosanjh, who has been having a terrific run on the professional front, surprised his fans on Thursday. The singer-actor took to his Instagram on Thursday, and dropped the teaser of his upcoming track 'Muhammad Ali'.

For the same, Diljit has collaborated with the American rapper NLE Choppa. The teaser shows Diljit Dosanjh and NLE Choppa vibing to the electrifying beats, promising another anthem that transcends borders and genres.

Meanwhile, Diljit has another project waiting in the wings.

The actor-singer's upcoming film 'Sardaarji 3' is set to debut in theatres on June 25, 2025.

2024 has been a great year for Diljit so far. The Punjabi superstar garnered critical acclaim for his work in the streaming biopic 'Amar Singh Chamkila'. The film, which released on Netflix, is noted for its narrative style and a chartbuster OST by the Oscar and Grammy-winning composer A. R. Rahman.



Shradha, Tamannaah slay in red at launch of song

Team Absolute | Mumbai

'Aaj Ki Raat', the first song from the upcoming horror-comedy film 'Stree 2' starring Shradha Kapoor and Rajkumar Rao, was unveiled in Mumbai on Wednesday evening.

Actresses Tamannaah Bhatia and Shradha Kapoor, who were present at the event, twined in red outfits. While Tamannaah makes a guest appearance in the song, Shradha is set to reprise her role as a mysterious lady in 'Stree 2' which is the sequel to the 2018 hit 'Stree'.

Throughout the promotional phase, Shradha has embraced her character's essence with a consistent braided hairstyle, a subtle yet significant nod to her on-screen persona. At the 'Aaj Ki Raat' song launch, she continued this trend, exuding an aura of mystique and allure that complemented her role perfectly.

Meanwhile, Tamannaah brought her own brand of elegance to the event, donning a red saree paired with a corset top. Tamannaah's ensemble at the song launch combined traditional grace with contemporary flair, making her a vision of sophistication.

Neelam, Jackie Shroff team up after three decades for romantic song

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood's veteran stars Jackie Shroff and Neelam Kothari, a popular romantic pair of the 80s, have reunited for a song after three decades.

Taking to their Instagram, T-Series recently made a joint post with Musicin Talwinder, Jackie Shroff and Neelam Kothari, announcing their upcoming song 'Tu'.

Sharing a snippet from the song, T-Series wrote: "3 Legends in one song! #Tu releasing soon. #tseries #BhushanKumar @apnabhidu @neelamkotharisoni @talwiinder @sanjojd @agam.mann @azeem.mann." This was accompanied by a bomb emoji.

This latest development has left fans super-excited for the release of the song, with many commenting: "What a surprise."

"3 Legends in one song," said another,



while another fan wrote: "Amazing."

Jackie Shroff and Neelam Kothari have consistently captivated audiences with their on-screen presence. They have starred together in several notable films such as 'Doodh Ka Karz', 'Hum Bhi Insaan Hain', 'Laat Saab', and 'Antim Nyay'.

Rakul Preet pens heartwarming b'day wish for her mother

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Rakul Preet Singh wished her mother a happy birthday as she called her an inspiration, a pillar of strength and her guiding light.

In her heartwarming Instagram post, Rakul celebrated her mom's birthday and applauded her for being the remarkable woman that she is. She called her loving, strong and caring.

The actress went further to thank her mom

for being her rock, her inspiration and hers forever.

She wrote: "Happy Birthday to the most incredible woman in my life, my pillar of strength, my source of endless love, and my guiding light. Mommmmy your unwavering love, selfless sacrifices, and nurturing spirit have shaped me into the person I am today. On this special day, I celebrate not just your birthday but the remarkable woman you



are - loving, strong, and caring. May your day be filled with all the love and joy you deserve. Thank you for being my rock, my inspiration, and my everything. Happy Birthday Mommmmy You are loved beyond words."

Debuting in Bollywood as the refreshing girl-next-door Saloni in Divya Khosla Kumar's 'Yaariyaan', Rakul has been capturing the hearts of audiences with her versatile performances in 'De De Pyar De', 'Chhatriwali', and Telugu movie like 'Sarrainodu' and 'Dhruva'.

