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UNION BUDGET 2024: FM UNVEILS ROAD MAP FOR 'VIKSIT BHARAT'



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday presented her seventh straight Budget that would lay a roadmap for 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047, focusing on employment, skilling, agriculture and manufacturing.

The first budget under Modi 3.0 seeks an economic vision that balances fiscal prudence. This is Prime Minister Narendra Modi government's 13th straight Budget since 2014, including two interim ones.

The Union Budget focuses on supporting consumption via higher allocation for the rural economy, taxation reforms, infrastructure push, thrust on local manufacturing, job and skill creation and an increase in production-linked incentive (PLI) allocation to more labour-intensive sectors.

In a major push to employment generation, the Finance Minister announced three schemes. "Government to set up three schemes for employment generation. Scheme for first-timers to provide one-month wage to all persons newly entering the workforce in all sectors. First-time employment scheme to benefit 2.1 crore lakh youths," said the FM.

While presenting the Budget in the Lok Sabha, she said, "People of India have reposed their faith in the government led by PM Modi and re-elected it for a historic third term."

She said the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana was extended by five years, benefiting more than 80 crore people in the country. As the Modi government's focus is the farming community, the Finance Minister said, "New 109 high-yielding, climate-resilient varieties to be released to farmers. One crore farmers are to be initiated into natural farming over two years."

"This is a Budget that will take the country's villages, poor and farmers on the path of prosperity. In the last 10 years, 25 crore people have come out of poverty. This Budget is also a Budget for the continuation of the empowerment of the newly emerged Neo Middle Class."

Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

"The Modi government's 'copycat budget' could not even copy the Congress' Nyay Patra properly! The Modi government's budget is distributing half-hearted 'rewadis (freebies)' to dupe its coalition partners so that the NDA survives. This is not a budget for the 'progress of the country', it is a 'save Modi government' budget!"

Mallikarjun Kharge, President, Congress

Other highlights are:

10,000 need-based bio-input centres to be established
Large-scale clusters for vegetable production are to be developed closer to consumption centres.

Digital crop survey for Kharif to be taken up in 400 districts in FY25

Rs 1.52 lakh crore will be set aside for agriculture, and allied sectors in FY25

What becomes cheaper?

- The government on Tuesday announced to reduce the basic customs duty (BCD) on mobile phones, printed circuit board assembly (PCBA) and mobile chargers to 15 per cent from the current 20 per cent.
- Products that are set to become cheaper include mobile phones, imported gold, silver, leather goods and seafood.
- The reduction in duties on gold and silver by 6 per cent will significantly give a fillip to the retail demand.
- FM Sitharaman also proposed a reduction in customs duties on platinum by 6.5 per cent and 5 per cent cut on seafood which includes shrimps and fish feed.

Income tax sops for 4 crore salaried individuals

The tax rate structure is to be revised as follows;

- 0-3 lakh rupee - Zero
- 3-7 lakh - 5 per cent
- 7-10 lakh - 10 per cent
- 10-12 lakh - 15 per cent
- 12-15 lakh - 20 per cent
- 15 lakh and above - 30 per cent

First, the standard deduction for salaried employees is proposed to be increased from Rs 50,000 to Rs 75,000.

Similarly, the deduction on family pension for pensioners is proposed to be enhanced from Rs 15,000 to Rs 25,000/-. This will provide relief to about four crore salaried individuals and pensioners.

Angel tax abolished on startups to boost local innovation

New Delhi: In a major relief for the startup ecosystem, the government on Tuesday announced to abolish angel tax to further boost local talent and innovation.

The industry had sought rationalisation of Angel Tax by removing Section 56(2)(viib) in order to further nurture innovation among startups, saying scrapping this section would "greatly aid in capital formation" for the startup sector. Under Section 56(2)(viib) of the Income Tax Act, to become eligible for angel tax exemption, a startup must meet certain conditions which the industry claims are cumbersome and come in the way of attracting more investments. Startups registered with the DPIIT were exempted from the new norms. The government highlighted that the exemption will benefit over 80,000 startups.

Over Rs 3 lakh crore for schemes benefiting women & girls

New Delhi: Focussing on women-led development, the government on Tuesday announced more than Rs 3 lakh crore for schemes benefiting women and girls.

"This will be facilitated by setting up hostels and creating partnerships to organise women-specific skilling programmes and promotion of market access for women Self Help Group enterprises," FM said. Further, the allocation for women's welfare and empowerment saw a 218.8 per cent jump from FY14 to FY25.

Major push to job creation with focus on youth, women & farmers

New Delhi: Finance Minister aimed at giving a major push to job creation with a focus on the country's youth, empowering women and improving the incomes of farmers. She announced a package of five schemes aimed at facilitating employment and skilling, with an allocation of Rs 2 lakh crore.

The budget has allocated as much as Rs 3 lakh crore in programmes that will enable more women to enter the workforce and contribute to the country's inclusive development aligned with the Viksit Bharat goal, the Finance Minister said. Similarly, a robust allocation of Rs 5.2 lakh crore has been made for the agriculture and allied sectors to enhance the earnings of farmers. The Finance Minister said that the government will undertake a comprehensive review of the agricultural research setup to increase productivity and develop climate-resilient varieties. Domain experts will oversee the conduct of this research to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. The PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana was extended for five years, benefiting more than 80 crore people. She said that job creation in the manufacturing sector will be incentivised through a scheme linked to the employment of first-time employees. The government will reimburse employers up to Rs 3,000 per month for two years towards EPFO contributions for each additional employee. This initiative aims to incentivise the additional employment of 50 lakh people.

First-timers will receive one month's wage upon entering the workforce in all formal sectors. A direct benefit transfer (DBT) of one month's salary, up to Rs 15,000, will be provided in three instalments. The eligibility limit for this benefit will be a salary of Rs 1 lakh per month, and it is expected to benefit 2.1 lakh youths.

To facilitate term loans for MSMEs for the purchase of machinery and equipment without collateral and guarantee, a new scheme will be introduced. This guarantee fund will provide guarantees of up to Rs 100 crore.

The Finance Minister further stated that under PM Awas Yojana, Urban 2.0, the housing needs of the urban poor and middle class will be addressed with an investment of Rs 10 lakh crore.

Defence allocation increased by 4.79 pc to Rs 6.22 lakh crore

New Delhi: The Union Budget 2024-25 has allocated Rs 6.22 lakh crore for the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the highest among all the ministries.

The allocation aims to promote 'Aatmanirbharta' in defence technology and manufacturing, and equip the armed forces with modern weapons/platforms along with the creation of job opportunities for the youth. The scheme enables the Defence Ministry to engage with startups/MSMEs and innovators to develop Def-Tech solutions and supply the Indian military with innovative and indigenous technological solutions. A grant of up to 50 per cent of Product Development Budget with an enhanced limit (maximum) of Rs 25 crore per applicant will be awarded as per the extant iDEX guidelines. The allocation to the MoD for FY 2024-25 is higher by approximately Rs 1 lakh crore (18.43 per cent) over the allocation for FY 2022-23 and 4.79 per cent more than the allocation for FY 2023-24.

8-point booster for MSMEs

New Delhi: In a booster for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), the government on Tuesday formulated a detailed package that covers financing, regulatory changes and technology support for them to grow and also compete globally.

Among the measures are a credit guarantee scheme for facilitating term loans to MSMEs for purchase of machinery and equipment without collateral or third-party guarantee. The scheme will operate on pooling of credit risks of such MSMEs.

Giving more details, the Finance Minister said that a separately constituted self-financing guarantee fund will provide, to each applicant, a guarantee cover up to Rs 100 crore, while the loan amount may be larger.

The borrower will have to provide an upfront guarantee fee and an annual guarantee fee on the reducing loan balance.

The Finance Minister proposed that public sector banks (PSBs) will build their in-house capability to assess MSMEs for credit, instead of relying on external assessment. They will also take the lead in developing or getting developed a new credit assessment model, based on the scoring of digital footprints of MSMEs in the economy.

The Finance Minister proposed to enhance the limit of Mudra loans to Rs 20 lakh from the current Rs 10 lakh for those entrepreneurs who have availed and successfully repaid previous loans under the 'Tarun' category.

For facilitating MSMEs to unlock their working capital by converting their trade receivables into cash, FM Sitharaman proposed to reduce the turnover threshold of buyers for mandatory onboarding on the 'TReDS' platform from Rs 500 crore to Rs 250 crore.

FM gifts 2 Expressways to Bihar, allots Rs 15,000 cr for Andhra

New Delhi: Finance Minister announced landmark projects and also fund allocations in Bihar and Andhra Pradesh, the states whose ruling parties are allies with the BJP at the Centre.

The announcement is crucial because of both states' demand for special category status and special packages, post their bifurcation.

Also, Bihar's JD(U) and Andhra's TDP-Janaseena are BJP's ally partners at the Centre.

FM Sitharaman announced two major Expressways for Bihar, namely Patna-Purnia Expressway and Buxar-Bhagalpur Expressway.

Moreover, two land bridges over Ganga River will come up in Buxar District.

These projects, with a total cost of Rs 26,000 crore will give Bihar's road infrastructure a major facelift and open new avenues for growth.

FM Sitharaman also announced that new airports, medical colleges and sports infrastructure will be constructed in Bihar. Addressing the monetary concerns of Andhra Pradesh, she said that the government had made concerted efforts in recognising the state's need for capital, as per the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act.

To facilitate special financial support through multi-lateral developmental agencies a sum of Rs 15,000 crore will be arranged in the current fiscal, with additional outlays in future years.

Union Budget 2024: Govt to exempt three more cancer drugs from customs duty

New Delhi: In a big relief to cancer patients, Finance Minister exempted customs duty on three cancer drugs.

The three drugs are Trastuzumab deruxtecan, Osimertinib and Durvalumab. The reduction in customs duty may help reduce the financial burden on those battling the deadly disease.

In her seventh budget speech, the Union Minister also called for exemptions in custom duties on X-ray tubes and flat panel detectors. According to the recent 4th edition of Apollo Hospitals' Health of Nation Report, cancer cases are skyrocketing across the country. He report dubbed India the "cancer capital of the world".

GST REDUCED TAX INCIDENCE ON COMMON MAN, TO BE EXPANDED TO REMAINING SECTORS

New Delhi: The Goods and Services Tax (GST) has decreased tax incidence on the common man, reduced compliance burden and logistics cost for trade and industry, and enhanced revenues of the Central and state governments. The Union Budget 2024-25 indicated that GST will be expanded to the remaining sectors. All the major taxpayer services under GST and most services under Customs and Income Tax have been digitised. India's gross GST collection rose to Rs 1.74 lakh crore in June this year representing a 7.7 per cent increase over the same month last year, according to sources. This takes the total GST mop-up for the first three months of the current financial year to Rs 5.57 lakh crore. In April 2023, GST collection had soared to a record high of Rs 1.87 lakh crore. According to experts, the GST reforms, which have eased compliance and reduced tax burdens, have been instrumental in driving economic growth.



Budget will steer India towards sustainable path: Experts

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Union Budget 2024-25 presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday included several key initiatives like energy transition pathways, climate finance, improving water resources management, and measures related to irrigation and flood management that will boost India's fight against impacts of climate change, say climate and energy experts.

While the budget lacked details on crucial announcements related to carbon pricing, the use of nuclear power or even how its plan the PM Awas Yojana Urban 2.0 will help build heat-resilient cities, they say.

It has focused on building capacity for each aspect of climate change: mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage.

With barely four months to go before the United Nations Climate Change Conference, commonly known as COP, will be held in Baku, Azerbaijan, here's a look at how the world's fifth-largest economy has prioritised in its national budget.

Under the mitigation category, the Budget introduces the Critical Mineral Mission to enhance domestic production,



recycling, and overseas acquisition of critical minerals necessary for various strategic sectors.

This mission will focus on technology development, workforce training, extended producer responsibility, and establishing financing mechanisms.

PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana: This initiative aims to install rooftop solar plants for one crore households, providing free electricity up to 300 units per month. The program, which has been allocated Rs 6,250 crore is expected to reduce reliance on non-renewable energy sources and promote renewable energy adoption.

Pumped storage projects: The government plans to promote pumped storage projects to facilitate electricity storage and manage the variable nature of renewable energy, ensuring a more stable integration into the power grid.

Nuclear energy development: The budget outlines plans to partner with the private sector in developing Bharat Small Reactors and Bharat Small Modular Reactors. It also includes research and development for new nuclear technologies, supported by government funding.



No sufficient material on record to order re-exam for NEET-UG 2024: SC

DEMAND REFUSED

Team Absolute | New Delhi

In a big blow to the litigants alleging irregularities in the NEET-UG 2024, the Supreme Court said on Tuesday that sufficient material was not available on record to order a re-test.

Referring to the data analytics undertaken by IIT Madras and other statistics placed on record, a bench presided over by CJI D.Y. Chandrachud observed that there was no systematic leak of question papers breaching the sanctity of the competitive exam.

The bench, also comprising Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, said that it was mindful of the fact that directing fresh exam would be replete with serious consequences for over 2 million students who had appeared for the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (Undergraduate) on May 5.

The apex court clarified that its judgment won't prevent authorities from taking action against candidates who had secured



admission using malpractices.

It also asked the National Testing Agency (NTA) to re-tally the marks afresh in view of the opinion rendered by the expert panel of IIT Delhi in respect of a contentious physics question, saying that two options cannot be treated as the correct answers to a question.

During the previous hearing, the SC had asked the Director of IIT Delhi to constitute a team of three experts to formulate its opinion on the correct option and remit its opinion to the registrar of the court by 12 noon on July 23.

During the hearing on pleas seeking cancellation of the NEET-UG, a petitioner pointed out that as many as 44 candidates were able to secure full marks on account of the ambiguous question, and questioned NTA's decision to award compensatory marks in violation of its own instructions asking students to follow the latest NCERT textbook.

Nitish Kumar welcomes special package for Bihar

Patna | Agencies

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar welcomed the special package from the Union government for infrastructure projects in the state.

After Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Union Budget on Tuesday, the Chief Minister noted that though Bihar has not been granted special status, the Central government has begun providing special assistance to the state.

"We had requested the Centre to grant the state special category status or provide special help. We have been demanding Centre's assistance for a long. Now, they have started special help for Bihar," he said.

"After coming to power in November 2005, we have done many developmental works in the state. There were no roads in the state, but now you can see the roads and development in Bihar. Patna has immensely



developed," Kumar said.

"The opposition leaders are unnecessarily saying that the Centre has denied special category status. I always say that special help is required

here, and the Centre has started it," he pointed out.

He expressed hope that the Central Government will continue to support Bihar in the future for development.

Chandrababu Naidu thanks PM, FM for support to Andhra Pradesh

Amravati | Agencies

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for the announcements made in the Union Budget 2024-25, saying this would go a long way towards rebuilding Andhra Pradesh. The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) President took to 'X' to thank the Prime Minister and Finance Minister on behalf of the people of Andhra Pradesh. Naidu, whose TDP is a key partner in BJP-led NDA government at the Centre, expressed his gratitude to PM Modi and Finance Minister Sitharaman for "recognising the needs of our State and focusing on a Capital,



Polavaram, industrial nodes and development of backward areas in AP in the Union Budget of FY 24-25."

"This support from the Centre will go a long way towards rebuilding Andhra Pradesh. I congratulate you on the presentation of this progressive and confidence-boost-

ing budget," Naidu posted with the hashtag #APBackOnTrack. Andhra Pradesh's minister for human resources development and TDP general secretary, Nara Lokesh, also hailed the announcements made in the Union Budget and called it a new sunrise for Andhra Pradesh.

SOLDIER INJURED IN BATTAL OPERATION AGAINST TERRORISTS SUCCUMBS

Jammu: The soldier injured in the Battalion sector of J&K's Poonch on early Tuesday succumbed to critical injuries in the hospital, the Army announced.

Officials said that the soldier was injured during the exchange of fire between terrorists and security forces in Battalion Poonch's Mendhar area.

"An infiltration bid was foiled by the army in the Battalion sector, and during the exchange of fire, a soldier identified as Subhash Chander was critically injured. He was immediately shifted to a nearby hospital for treatment, where he later succumbed to his injuries," an official said.

Glad to know FM has read Congress manifesto, says Chidambaram

Team Absolute | New Delhi

After Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman introduced many schemes while presenting the Budget on Tuesday, former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said that he is glad to know that the Finance Minister has read the Congress manifesto of 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

"I am glad to know that the Hon'ble FM has read the Congress Manifesto LS 2024 after the election results," the former Finance Minister wrote on X.

He said that he is also happy that the Finance Minister has virtually adopted the Employment-linked incentive (ELI), which he claimed was outlined on page 30 of the Congress manifesto.

"I am also happy that she has introduced the Apprenticeship scheme along with an allowance to every apprentice spelt out on page 11 of the Congress Manifesto," the former Finance Minister said.



He also taunted the Finance Minister, saying that he wished that Nirmala Sitharaman had copied some other ideas from the Congress Manifesto.

"I was pleased to hear that the FM will abolish the Angel Tax. Congress has pleaded for the abolition for many years and most recently in the Congress Manifesto on page 31," the former

Finance Minister wrote on X. However, he said that he would also shortly list the missed opportunities.

Earlier, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman laid out nine priorities of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government in the Budget with a focus on employment, skilling, agriculture and manufacturing.

Over 4,300 students crossed over to India from B'desh in last 4

Kolkata | Agencies

Border Security Force (BSF) on Tuesday said that over 4,300 students, including a Canadian and two Maldivian nationals, have crossed over to India from Bangladesh in the last four days.

"Since Friday, 4,315 students have crossed over the Indo-Bangladesh Border (IBB) and have been provided assistance by the BSF. Of those students who have crossed over, 3,087 are Indians, 41 Bangladeshis, 1,118 Nepalese, 66 Bhutanese, two Maldivians and a Canadian," an official of the BSF's Eastern Command said.

He said that these students have undergone medical



check-ups and have been provided food.

"Special counters have also been set up for documentation, as and when the need arises. Transportation is also being provided to the students by the BSF to their nearest destinations," the

official said.

Eastern Command ADG BSF Ravi Gandhi has issued an 'Operation Alert' - all along the IBB - after nationwide violence erupted in neighbouring Bangladesh. "While security has been tightened to prevent any ille-

gal immigration from across the IBB, special care is being taken to ensure the safe return of students from India as well as other countries," the BSF official said.

BSF's Eastern Command is entrusted with the responsibility of guarding the IBB passing along 32 districts of five Indian states that adjoin 30 Bangladeshi districts. The IBB stretches for 4096.7 km, 23 per cent of which is riverine and unfenced. This is the fifth-longest land border in the world.

"We are closely monitoring the situation across the IBB while facilitating in safe return of students, in close coordination with sister agencies and the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB)," the official said.

Six Russians, three others detained by TN Police near Kudankulam nuclear power plant

Chennai | Agencies

Tamil Nadu Police have taken into custody six Russian citizens and three Indians from near the nuclear reactor plant at Kudankulam.

A senior police officer told reporter that they were taken into custody on Monday evening after local people tipped off on the presence of foreigners around the premises of the nuclear reactor. Besides six Russians including a woman, two Tamil Nadu natives and a Keralite from Thiruvananthapuram were also taken into custody by the police. Sources in Tamil Nadu Police told reporter that the Central agencies have commenced quizzing those in custody. The Thiruvananthapuram native, according to police, is the driver of the cab in which the Russians came.

BJP will again get a fitting reply in Bengal for depriving state in Budget: Mamata Banerjee

Kolkata | Agencies

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday said that the people will once again give a fitting reply to the BJP for leaving the state "completely deprived" in the Union Budget 2024-25.

"The proposals in the budget are directionless, anti-people, and politically motivated. Bengal has again been deprived. Bengal does not depend on any charity from anyone. But the people of Bengal will not remain silent and roar if anyone seeks to insult the state," she told media persons here on her reaction to the Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Parliament.

Banerjee also said that despite the BJP's excellent



performance from north Bengal in the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls, that region has been deprived in the budget proposals.

"There is a reference to Sikkim. But there is no reference to Darjeeling. I am not objecting to Sikkim getting anything in the budget. But why has Darjeeling been deprived?" she asked.

The Chief Minister said

that BJP is keeping its allies in confidence by giving them money. "I do not know why the allies are accepting them. The allies are sacrificing ministerial berths against money. I have no objection to Andhra Pradesh and Bihar getting money. After all, they are too Indian states. But why has one been deprived to fulfill the wish of the other?" she said.

This Budget is only for corporate sector: RJD

Patna | Agencies

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) on Tuesday criticised the Central government over the Budget, saying allocating Rs 26,000 crore to Bihar is not for the common people but for the corporate sector.

"This budget is only for the corporate sector. The Finance Minister has not provided any idea of how the Centre would create jobs for unemployed youth. She has not addressed the issues of youth, farmers, women, and labourers in her budget speech," said Bhai Virendra, the four-time RJD MLA from the Maner assembly constituency.

Earlier, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman allocated Rs 26,000 crore for various infrastructural projects for the state. Bhai Virendra said that similar projects have also

been announced by previous governments as well. "Bihar needs special category status, which the Central government has denied," he said.

Former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi said the Central government has given Jhunjhuna (toy) to Bihar.

"This budget has nothing for the common people of Bihar," the former Chief Minister said.

However, defending the Central government, BJP MLA Pramod Kumar said that this budget will boost the economy of Bihar through infrastructural projects.

"The Central government has given three expressway projects, a two-lane bridge at Buxar, a power station in Pirpainti, and an industrial hub in Gaya. These projects will develop Bihar, create jobs, and help stop migration," Pramod Kumar said.

JAIPUR EMBRACES CROWDFUNDING IN TIMES OF NEED

► THE FREE, USER FRIENDLY PLATFORM MAKES IT EASY FOR PEOPLE TO RAISE FUNDS QUICKLY, OFFERING A CRUCIAL SAFETY NET DURING EMERGENCIES

Jaipur | Agencies

Milaap, India's leading crowdfunding platform, raised awareness and encouraged people to embrace crowdfunding at a city event today. The discussion highlighted how crowdfunding can make a significant difference during medical emergencies, support families following unexpected losses, and provide major aid during natural disasters. Milaap has been at the fore-

front of the Indian crowdfunding landscape, enabling these impactful contributions. Although relatively new to the concept, Rajasthan and especially its capital city, Jaipur, are rapidly using crowdfunding with over 22,000 fundraisers and more than Rs 32.2 crores raised in the state so far.

In a country where healthcare costs are often prohibitive and insurance coverage is limited, Milaap has emerged as a crucial financial enabler. The platform plays a critical role in bridging the gap between people who are facing insurmountable financial hurdles while going through a medical journey and those who wish to make a difference with their own donation ability. Whether someone is seeking treatment in Jaipur or relocating to metro cities upon recommendation, crowdfunding provides the financial support needed to



pursue the best available treatments. The event brought together beneficiaries and campaign organisers from Rajasthan, who have successfully raised funds through Milaap, to create awareness and share their personal journeys and experiences. Not only medical, memorials, community causes, and efforts for animal welfare have also seen immense success on the platform. For instance, RAKSHA, an organisation dedicated to protecting urban wildlife, has been able to further its mission with

Milaap's support. Rahul, the founder, said, "Our Snake Rescue Project, funded through Milaap, raised Rs 1.47 lakh with 137 generous supporters. This project rescues snakes in the residential areas of Jaipur and Phulera, and raises public awareness. The team has been helpful in our successful fundraising, allowing us to continue rescuing reptiles, saving injured birds, and promoting environmental awareness. Their platform provides the resources and support to bring our vision to life."

ISHRAE CoOL Conclave on theme - Decarbonization - Preparations Underway in Jaipur

Lalit Sharma | Jaipur

As global efforts to combat climate change intensify, Jaipur is set to host a major conclave focused on decarbonization strategies with ISHRAE Jaipur Chapter as host. The event, slated between 1st August to 3rd August 2024, will gather experts, policymakers, industry leaders, and environmental advocates to discuss and devise actionable solutions for reducing carbon emissions.

In preparation for this significant event, a crucial meeting was held yesterday at the Jaipur - Novotel International Convention Centre. Key stakeholders from various sectors, experts and volunteers along with host chapter came together to discuss the logistics, agenda, and goals for the upcoming conclave.

The primary focus of the conclave is to explore excel-

lence, innovative technologies and policies that can accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy with HVAC-R in focus. The 3-day agenda will cover topics under plenary and parallel tracks for such major topics related to decarbonization, renewable energy integration, energy efficiency, sustainable for hospitality industry, data centres, and carbon reduction.

One of the major highlights will be a panel discussion featuring renowned experts who will share insights on global best practices in decarbonization. Additionally, the event will provide a platform for startups and innovators to present their ideas and solutions.

With the preparations underway, Jaipur is poised to become a hub of innovation and dialogue on decarbonization with ISHRAE NATIONAL TEAM. The con-



UNION BUDGET ONLY FOR ANDHRA, BIHAR; MAHA GOT NOTHING, SAYS MVA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi on Tuesday slammed the Union Budget 2024-2025 as "intended only for Andhra Pradesh and Bihar", "copying many points of the INDIA alliance Lok Sabha manifesto" with "nothing for the farmers."

The MVA-INDIA bloc partners claimed that the budget was only aimed at "saving" the BJP-led government at the Centre which has shown its "hatred" for Maharashtra.

MVA Leader of Opposition in the Council, Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Ambadas Danve said that just recently Prime Minister Narendra Modi called Maharashtra the 'powerhouse' of the country that generates the highest taxation revenues.

"The state has been again tossed around for the goal of a \$5 trillion economy, but since the people here did not vote for the BJP in LS polls, the Centre has hit back at them. The three leaders of the ruling Mahayuti alliance are now defeated by their own people," said Danve.

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly, the Congress' Vijay Wadetiwar said that Bihar CM Nitish Kumar and Andhra Pradesh CM Chandrababu Naidu, whose parties are supporting the NDA regime, "have been given a boost in the budget."

"Maharashtra CM Eknath Shinde has also supported them... But what did this state get in return - Thenga! Why treat (like this) the state that pays the highest tax (revenue) in the country," Wadetiwar demanded.

NCP(SP) National General Secretary Jitendra Awhad said Naidu and Nitish Kumar have got a "return gift" for propping up the BJP, though Mumbai and Maharashtra play a major role in the country's economic development. "The PM came to Mumbai and prom-



ised to make it a world-class financial centre, but when it comes to giving funds, Maharashtra is left high and dry. The fact that the stock markets crashed today is enough to make sense of the budget," Awhad said sharply. Congress state President, Nana Patole said the budget is all about big numbers and catchy slogans but bereft of any concrete policy or vision.

"Despite huge unemployment, there is nothing real to provide stable jobs to the youth, not a single relief for the farmers on the GST aspects, nothing to tackle inflation. All sections are disappointed including the tillers, youth, students, women, MSMEs, and others. It's clear that the Mahayuti enjoys no credit at the Centre as huge funds have been given to Bihar and Andhra Pradesh," said Patole strongly.

NCP(SP) state President Jayant Patil said that belying claims, the Centre failed to take

any bold decision even the size of a sesame seed and there was no funding for social welfare schemes and other sections of people, but it was only intended to prevent the government from falling.

"This is a compromise budget, the states that did not support BJP in LS polls like Maharashtra or even Uttar Pradesh, got nothing. Surprisingly, the MGNREGS which Modi had termed as the 'monument of UPA failure' has received the highest funding in the budget, proving the utility of the UPA's welfare policies," said Patil.

SS(UBT) leader Aditya Thackeray said that it was understandable to give huge funds for Bihar-Andhra Pradesh, but what was Maharashtra's fault as it was ignored completely though it is the largest source of tax collection.

"What did this state get against its huge contribution to the nation, despite having an

unconstitutional and corrupt government in the state... It's only looting the state with corruption and then taxes after taxes," said Thackeray Jr.

The SS(UBT) said that the budget has given huge provisions for Bihar of Rs 58,900 crore for infrastructure and other schemes, Rs 26,000 crore for roads, Rs 21,400 crore for Pipraint power plant, etc. Similarly Andhra Pradesh has got Rs 15,000 crore for various projects, and despite the PM's claims to give equal justice to all in the country, the government has only helped those states which bow before it, while Maharashtra remains neglected. Taking a swipe, NCP(SP) National Spokesperson Clyde Crasto wondered if Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has presented the national budget only for Bihar-Andhra Pradesh - "a hold-onto crutches budget" - and it was a budget for the NDA not the country, and if it was unfavourable to them (Bihar-Andhra Pradesh), the government would fall.

SS(UBT) National Spokesperson Kishore Tiwari said that as expected, the budget has thumbed its nose at the agricultural community and pointed out how he had submitted a series of suggestions to give a Rs 1 lakh crore package (July 17) for the farmers in Maharashtra plagued by the highest number of farmland suicides.

Patole added that the NDA has copied the Congress' 2024 Manifesto almost in toto, proving it has no policy at all to provide permanent jobs to millions of youth that can help reduce the unemployment burden.

"Due to demonetisation, lockdown and a faulty GST policy, the NDA-BJP government devastated the MSME sector which accounts for 50 per cent of employment and 25 per cent of GDP, but this has been virtually ignored in the budget," Patole said.

Shinde hails tax structure changes saying Maha will remain leader in collection

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has reaffirmed the trust of crores of countrymen by giving relief through major changes in the tax structure.

"The new tax structure is a relief to the common man and employees and I welcome it. Due to this new tax structure, the number of taxpayers will also increase. Maharashtra will remain a leader in tax collection which is necessary for development," he remarked. Shinde said that while emphasising on the poor, women, youth and farmers, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has made a provision of Rs 1.52 lakh crore for agriculture and allied sectors.

The digital public infrastructure, which aims to increase productivity in the agriculture sector, will further strengthen the farm sector and ultimately make growers financially sound. He added that the FM's proposal to encourage one crore farmers to take up natural farming is the need of the hour.

According to him, the state government has also taken steps to promote natural farming in Maharashtra.

He said that the provision of Rs 2.66 lakh crore for the development of rural India will transform villages.



"It is always said that our country belongs to the youth. Its reflection has been seen in today's budget and a large number of provisions have been made for the youth. The budget has also decided to create 50 lakh additional employment opportunities which will benefit the youth of Maharashtra also," said CM Shinde. On the allocation of Rs 11.11 lakh crore on infrastructure development, CM Shinde hoped that Maharashtra would get support for its ongoing infrastructure development projects and also those in the pipeline.

"Maharashtra is the leader in infrastructure development in the country. The FM's proposal for the allocation of Rs 26,000 crore for road development and the development of 12 industrial parks will also be crucial for the state," he noted.

CM Shinde said the FM's proposal to launch the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana Phase 4 to build good quality roads for 25,000 villages across the country will be important for the development of roads in rural areas of Maharashtra.

First Budget of Modi 3.0 puts India on path of becoming a world power: Ajit Pawar

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister and NCP national President Ajit Pawar on Tuesday hailed the first Budget of Modi 3.0, saying that it puts India on the path of becoming a world power.

"I heartily congratulate Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for presenting a good, visionary, public welfare budget that balances urban and rural development and emphasizes the development of the weak, deprived, marginalised, backwards and minority sections of the society. The first budget of this NDA government has strengthened the confidence of people in the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said. Pawar, who



recently presented his 10th Maharashtra Budget, said that the budget has revealed a strategy for a strong-developed India that fulfils the aspirations and expectations of the middle class and working class, empowers the development of all sectors such as agriculture, industry, trade, education, health, cooperation, employment, self-employment, science, research, skill development, social justice and women

empowerment. "The provision of Rs 1.52 lakh crore for agriculture and allied sectors is important. It will increase the use of digital technology in the agriculture sector. Proposals for the promotion of low-cost and high-yielding agriculture will strengthen the country's agricultural sector and farmers. The term of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana has been extended for five years. Therefore, 80 crore citizens of the country have got food security," said Pawar.

The Deputy Chief Minister welcomed the Union Finance Minister's proposal of Rs 1.48 lakh crore for education, employment and skill development for the youth. "I believe that Maharashtra will also benefit from these proposals," he said.

IAS academy has 'no info' on trainee Puja Khedkar as deadline ends

Team Absolute | Mumbai

On the final day of a notice by the elite Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) to Maharashtra 2023 cadre IAS Probationary Officer Puja Khedkar, the Mussoorie-based institution had no information on her whereabouts, on Tuesday.

On July 16, the LBSNAA had directed the Maharashtra government to immediately relieve the controversial IAS-PO of her field assignment as 'Super Numerary Assistant Collector', Washim Collectorate and ordered Puja Khedkar to report back to the Academy by July 23 "for further necessary action."

Official sources at the LBSNAA told reporter that as of July 23 morning, they had "no information" on



Puja Khedkar, and declined to elaborate whether she was likely to report back there later in the day or not.

Puja Khedkar, 32, had left Washim around last Friday, purportedly to go to the Pune Police to record her statement on the allegations of harassment she hurled against Pune Collector Suhas Diwase, who had ordered her transfer from Pune Collectorate to Washim in the second week of July. The IAS-PO had reported to Washim Collectorate and took charge as Assistant Collector on July 11, even as a storm erupted behind Puja Khedkar over a series of allegations and irregularities perpetrated by her in the last few months, shaking the administration.

Later, the state and Centre launched separate probes against her, the Pune Police started its own

investigations and the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) initiated criminal proceedings against her, hinting at cancelling Puja Khedkar's IAS 2022 candidature on July 19.

As per the LBSNAA Deputy Director Sheshel Nawal's orders, Puja Khedkar was expected to reach and report there today, but her whereabouts remain a mystery in Mumbai, Pune, Washim, New Delhi and Mussoorie.

After the serial exposures on the alleged frauds/irregularities masterminded by Puja Khedkar, even her parents - father Dilip Khedkar who is an ex-state government employee and mother Manorama Khedkar who is an ex-Sarpanch - have come under a cloud in different cases.

While Manorama Khedkar was arrested and is currently in judicial custody, Dilip Khedkar has secured an interim pre-arrest bail till July 25.

Bombay High Court upholds student's tribal claim

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A division bench of Bombay High Court at Aurangabad has come again in rescue of a girl whose claim to belong to schedule tribe was rejected by the scrutiny committee and thus threatened to jeopardise her education aspirations. It was the previous order of the High court which enabled the girl to pursue a science degree in computer applications even as the matter was being heard before it. The High Court has now ruled that her claim of belonging to a schedule tribe was true and thus paved the way for the aggrieved student who is now 20-year-old to pursue a Masters degree. The court has directed the Schedule Tribe Certificate Scrutiny Committee, Nandurbar, to issue her caste validity certificate immediately



from the date of passing their order on July 20 2024.

Samridhi Savale after passing out her HSC examination with first class faced hurdles when she tried to enroll for her first year Bsc (computer application) at SNDT College, Shahada taluka, Nandurbar, under the quota reserved scheduled tribe. At the time of her admission, her application for her caste validity certificate was pending before the Schedule Tribe Certificate Scrutiny committee, Nandurbar. However, on the basis of the vigilance committee report to whom the verification work was assigned, the scrutiny committee rejected her application seeking caste validation certificate, which left her admission in the lurch. The college, subsequently, had notified her that her admission would stand cancelled on her failure to produce the certificate of validity.

RAPE VICTIM DIES IN CHILD-BIRTH; CASE REGISTERED

Mumbai: A case of rape has been registered at Vashi police station after an 18-year-old girl died in childbirth, reported an official on Tuesday.

After a 'zero' FIR was filed, it was transferred to Dighi police station in Raigad district as the alleged crime took place in Dighi, said the news agency report.

The accused has been identified as Hemant, resident of Shriwardhan. He met the victim at a computer class and befriended her sometime last year. As per the complaint lodged by her parents, he allegedly raped her on two occasions, following which the girl became pregnant. The girl then shifted to Vashi with her parents. She was found lying in the bathroom in a pool of blood with a newly delivered male infant beside her On July 18. She was declared dead at hospital while the child died two days later

Woman travels to Pakistan by obtaining fake documents; booked with man

Mumbai: A case was registered against a 23-year-old woman in Maharashtra's Thane district for allegedly travelling to Pakistan by forging passport and visa made using fake documents.

Apart from the woman, the police also filed a case against an unidentified man for facilitating her fake documents, he said. The accused woman has been identified as Nagma Noor Maksud Ali alias Sanam Khan. She changed her name and obtained Aadhaar card, PAN card and her daughter's birth certificate from a centre in Lokmanya Nagar and then attached these documents to the passport application, the official of Vartak Nagar police station said. She obtained a passport and visa for Pakistan and travelled to the neighbouring country on the basis of these documents. He offence took place between May 2023 and 2024, the official said, a probe into the crime was underway.

The duo has been booked under the Indian Passports Act and others, the official added.



Serial conman arrested for cheating senior citizen

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Vishnu Nagar police in Dombivli have arrested a 55-year-old conman who cheated people by posing as a nephew of an MLA. The police said the accused has a criminal past of almost three decades and he is booked in over 50 cases.

According to the police, the accused, Vijay Dattaram Tambe, 55, is a resident of Bhiwandi in Thane and is booked in cheating cases across Mumbai, Thane, Navi Mumbai and Mira- Bhandand area. "The accused was arrested from Navi Mumbai on a tip-off and he was taken into custody," said Sanjay Pawar, senior police inspector, Vishnu Nagar police station.

A case was registered at Vishnu Nagar police station where a 75-year-old senior citizen was cheated of gold worth Rs 50,000 and Rs 10,000 in cash.

"The victim was approached by the accused who claimed to be a nephew of an MLA and began interacting with him. After pretending to be caring, Tambe convinced the victim to take care of the valuables as there was a huge crowd ahead. Tambe then convinced the victim to hand over the valuables and cash and keep it safe in a handkerchief. Before the victim realised, Tambe with a sleight of hand took away the cash and gold.

"After the case was registered we scrutinised the CCTV footage and traced the accused to Navi Mumbai. He was arrested and is currently in police custody for three days. He along with his accomplice has been defrauding people since 1995 and has more than 50 cases across the MMR region," added Pawar.

The police said that Vijay cheated many people along with his accom-



plish by claiming to be the nephew of the MLA. Further investigation is being conducted by police sub-inspector Deepvijay Bhawar.

"During the investigation, we asked him about the stolen jewellery and cash but he is not ready to reveal the whereabouts. Also he has multiple diseases and yet he keeps committing some crime or the other. Due to his illness, we can't be harsh on him to uncover more details about his modus and the cash that he stole," said a police officer.

During the course of the investigation, the police found that the accused is presently absconding in eight cases registered at DN Nagar, Dombivli, Sahar, Nizampur, RAK Marg and Mahim. "The accused will be taken into custody by other police stations as he has been wanted in several crimes," said a police officer.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Union Budget 2024-25: At a glance

Due to the upcoming general elections in 2024, a full Union Budget wasn't presented. Instead, an Interim Budget was delivered in February 2024 by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. This Interim Budget focused on maintaining economic stability and providing some key benefits in the lead-up to the elections. The phrasing likely emphasized the government's commitment to ongoing programs and initiatives, highlighting their achievements in the previous year. Populist Measures: benefits for specific demographics, like farmers, small businesses, or students. Considering global economic uncertainties, the phrasing might have balanced these social welfare measures with a commitment to fiscal responsibility. The budget speech could have outlined plans for continued investment in infrastructure development projects to boost long-term economic growth. Vision for the Future: While focused on the immediate needs of the pre-election year, the phrasing might have hinted at the government's broader economic vision for the coming term. Overall, the phraseology of the Union Budget 2024 would likely strike a balance between short-term social welfare and long-term economic goals, keeping the upcoming elections in mind. Congress party leaders have alleged Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman plagiarised the apprenticeship scheme from the party's general election manifesto. Taking a swipe at the announcement, Congress leader and former Union Finance Minister P Chidambaram in a post on X said he wished the Finance Minister "had copied some other ideas from the Congress manifesto."

A Trump-Vance Team Is A Nightmare For Europe

Syed Zubair Ahmed

President Joe Biden's decision to drop out of the presidential race on Sunday has left everyone guessing who his replacement will be. He has backed his Vice-President, half-Indian Kamala Harris. But it's unclear at this stage whether she will indeed be the party's nominee. The Democratic Party convention next month in Chicago (August 19-22) is going to be a tumultuous one. But it is believed the party delegates might just endorse Harris before that. The endorsement at the convention will become a mere formality by then. Not since Lyndon Baines Johnson in 1968 has any Presidential candidate dropped out of a re-election campaign. The Democratic Party appears to be in disarray. If Harris becomes the party's presidential nominee, will she be able to take on Donald Trump, who is riding on a sympathy wave since his brush with death last week? Many say the selection of Harris will be music to Trump's ear. Two days after the assassination attempt, the latter announced that J.D. Vance would be his running mate. The Trump-Vance team will be too hot to handle for any Democratic Party candidate, who will have no time on his or her side to give a tough fight to the duo. This might make Europe even more despondent because the last thing the Europeans want to see is the return of Trump, and his deputy becoming the Vice President. In his poem The Second Coming, William Butler Yeats questions whether humanity is on the brink of a revelation or heading towards further devastation. His angst is reflected in these famous words: "Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold; mere anarchy is loosed upon the world..." They captured the dark mood prevailing across a war-torn Europe, symbolised by the ominous image of a "rough beast slouching towards Bethlehem to be born". Yeats's Europe was reeling from the aftermath of the First World War. Today's Europe is gripped by a similar sense of unease and chaos as the Russian onslaught in Ukraine continues to rage with no peace deal in sight. On top of that, Europe's anxiety and fear over Trump's potential return to power, especially with Vance, appears to be at its peak. The parallels between the post-war disarray that inspired Yeats to write The Second Coming and the current commotions in Europe cannot be overstated. The prospect of a second coming of Trump was already troubling Europe's globalised, liberal world order. But the entry of Vance, a 39-year-old first-term senator from Ohio, has pushed Europeans to the edge. The possibility

ty of Vance becoming the US Vice-President and potentially succeeding Trump as President later has raised huge concerns in Europe. Vance shot to fame in 2016 with his memoir, Hillbilly Elegy, which depicted his upbringing in a struggling working-class family in the 'Rust Belt'. The book, which was later adapted as a Netflix drama, is both a personal story and a sociological analysis of the white working-class experience in America. Vance's narrative resonated with many Americans, particularly those who felt left behind by globalisation and economic change. Vance is married to Usha Chilukuri, who is of Indian descent and a practising Hindu. They met at Yale Law School and got married in 2014. He is believed to have been influenced by his wife's Hindu faith, but not enough to prevent him from converting to Catholicism in 2019. In his early years as a politician, Vance called Trump "America's Hitler". But later, he completely surrendered to Trumpism. Vance, with a working-class background, is from Ohio and has considerable influence in the "Rust Belt" states that were once industrialised and manufacturing hubs. Trump has said in one of his social media posts that his running mate "will be strongly focused on the people he fought so brilliantly for, the American workers and farmers in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, Minnesota, and far beyond". But Vance's influence in the "Rust Belt" region was not the only reason he was picked. His views on globalisation, immigration, NATO, and China complement those of Trump. He is being seen more as an heir apparent to Trump, considering he is not even 40. Indians may like to see Harris win the nomination, because of her Indian connection. But Europe will certainly pin all its hope on her and pray that she comes out victorious in the November election. After winning the election nearly four years ago, one of the first things President Biden did was declare to the world that "America is back". Biden was referring to the US reasserting its leadership role on the global stage, particularly after the decline of US influence during the Trump administration. If the Trump-Vance team wins the election - which now seems likely - Europe fears that the US would once again abandon its global leadership role. Trump has previously advocated for a more isolationist and nationalist approach, prioritising American interests over international cooperation and multilateral agreements. In Hillbilly Elegy, Vance has echoed similar views on these issues.

A reduced role for the US leader on the global stage could mean less engagement in international institutions and agreements, more focus on bilateral deals and transactions, reduced commitment to global issues such as climate change and human rights, increased emphasis on national sovereignty and border control, and potential withdrawal from or renegotiation of international agreements. Europe believes that the Trump-Vance administration will pursue a peace deal with Russia, which could have significant implications for the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Vance's views on Ukraine suggest he may prioritise a peace deal over supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity. Specifically, he has stated that Ukraine should abandon its claims over the land captured by Putin, which could be seen as a concession to Russia. He said in a 2022 interview with an American portal, "The Ukrainians have to make some hard decisions about what they're willing to give up in order to get a peace deal. And if that means giving up some territory, that's what they're going to have to do." However, Europeans were aghast to hear his views, and now that he is Trump's running mate, they appear to be more alarmed. They vehemently argue that such concessions would embolden the Russians to invade other European countries, such as Poland. Trump, too, openly said during the first presidential debate that the war was draining out the US economy, that Putin was his friend, and that he would end the war soon after assuming office. Europe is apprehensive that a Trump-Vance team could further this agenda, potentially weakening the alliance and reducing American influence in global security matters. Vance, like Trump, is also against foreign aid. It is likely their administration might cut foreign aid and reduce participation in international development programmes, and that is bound to impact global stability and humanitarian efforts. Both Trump and Vance have expressed strong support for protectionist economic policies. This could lead to higher tariffs on imported goods, renegotiation or withdrawal from international trade agreements, and a general reduction in global trade. Vance in his book laid huge emphasis on domestic production. He has held on to his views and they appear to be more than just rhetoric. His focus on boosting domestic production and reducing dependency on foreign manufacturing aligns with the broader nationalist agenda that Trump pursues. This could lead to a

more insular US economy, potentially sparking trade wars and reducing global economic integration. Protectionist policies could lead to retaliatory tariffs from other countries, sparking trade wars that harm the global economy. Efforts to bring manufacturing back to the US could disrupt global supply chains, leading to economic instability and higher prices for consumers. The Trump administration was known for its unilateral approach to foreign policy, often bypassing traditional diplomatic channels and international agreements. Biden's foreign policy, in contrast, is based on consensus politics. For example, Biden has worked on building coalition partners to counter China's rise. This has proven more effective than Trump's unilateral actions. The fear is that a Trump-Vance team might continue this trend, undermining multilateral institutions like the United Nations and the World Trade Organization. As President, Trump had withdrawn the US from the Paris Climate Agreement, arguing it was unfair to American workers. Although Biden rejoined the agreement, a Trump-Vance administration could once again ditch the pact, significantly weakening global efforts to combat climate change. I have never seen Europe so worried before. Many leaders are already gearing up for a four-year "disruption and chaos". A few governments are already reaching out to the Trump camp, while others are struck by inertia and have accepted their fate. There is, however, one notable exception to this brooding atmosphere. Hungary is the only European country, also a NATO member, which has openly welcomed Trump's second coming. The Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orban, who is on a peace mission in Europe, said last week in a letter to European leaders that Donald Trump had a plan and he was prepared to immediately negotiate for peace in Ukraine if he won the election. But at what cost? That weighs heavily on everyone's mind here in Europe. (Syed Zubair Ahmed is a London-based senior Indian journalist with three decades of experience with the Western media. The views expressed are personal.)

international

ANOTHER HINDU TEMPLE IN CANADA VANDALISED, MP CALLS FOR ACTION

Toronto | New York

A Hindu temple in Alberta's capital Edmonton was vandalised with "hateful graffiti" on Tuesday. This incident adds to the series of attacks that have happened recently on Hindu establishments in Canada. Canadian Member of Parliament Chandra Arya took to X to express his concern over BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir that was defaced. He wrote: "During the last few years, Hindu temples in Greater Toronto Area, British Columbia and other places in Canada are being vandalised with hateful graffiti." Drawing attention to the extremist elements instigating such incidents, the Liberal MP, known for his advocacy on multicultural issues, highlighted that "Gurpatwant Singh Pannun of Sikhs for Justice last year publicly called for Hindus to go back to India. Khalistan supporters publicly celebrated in Brampton and Vancouver the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi,



brandishing images of deadly weapons." "As I have always been saying, Khalistani extremists seem to get away with ease with their public rhetoric of hate and violence," he asserted, adding: "Again, let me put on record. Hindu-Canadians are legitimately concerned." With a picture of the defaced temple wall, he concluded his post by urging: "Like a broken record, I again call on Canadian law enforcement agencies to take this issue seriously before these rhetorics get translated into physical action against Hindu-Canadians." The vandalised temple wall reads: "PM Modi MP Arya Hindu Terrorists are Anti-Canada."

Last year in November, Canada-India Foundation, an advocacy body, had asked politicians in the country to break their silence and rein in radicals before it got too late. However, Canadian politicians and media ignored the threat. In response to the situation, they had expressed in an open letter: "We are even more disappointed that our political leaders have maintained a total silence on this grave issue. This selective approach to dealing with terrorism and threats will not make this world a safe place." In recent times, vandalised Hindu temples include Ram Mandir in Mississauga, Vishnu Mandir in Richmond Hill, BAPS Swaminarayan Temple in Toronto, Lakshmi Narayan Mandir in Surrey. These attacks are viewed as attacks on the freedom of religion and are perceived as a dangerous trend. The advocacy body also highlighted that the extremists have started to even target ordinary Hindus, telling them to leave Canada.

DEATH TOLL IN ETHIOPIAN LANDSLIDE RISES TO 157

Addis Ababa: A landslide in southern Ethiopia has claimed more than 157 lives, the local government said on Tuesday. The landslide occurred on Monday in southern Ethiopia's Geze Gofa district, Xinhua news agency reported. The local community is currently working to save the lives of the injured and provide shelter and food to the victims, the Gofa Zone Government Communication Affairs Department said in a statement. The death toll has increased due to additional accidents involving people who went to the area for life-saving work. Some teachers, health workers, and agriculture professionals who were present for the rescue work have become victims of the accident, the local government said. Ethiopian Red Cross Association and professionals from the neighbouring regions and zones are at the site helping the victims. The local government has called on all Ethiopians to provide support and attention needed to the zone for further rescue efforts.

Kamala Harris calls Biden's achievements 'unmatched' in first remarks

Washington | Agencies

US President Joe Biden's legacy of achievements was "unmatched" in modern history, Vice-President Kamala Harris said Monday in her first public remarks after taking over the presidential ticket from him. Harris addressed student athlete champions from American colleges on the South Lawns of the White House, standing in for Biden who is recovering from a Covid-19 infection at one of his homes in Delaware. It was from there that he announced on Sunday that he was ending his bid for re-election and endorsing Harris, who has since taken over the ticket and is moving swiftly to lock the nomination. "Joe Biden's legacy of accomplishment over the past three years is unmatched in modern history," Harris said, adding, "In one term, he has already surpassed the legacy of most presidents who have served two terms in office." Harris recounted her own personal journey with President Biden, which started with her friendship with his late son Beau Biden. Harris got to know him

as Attorneys General for California and Delaware, respectively. "Back then, Beau would often tell me stories about his dad. He would talk about the kind of father and the kind of man that Joe Biden is. The qualities that he revered in his father, at the same qualities that I have seen every day in our President, his honesty, his integrity, his commitment to his faith and his family, his big heart, and his deep love of our country. And I am a first-hand witness to that every day. Our President Joe Biden fights for the American people and we are deeply deeply grateful for his service to our nation," she said. Harris is running on the achievements of the three and half years of the Biden-Harris administration and although the President is out of the race, ousted by the party for his perceived inability to defeat his Republican rival, former President Donald Trump, triggered by his disastrous performance in the first presidential debate late June, she has embraced the administration's achievements. The Republicans will make sure they tie her up to its failures as they intend to.

59 DETAINED FOR DRUG TRAFFICKING IN TURKEY; 1.2 TONNES NARCOTICS SEIZED

Ankara | Agencies

The police in Turkey have detained 59 suspects for manufacturing and trafficking drugs in operations across the country, Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said on Tuesday. The security forces seized more than 1.2 tonnes of narcotics, 13.6 million roots of hemp, and more than 2 million narcotic pills in raids across 16 provinces, Yerlikaya wrote on X, without specifying the time frame of the operations, Xinhua news agency reported. The police teams carried out the raids with the support of aerial vehicles and narcotic detector dogs, he added.



"We are determined to rid our country of poison dealers and street vendors," Yerlikaya said. Turkey, often used by illegal drug dealers as a transit hub, has ramped up its crackdown on drug smuggling since last year. In mid-July, Turkish police detained 396 suspects for manufacturing and trafficking drugs in operations across the country, seizing more than 1.7 tonnes of narcotics and 1.18 million narcotic pills in raids carried out across 57 provinces.

EVACUATION ORDERED FROM GAZA 'HUMANITARIAN ZONE': UN

United Nations | Agencies

A new evacuation order for parts of Gaza, including from parts of a "humanitarian zone," reportedly is forcing families into overcrowded, sparse shelter areas, UN humanitarian said. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on Monday said it received initial reports that families are starting to flee toward Deir al Balah and western Khan Younis, following Israeli military evacuation orders. Both areas are already heavily overcrowded, with limited services and shelter spaces available, Xinhua news agency reported. OCHA said the latest evacuation order includes areas located in the eastern part of what had been designated by the Israeli military and described as a "humanitarian zone" in Khan Younis. OCHA said relentless hostilities and frequent evacuation orders are further devastating Gaza's health system, making it increasingly difficult for people repeatedly displaced to access essential services. In

the latest challenge for the health system, Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis has issued a new call for people to donate blood, with reports the facility received dozens of casualties on Monday. The UN Relief Agency for Palestinians, known as UNRWA, reported that Israeli forces shot at a UN convoy heading to Gaza City on Sunday. UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini said there were no casualties, but UNRWA's teams, travelling in clearly marked UN armoured cars and wearing UN vests, had to take cover. He said one vehicle was severely damaged while waiting near the Israeli forces' checkpoint south of Wadi Gaza. That vehicle left the convoy. After the teams re-assembled, they were able to reach Gaza City. Lazzarini said the convoy's movement was coordinated with the Israeli authorities. He said those responsible for the incident must be held accountable. "It is extremely worrying," said Stephane Dujarric, chief spokesman for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. "We have seen an unprece-



dent number of colleagues have been killed in this operation. We have seen what happened to the World Central Kitchen (WCK). We need to get to the bottom of this, and this also comes within the context of some very harsh words by a number of Israeli officials regarding UNRWA." Israeli officials have repeatedly accused UNRWA employees of taking part in the deadly October 7 Hamas attack on Israelis.

Seven WCK employees were killed in an April Israeli drone attack on their convoy, previously cleared by authorities. "As always, wherever we operate, we operate under the protection of the authorities of where we work," Dujarric told correspondents at a regular briefing. The United Nations in Gaza is not armed. We do not have armed security with us. It is incumbent on all the parties in this conflict to ensure the protection of

the UN and all humanitarian workers." He said humanitarian operations in Gaza will continue. "Our humanitarian partners report that people in Gaza continue to face severe water shortages," OCHA said. "Between July 8-21, the daily average water supply was about 90,000 cubic meters, about a quarter of the amount produced before October of last year." Damage to infrastructure, the lack of electricity and shortages of fuel, spare parts and chlorine continue to hamper water production, purification and sewage pumping. This is despite some improvements, including the installation of a solar-powered desalination plant in Deir al Balah, with the support of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). The fund reported that, on average, one Palestinian child was killed every two days in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since October. UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell said the situation has deteriorated significantly, coinciding with the escalation of hostilities inside Gaza.



BUDGET WILL GIVE AMPLE OPPORTUNITY FOR PARALLEL GROWTH OF MP: CM

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for the Budget on Tuesday.

The Chief Minister said the Centre has tried to reduce the burden of inflation, especially from the people belonging to lower income categories and salaried class. He said the control over inflation is the need of the hour and PM Modi's government has taken this step through its Budget.

"The framework of the annual Budget indicates that steps have been taken to keep the growth of the country and its people from every class. This Budget is the vision of 'Viksit Bharat' and I congratulate PM Modi and FM Nirmala Sitharaman for the budget," the Chief Minister said.

He added that the nine-point schemes of the budget, which includes agriculture, employment,



economic growth, social justice etc will take the country into new growth in the coming years. The Chief Minister expressed hope

that the Budget will provide ample opportunity for parallel growth of Madhya Pradesh. "The growth of Madhya Pradesh is part of the growth of the country. I believe that MP will witness growth parallelly," he added.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented her seventh consecutive Union Budget on Tuesday.

She introduced increased standard deduction and revised tax rates for salaried individuals under the new tax regime and cut on customs duty on gold, silver, mobile phones and other goods were announced.

The Budget has the provision for employment-linked incentives, including one month's wage support for first-time employees, which has become the need of the hour.

Women-specific skillings programs and increased workforce participation, MSME and manufacturing support and some others are key points of the annual Budget.

MP gave 29 LS seats to BJP but got nothing in Budget: Congress

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Congress Chief Jitendra Patwari on Tuesday criticised the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying that the state gave all its 29 seats to the party but in return, they have failed its people.

"People in MP gave all 29 Lok Sabha seats to BJP but today when the annual Budget was announced, they feel betrayed," Jitendra Patwari said while addressing a press conference at party headquarters in Bhopal.

He said that during the elections (Assembly and Lok Sabha), to gain public support, the BJP gave a slogan - 'MP Ke Man Men Modi - Modi Ke Man Men MP', but there is nothing for the people of MP in the annual Budget presented by the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

He also hit at Union Ministers Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Jyotiraditya Scindia, saying that despite being the top leaders of the state in PM Modi's government, they couldn't provide anything fruitful from the Budget for Madhya Pradesh.

He also alleged that the BJP tried to copy promises of the Congress' election manifesto. "They (BJP) tried to copy of Congress' manifesto, which is clearly visible in the Budget



announcement," Patwari said. However, the MP BJP said that the annual Budget has a lot for the state which will help the growth of Madhya Pradesh, especially, the fund allocation for education, health, tourism and for tribals.

MP BJP Chief V. D. Sharma said that the state is the hub of tourism, which has got a lot in the budget. "State also has a step for regional industrialisation and the Centre's budget and policies will help to make it happen," he said.

Notably, the BJP won all 29 Lok Sabha seats in Madhya Pradesh on June 4 six months after it returned to power in the state by winning 163 out of 230 assembly seats in November last year.

An elderly man committed suicide by shooting himself with a licensed gun in Indore

Team Absolute | Indore

Late last night in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, an elderly man committed suicide by shooting himself with his licensed gun. The reason for suicide has not been revealed. The police is investigating the case.

According to information received from the police, Vijay Shukla (65), resident of Vijayanagar police station area, committed suicide by shooting himself with his licensed gun late on Monday night. The old man shot himself with a 12 bore rifle while lying on his bed.

This incident happened at around 1 o'clock in the night. The old man died on the spot as soon as he was shot. The police took the body into custody and sent it for post-mortem.



Vijayanagar police is investigating the matter. However, the reason behind the suicide is not yet known. Before shooting himself, Vijay Shukla had also sent a message to his daughter on her mobile. There has been no official confirmation of sending the message.

It is being told that Vijay Shukla used to run a security

agency some time ago. His wife passed away about six years ago. He has two sons and four daughters. Elderly Vijay Shukla lived with the family of one of his sons. After hearing the sound of the bullet, everyone reached his room. His condition was very serious. However, he died just then. The police is investigating the matter.

Special gift to dear sisters of Mohan Yadav cabinet on Rakshabandhan, additional Rs 250 will be transferred to their accounts

Chief Minister, while discussing the changing circumstances, has asked the farmers not to sell their land now. Now their income from land is going to increase.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Taking a big decision, the Mohan Yadav cabinet of Madhya Pradesh has decided to deposit additional Rs 250 in the accounts of the beloved sisters of the state on the occasion of Rakshabandhan.

BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has given a big gift to women under 'Ladli Behan Yojana' before Rakshabandhan. Actually, on August 1, Rs 250 will be transferred to the accounts of women in the state, which will be different from the amount given under the 'Ladli Behan Yojana' running in the state.

Madhya Pradesh cabinet meeting was held on July 23 under the leadership of Chief Minister Mohan Yadav. In this, CM Mohan Yadav said that every year in the month of Sawan, an additional Rs 250 will be given to the



accounts of all the beloved sisters of the state on one date. Let us tell you that this amount will be different from the amount of Rs 1250 already released per month.

Along with this gift to the sisters of the state, he has made a special appeal to the public representatives.

CM Mohan Yadav has also called upon the public representatives to tie Rakhi to the sisters of their area on the festival of Rakshabandhan.

CM Mohan Yadav launched the Self-reliant Panchayat Samriddh Madhya Pradesh program in Bhopal. During this, the CM mentioned the

changing picture of the state. He said that efforts are being made to ensure that farmers get adequate water for farming. Animal husbandry is also being promoted. This will increase the income of farmers, hence farmers should not sell their land now, even if they take loan if needed.

CM Mohan Yadav said that the state has received gifts like Ken-Betwa Link Project, Parvati-Kalisindh Project. With this, farmers will get ample amount of water for irrigation and their income will increase. Efforts are going on to promote animal husbandry.

The state government has decided to build cow shelters. A provision of Rs 40 per day is being made for fodder for cows, while farmer families who rear more than 10 cows will get additional benefits. Preparations are being made to give bonus on milk also.

Delegates got excited after watching virtual reality videos of historical heritages of Madhya Pradesh

State's exhibition becomes center of attraction in the session of World Heritage Committee. Special session of Madhya Pradesh on 24th July, representatives from all over the world showed interest

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Tourism Exhibition has become the center of attraction during the 46th session of UNESCO World Heritage Committee going on in Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. On the third day of the session also a large number of foreign delegates visited the exhibition. Here, we were excited to see various destinations of Madhya Pradesh including Sanchi, Omkareshwar, Maheshwar, Bhedaghat, Khajuraho, Ujjain through the virtual reality device. Mayo, who came from Japan, said that she saw the Sanchi Stupa through a virtual device. I really felt that I had reached Madhya Pradesh, it was an amazing experience. Felt quite good. Dr. Hama of Burkina Faso



told that he has read and heard a lot about Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh. Information about other destinations was also available through the exhibi-

tion. A special session focusing on urban heritage and HUL's recommendations is being organized by

Madhya Pradesh in collaboration with National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) and ASI on July 24. Apart from Canada, America, France, UAE, Singapore, Malaysia, representatives from countries like Pakistan, China, South Korea, Nepal, Bangladesh etc. showed interest in attending the session. There will be a panel discussion during the session, in which Principal Secretary, Tourism and Culture Department and Managing Director, M.P. Tourism Board Shiv Shekhar Shukla, Principal Secretary of Urban Development and Housing Department Neeraj Mandloi, Principal Secretary of Rajasthan Tourism Department Gayatri Rathore, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation Deputy Commissioner Ramya Kumar Bhatt will be included.

Four additional third AC coaches were added to Garib Rath running between Lucknow to Bhopal and Raipur

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Railway administration has decided to add four permanent coaches of third AC category in Lucknow-Bhopal-Lucknow and Lucknow-Raipur-Lucknow Garibrath Express with the aim of clearing additional passenger traffic and waiting list.

This decision will prove to be a big relief for the passengers of Satna, Katni, Bhopal, Vidisha and Bina stations.

Four third air-conditioned permanent class coaches will be added to train number 12593 Lucknow-Bhopal Garibrath Express from 27 July 2024 and to train number 12594 Bhopal-Lucknow Garibrath Express from 28 July 2024. These trains operate via Vidisha and Bina.

Similarly, four third air-conditioned permanent class



coaches will be added to train number 12535 Lucknow-Raipur Garibrath Express from 29 July 2024 and train number 12536 Raipur-Lucknow Garibrath Express from 30 July 2024. These trains will reach their destination via Katni and Satna. After the change in coach

composition, both trains will have a total of 16 coaches including 14 air-conditioned third class coaches and 2 generator cars. Passengers are advised to obtain information at railway stations, Rail Madad 139 or online to avail this additional facility.

Bhopal: GRP police station Bina exposed blind murder and arrested two accused

Team Absolute | Bhopal

GRP police station Bina has revealed the blind murder in a short time and arrested two accused. A written memo was presented at the police station by Deputy Station Master Beena, in which the body of an unidentified person was found near the railway line.

The police team that reached the spot examined the body and found that the deceased had serious injuries on his head and face. Blood stained soil, concrete stone and a piece of iron from the railway line were recovered from the spot.

The deceased was identified as Buddha alias Asaram Ahirwar. His family members told that due to old rivalry, Shaukat Ali's family members killed Buddha. Police started investigating the case and found that the deceased died due to injury on his head with a solid object.

During investigation, information was received from the



informer that murder accused Azhar and Deepak Raikwar were hiding on Kurwai Road. The police team reached the spot and arrested both the accused. During interrogation, both of them confessed to the mur-

der and the ax used in the murder was recovered.

In this action, station in-charge Babita Katheria and her team played a commendable role. The accused were presented in the Honorable Court.

Approval for amendment in IT/ITES/ESDM Investment Promotion Policy-2023

Creation of a new tehsil Dhundhka in Mandsaur. Strengthening of 7 regional offices of Higher Education Department approved. CM Dr. Yadav chairs Cabinet Meeting

Team Absolute | Bhopal

The State Cabinet, which met here today under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav at Mantralaya gave approval for amendment in Madhya Pradesh IT, ITES, and ESDM Investment Promotion Policy-2023 to encourage investment in the IT/ITES/ESDM data sector.

The amendment will enable investors units to get the benefits of Madhya Pradesh IT, ITES, and ESDM Investment Promotion Policy-2023. Eligible investor units will be able to get single window clearance, assistance in capital expenditure and rent, land at affordable rates, exemption in stamp duty and registry, and assistance in marketing and quality control. Guidelines have been issued for the implementation of the policy. Paragraph 17 has been amended to provide the benefits of the policy to eligible units. The Cabinet has approved five temporary posts for the



Local Election Office in District Niwari for the period from March 1, 2024, to February 28, 2025. These posts include Deputy District President (Local Elections), Assistant Superintendent (Local Elections), Accountant cum Upper Division Clerk (Local Elections), Lower Division Clerk (Local Elections) and Data Entry Operator (Contract).

In order to follow social distancing and other precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (Corona virus),

the Council of Ministers will provide three months of free food grains from April 2021 to June 2021 to the eligible beneficiaries covered under the National Food Security Act 2013. The distribution instructions and expenditure amount of Rs 75 crore 93 lakh 53 thousand 830 were ratified.

The Cabinet has approved the creation of new tehsil Dhundhka in Mandsaur district. A total of 26 Patwari Halke will be included in the P.H. N 31 to 40, 42 and 47 to 61 of the

present tehsil Mandsaur (Rural) in the new tehsil Dhundhka. After the formation of Tehsil Dhundhka, the remaining P.H.N 01 to 30, 41 and 43 to 46 totalling 35 Patwari Halkas will be included. For the smooth operation of the new Tehsil Dhundhka, one Tehsildar, 2 Naib Tehsildars, two Assistant Grade 2, 04 Assistant Grade 3, 3 Assistant Grade-3 (Producer), 1 Jamadar/Daftari/Bastawardar, 1 driver, 6 of peons, thus a total of 20 posts have been sanctioned.

Strengthening of 7 regional offices of the Higher Education Department approved The Cabinet has approved an additional 91 posts and Rs 7 crore 46 lakh for strengthening 7 regional offices run under the Higher Education Department. In this, approval was given for the annual recurring expenditure of Rs 6 crore 41 lakh and non-recurring expenditure of Rs 1 crore 5 lakh on the scheme including resources and vehicle arrangements.



Eminem grabs top spot on Billboard 200, Taylor Swift on 4th spot



Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-songwriter Taylor Swift, who had been on the Number 1 spot on the Billboard 200 since the release of her album 'The Tortured Poets Department', has now been replaced by Rap icon Eminem for the top spot.

Eminem has grabbed the top spot courtesy of his album 'The Death of Slim Shady (Coup de Grace)', reports Variety.

'The Death of Slim Shady' marks Eminem's 12th album, and opened at the top of the all-genre-inclusive chart with the equivalent of 281,000 album units in the United States.

As per Variety, it also logs 220 million streams and 114,000 sales, the data is provided by Luminate. Eminem first announced the album during the NFL Draft in April, and later published an obituary in the Detroit Free Press bidding adieu to Slim Shady, his career-long alter ego that he's played as a character in his songs and in videos.

The LP is Eminem's first record since 'Music to Be Murdered By,' a January 2020 release. 'The Death of Slim Shady (Coup de Grace)' is Eminem's eleventh album to reach the Number 1 spot, a figure that puts him in a tie with Bruce Springsteen, Barbra Streisand and Ye (Kanye West).

Swift's 'The Tortured Poets Department,' meanwhile, slipped to Number 4 following a record-breaking 12-week streak at No. 1. It held the post with unrivalled availability in variants — multiple different vinyl, CD or cassette versions of an already-released album or EP — that were released across numerous weeks.

Los Angeles | Agencies

The mother-of-three was known for her teenage relationship with Dustin Franklin during the show.

Per the Henrico County Police Division statement to E! News, "members from Henrico Fire attempted life-saving measures however they were not effective. Autumn Oxley, 27, of Henrico, was pronounced deceased at the scene. Henrico Police are currently classifying this incident as a death investigation. Detectives are working with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner on this case to determine the exact cause and manner of death."

The world gained knowledge of her passing once her sister Misty Crittendon had revealed the news on a Facebook post that has since been deleted where she referred to Autumn as her "baby sister."

She noted in her message, "you were robbed of your life at such a tender age, you left before anyone could tell you goodbye.. how much we love you.. how amazing you are and how proud we are of you for staying sober through some of the toughest parts of your life, how far you've come from where you were, how thankful we are to have had all these years with you, how proud of you we are as a mother, how grateful we are for the 3 tiny parts of your heart that are still walking this earth."

Misty then reaffirmed to her late sister she would watch over her little ones and always remind them of who their mom was, "these babies will always know how much you love them, how amazing you are, how special you are, how much you sacrificed and overcame for them, everything and nothing short of it."

AUTUMN CRITTENDON WAS PRONOUNCED DEAD AT AGE 27

16 & Pregnant season five alumna, Autumn Crittendon was pronounced dead at age 27.



Pete Davidson said he 'did coke and ketamine

Pete Davidson never holds anything back, including some personal revelations. During a comedy show in Atlantic City over the weekend from his current tour, the 30-year-old Saturday Night Live alum revealed which drug he isn't quitting: marijuana.

"I can't quit [weed] yet. It's all I have left," Pete said according to Daily Mail. "I did coke and ketamine and f**king all the pills and all that s**t. All I have is weed left, so it's almost over, but I'm holding on for a little bit longer."

The King of Staten Island star has been open about his struggles with drug use, including his experience with ketamine. He previously revealed that he took ketamine daily for four years before seeking help. During a 2023 comedy show, Pete described the drug's effects as "magical" but later acknowledged the consequences of his addiction.

Apart from drug usage, Pete also opened up about the car crash he was involved in last year. In 2023, he crashed his vehicle into a home in Beverly Hills. He was subsequently sentenced to community service and had to complete traffic school as a result.

"I saw the house and I was like, 'I don't think you could die if you hit a house,'" Pete joked during his recent comedy show in Atlantic City. "Usually, in sitcoms they just go right through it. So, I swerved and I aimed for the house, and I actually hit the garage pretty good. Even at my worst, I'm pretty f**king spot on."



CHRIS BROWN SUED FOR \$50 MILLION OVER ALLEGED BACKSTAGE ASSAULT

Los Angeles | Agencies

Singer-songwriter Chris Brown has been slapped with a legal action for his alleged misdeed.

He has been sued for \$50 million in connection with an incident that took place backstage at one of his concerts, reports Variety.

Larry Parker, Joseph Lewis, Charles Bush and Da Marcus Powell filed the suit in Harris County, Texas, on Tuesday against Brown as well as his tour promoter Live Nation, Sinko Ceej, Hood Boss and Yella Beezy.

In addition to the payment, the four plaintiffs are asking for a temporary restraining order against all defendants. According to the complaint, which was first reported by TMZ and accessed by Variety, Brown and his crew severely beat the plaintiffs following the singer's performance as part of his 11:11 Tour at Dickies Arena in Fort Worth, Texas.

As per Variety, the four men were



invited backstage to meet Brown, who showed up 30 minutes later than anticipated.

Before leaving, Bush approached Brown to congratulate him on the show, prompting a member of the singer's entourage to remind Brown that the two previously had issues. Brown allegedly said, "Oh yeah, we were. What's up, n****? I don't forget shit."

The suit states that Brown and seven to 10 members of his entourage proceeded to assault Bush and punch him in the chest, and claims that Hood Boss picked up a chair and threw it at Bush's head.



Blake Lively & Gigi Hadid Rock 'Deadpool & Wolverine

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hugh Jackman and Ryan Reynolds may be the stars of Deadpool & Wolverine, but Blake Lively and Gigi Hadid stole the show at the film's New York City premiere! While posing for pictures hand in hand, the *It Ends With Us* star, 36, and the model, 29, wore character-inspired outfits at the Monday, July 22, red carpet event.

As a nod to her husband Ryan's character, Deadpool, Blake wore a shiny red jumpsuit while pulling her hair back into a tall ponytail. As for Gigi, she matched Hugh's character, Wolverine, by donning a strapless yellow tube top with a matching knee-length skirt. She offset the outfit with black stilettos and a brown belt, and she accessorized with a matching yellow purse.

While promoting his latest movie, Ryan, 47, joked about his wife and their kids during a recent appearance on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*. After host Jimmy Fallon asked the actor whether he'd make a fourth *Deadpool* film, Ryan promptly replied, "Oh god, no. ... My wife and children will divorce me."

"Jimmy, I have no prenup with any of them," Ryan hilariously insisted. "I will be capital-B broke, and in turn probably then doing *Deadpool 4* because I need the money."

Ryan Reynolds revealed that their fourth child's name is Olin

Los Angeles | Agencies

Ryan Reynolds revealed the name of his and Blake Lively's youngest child as he gave a speech at the premiere of *Deadpool and Wolverine* in New York City on Monday, July 22. Before showing the movie, the actor, 47, took the stage alongside director Shawn Levy and some of his co-stars. During the speech, he revealed that their fourth child's name is Olin, according to People.

As Ryan spoke at the David H. Koch Theater in Lincoln Center, he showed love to his wife, 36, and children. He complimented Blake's look and then gushed about having all of his kids at the event. "Her outfit is amazing, spoiler alert," he quipped, per Today. "I want to thank my kids, James, Inez, Betty, Olin, who are here. I hope that, if I'm lucky, this moment will be the most traumatic thing — that is, the contents of this movie — that



happens in your wondrous life."

Besides the joke about traumatizing his kids with the content of the movie, Ryan did admit that he was happy to get to share in the moment with all the people he loves most. "I love that my entire family is here," he said to the audience.

Ryan didn't reveal the sex of their fourth baby. The couple quietly welcomed their fourth child in February 2023. After Blake gave birth, the pair kept details about their baby private, but Ryan slowly opened up about adjusting to life with four little ones in interviews.



ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY

Bella Thorne



Andy Murray to retire after Paris Olympics

New Delhi | Agencies

Former World No. 1 Andy Murray confirmed he will retire from tennis after the 2024 Paris Olympics via a social media post on Tuesday.

The 37-year-old Scot, who made his first Olympic appearance in the Beijing Games in 2008, is planning to play in the singles and doubles in Paris, which will be his fifth Games.

"Arrived in Paris for my last ever tennis tournament," Murray wrote on X.

"Competing for Team GB has been by far the most memorable weeks of my career and I'm extremely proud to get to do it one final 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.

The tennis action in Paris begins at Roland Garros on July 27 and concludes on August 4, with medal rounds being played from August 2.

Women's Asia Cup: Clinical India seal semis berth with commanding 82-run win over Nepal

Dambulla (Sri Lanka) | Agencies

India crushed Nepal by 82 runs in a Group A match of the Women's Asia Cup to progress to the semi-final at the Rangiri Dambulla International Stadium here on Tuesday.

With this, India secured their third consecutive win of the tournament to top the group with six points.

After Shafali Verma's fiery innings, Indian spinners showed their class against minnows Nepal to advance to the knockout stage of the tournament.

In the 179 chase, Nepal were never in the picture as they lost the opener Samjhana Khadka (7) in the second over by Anurudhati Reddy. Sita Rana Magar and Kabita Kunwar tried to stabilise the side in the Power-play but Reddy gave them another jolt by removing Kunwar (6) in the fifth over.

However, Sita and captain Indu Barma showed some sign of fightback as the duo added 22 runs for the third-wicket partnership. The ray of hope didn't last for Nepal as Radha Yadav broke the stand, leaving them reeling at 43/3 after 9.2 overs.

Sita's stay in the middle didn't last longer as she too was sent back to the pavilion by Reddy in the next over. Nepal lost their half of the side inside 11 overs with more than 120 runs to win.

Things turned from bad to worse



for Nepal in the 14th over as they lost Rubina Chetry (15) and Kabita Joshi (0) in the span of three balls off Deepthi Sharma. Nepal failed to recover in time and went on to lose wickets at regular intervals and finished their innings for 96/9 in 20 overs. For India, Deepthi returned with the figures of 3-13 in her four overs while Reddy and Radha bagged two scalps each.

Earlier, Shafali Verma's scintillating half-century (81 off 47 balls) coupled with Dayalan Hemalatha's 47 powered India to 178/3 after opting to bat first.

Shafali and Hemalatha showed no mercy from the beginning of the

match. The 20-year-old made her intentions clear in the first over by hitting two fours against Kabita Kumwar's first over. She continued the onslaught from the one end while Hemalatha held the other end strong.

Sajeevan Sajana and Jemimah Rodrigues came together for a brief 23-run partnership and steered the side to the 150-run mark. Sajana (10) failed to extend her stay in the middle as she was trapped lbw by Kabita Joshi in the 19th over.

In the end, Rodrigues showed her attacking prowess and hammered quickfire 28 not out off 15 balls studied with five fours while Richa Gosh

remained unbeaten on six off three balls as India posted 178/3 in 20 overs. For Nepal, Sita Rana Magar bagged two wickets and returned with the figures of 2-25 in her four overs.

Brief scores:

India 178/3 in 20 overs (Shafali Verma 81, Dayalan Hemalatha 47; Sita Rana Magar 2-25) beat Nepal 96/9 in 20 overs (Bindu Rawal 17*, Sita Rana Magar 18; Deepthi Sharma 3-13, Radha Yadav 2-12) by 82 runs.

HARMANPREET, SHAFALI MOVE UP IN ICC WOMEN'S T20I RANKINGS

Dubai | Agencies

India batters Harmanpreet Kaur and Shafali Verma have moved up in the ICC Women's T20I Player Rankings after their recent performances in the ongoing Women's Asia Cup in Sri Lanka. Indian captain Harmanpreet and opener Shafali are in joint-11th position in the latest T20I rankings.

Harmanpreet's scores of five not out against Pakistan and 66 against the United Arab Emirates have helped her gain one spot while Shafali's scores of 40 and 37 have lifted her four positions.

Sri Lanka off-spinner Inoshi Priyadarshani has advanced three places to a career-best fourth position after taking two wickets against Bangladesh and one against Malaysia.

India's wicketkeeper Richa Ghosh has moved up four places to 24th, Bangladesh's Murshida Khatun has climbed six places to 47th, Sri Lanka's Vishmi Gunaratne has advanced seven



places to 51st, and Thailand's Nattaya Boochatham has jumped 10 places to 76th in the batting rankings.

Among the bowlers, Bangladesh's Nahida Akter has risen nine places to 21st while Marufa Akter is up one place to 26th. Sri Lanka's Udeshika Prabodhani has progressed four places to 30th, and India's Shreyanka Patil has surged 19 places to 41st.

England captain Heather Knight, who scored a match-winning 46 not out off 31 balls in the final match of their home series against New Zealand, helping England win the series 5-0, has re-entered the top 20, gaining two spots. Her teammate, new-ball bowler Lauren Bell, has moved into the top 10 following a three-wicket haul.

New Zealand's Amelia Kerr has advanced two places to 13th in the batting rankings, while her sister Jess Kerr has moved up five places to joint-42nd in the bowling rankings.

JR WOMEN, MEN WEST ZONE HOCKEY: CHHATTISGARH DEFEAT MADHYA PRADESH 9-0

Rajnandgaon (Chhattisgarh) | Agencies

Chhattisgarh defeated Hockey Madhya Pradesh 9-0 in the women's match on the third day of the 2nd Hockey India Junior Women and Men West Zone Championship 2024 here on Tuesday.

In the only match of the day, Sneha Patel (14') gave Hockey Madhya Pradesh the lead towards the end of the first quarter before captain Palak Gupta (17', 32', 47') and Chanu



Khaidem Shileima (18', 52', 53') both scored hat-tricks as Hockey Madhya Pradesh were well ahead in the contest. Kajal (54') and Krishna Sharma (59') also chipped in with a goal each for Hockey Madhya Pradesh.

Paris Olympics: Australian water polo player tests Covid-19 positive

Paris | Agencies

An Australian water polo player has been isolated at the Paris Games following a positive Covid-19 test, as confirmed by the country's Olympic team chief, Anna Meares, on Tuesday. The athlete's name has not been disclosed, but close contacts are being closely monitored and tested to prevent any further spread of the virus. Despite this setback, the team continues its training as planned.

The Tokyo 2020 Olympics were delayed by a year due to the pandemic and were held with limited spectators. However, the current approach to managing Covid-19 is more measured.

"We were due to have two players from water polo with us; however, currently, we have had one athlete from their team isolating with COVID, which was detected last night," Meares stated during a news conference.

"As a precaution, they're not joining us this morning. I must emphasise that



we treat Covid no differently than other bugs like the flu. This is not Tokyo. The athlete is not particularly unwell and is still training but sleeping in a single room."

Meares also highlighted that the athlete's teammates would wear masks and adhere to social distancing measures to mitigate any risk of further spread.

"It was late last night when she presented with symptoms, and the good

thing is that having our own testing equipment means that we can get that information really quickly and intervene both in diagnosis and treatment," she added.

Regarding the athlete's participation in future competitions, Meares stated, "We will wait until she gets the all-clear and we get the information from our chief medical officer, Carolyn Broderick."

French Health Minister Frederic Valletoux has reassured the public that there is no significant risk of a major Covid cluster in France. "Of course, Covid is here. We've seen a small peak in cases," he told the Franceinfo broadcaster. "But we are far from what we saw in 2020, 2021, 2022."

Valletoux added that there is no current obligation to wear a mask, as the number of cases remains low. "Some precautions are being taken but, because the level at which Covid is spreading is very low, they depend on the organizers."

Charith Asalanka to captain Sri Lanka in home T20Is against India

Colombo | Agencies

All-rounder Charith Asalanka will lead Sri Lanka in home T20Is against India, starting from July 27, as the selection committee announced a 16-man squad for the three-match series on Tuesday.

The T20I games will be played on July 27, 28, and 30 at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium in Kandy. Sadeera Samarawickrama and Dilshan Madhushanka have been dropped, with selectors instead opting for the likes of Chamindu Wickramasinghe, Binura Fernando and Avishka Fernando.

Veteran Dinesh Chandimal also returned to the fold as is in line to play his first T20I match since February 2022. The series against India is also the first assignment for former captain Sanath Jayasuriya, who has taken over the responsibility as the Interim Coach. Jayasuriya was appointed early this month following the resignation of former coach Chris Silverwood, who resigned at the end of June following the poor per-



formance by Sri Lanka at the last T20 World Cup in the USA and the Caribbean islands. Sri Lanka will be hoping to rejuvenate their former self as their T20 World Cup campaign was full of disappointment.

The side only managed to register one win during the campaign which came against Netherlands. Their loss against Bangladesh and South Africa and no result against Nepal saw the side crash out in the group stage of the tournament. On the other hand, T20 world champion India will be captained by Suryakumar Yadav while newly appointed India's head coach Gautam Gambhir is to execute his first assignment in the role. The Indian squad traveled to Sri Lanka on Monday. Sri Lanka squad: Charith Asalanka (c), Pathum Nissanka, Kusal Janith Perera, Avishka Fernando, Kusal Mendis, Dinesh Chandimal, Kamindu Mendis, Dasun Shanaka, Wanindu Hasaranga, Dumith Wellalage, Maheesh Theekshana, Chamindu Wickramasinghe, Matheesha Pathirana, Nuwan Thushara, Dushmantha Chameera, Binura Fernando

CHARITH ASALANKA TO CAPTAIN SRI LANKA IN HOME T20IS AGAINST INDIA

Colombo | Agencies

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Jayasuriya was appointed early this month following the resignation of for-



mer coach Chris Silverwood, who resigned at the end of June following the poor performance by Sri Lanka at the last T20 World Cup in the USA and the Caribbean islands.

Sri Lanka will be hoping to rejuvenate their former self as their T20 World Cup campaign was full of disappointment. The side only managed to register one win during the campaign which came against Netherlands. Their loss against Bangladesh and South Africa and no result against Nepal saw the side crash out in the group stage of the tournament.

On the other hand, T20 world champion India will be captained by Suryakumar Yadav while newly appointed India's head coach Gautam Gambhir is to execute his first assignment in the role.

The Indian squad traveled to Sri Lanka on Monday.

Sri Lanka squad: Charith Asalanka (c), Pathum Nissanka, Kusal Janith Perera, Avishka Fernando, Kusal Mendis, Dinesh Chandimal, Kamindu Mendis, Dasun Shanaka, Wanindu Hasaranga, Dumith Wellalage, Maheesh Theekshana, Chamindu Wickramasinghe, Matheesha Pathirana, Nuwan Thushara, Dushmantha Chameera, Binura Fernando



Big B set to host 'Kaun Banega Crorepati 16' from Aug

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The quiz-based reality television show 'Kaun Banega Crorepati' hosted by the veteran Bollywood icon Amitabh Bachchan, is set to return with its season 16 on August 12.

The makers announced the premiere date for the new season with the tagline, "Zindagi hai, har mod par sawaal poochegi, jawaab toh dena hoga".

The show's promo presents different scenarios where the individuals involved face resistance from their peers and a volley of questions that must be answered with conviction.

'Kaun Banega Crorepati' is India's most iconic television show. It is also responsible for reviving the career of Big B, who back in time was facing a severe financial crunch.

During the late 1990s, Big B's production house, Amitabh Bachchan Corporation (AB Corp) had gone belly up, given its overly corporate approach in times when the industry followed a very traditional way of making movies.

In a bid to pay off the creditors, Big B took to the medium of television with 'KBC' in 2000. Suddenly, a megastar, who earlier was only

accessible on the silver screen, reached millions of Indian households through television. With the strength of a new medium by his side, Big B not only booked the prime-time of India for himself but also made a place in the heart of every Indian family.

The Indian audience gave an overwhelming response to Big B in 'Kaun Banega Crorepati' which is based on the UK show 'Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?'

Another of Bollywood's biggest icons, Shah Rukh Khan hosted the third season of the show after two successful seasons hosted by Amitabh Bachchan but the former couldn't repeat the magic of Big B despite his unparalleled charm.

Big B made a return to the show with its fourth season and has been hosting it since 2010.

Ananya Panday buys herself a powerful new luxury SUV

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Bollywood diva Ananya Panday, who has currently raised eyebrows for her reportedly growing proximity to star Indian cricketer Hardik Pandya, has treated herself to a brand new powerful gift.

Recently, the actress was seen with a swanky new luxury SUV in the city.

Ananya was clicked by the paparazzi next to her white Range Rover that was decorated with a garland at the front.

The actress, who was recently seen in a cameo appearance in the recently released movie 'Bad Newz', sported a casual look, and was dressed in a grey tank top which she paired with black shorts and slippers.

She opted for a no-makeup look and tied her hair in a bun. Her accessories included cute earrings and a wristband. As the actress stepped out of her vehicle, a paparazzi present at the spot congratulated her on the new car. Ananya smiled and said, "Thank you."



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Zeenat Aman opens up about being undervalued by brands

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Veteran actress Zeenat Aman on Tuesday opened up about feeling "undervalued", sharing that she has held her own in the industry for over half a century and believes she is worth far more than the price of a designer handbag or high-heeled shoe.

The beauty pageant winner, who began her acting career in 1970 with the movie 'The Evil Within', took to Instagram and shared some mesmerising snaps from her recent photoshoot.

In the photos, the actress is wearing a red outfit and accessorising with black sunglasses.

In the caption, Zeenat penned a long note, stating, "Thank you, but no thank you. I can't tell you my precise worth, but I do know when I'm being undervalued. Amid the barrage of collaboration and appearance requests that materialise in my inbox each day, there are some that stand out for unpleasant reasons. Last-minute invitations that the organiser forgot to edit (and which are addressed to another celebrity who must have declined) are mildly insulting."

The actress continued: "Impolite emails with minimal details and brusque 'share commercials' are infuriating. And shady proposals to post stories or comments without the paid partnership tag are distasteful. Yet none of these compare to the impudence of multimillion dollar brands that expect my endorsement in exchange for 'brand association' and a ludicrously low fee. Such luxury brands pay an eye watering penny to their ambassadors (one of whom beautifully reprised a role I originally played), and sell even their most basic item for multiple lakhs of rupees.."

The Hare Rama Hare Krishna actress added, "In their outreach to me, they do not fail to express their admiration, with generous terms such as 'icon' and 'fashion inspiration'. But when it comes to actually compensating me for my time, energy, reputation, and reach... the well runs dry. I am over 70 years old, and I have held my own in this industry for over half a century. I work with what I know to be an unusual professionalism. I have a social media audience that is not only entirely organic, but so beautifully engaged. I have immense respect for myself, and for you who follow my page."

"I am certainly worth more than the price of a designer handbag or high-heel shoe. Your turn. Tell me your story of being undervalued or standing your ground against it," concluded Zeenat.



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Actress and fashion icon Sonam Kapoor has shared a glimpse of her new photoshoot for a magazine, promoting acceptance and fighting against prejudices. Sonam recently shot for a magazine and can be seen wearing a white off-shoulder gown with matching bell-shaped sleeves.

The actress opted for minimal makeup and accessorised the outfit with big, colourful ethnic jhumkas.

The magazine has captioned the post with Sonam's quote: "In a society where tradi-

Sonam Kapoor drops glimpses of concept photoshoot, vows to fight prejudices

tional views are still prevalent, taking a stand can be controversial, but I believe it's essential to use whatever platform I have to promote acceptance and fight against prejudices - Sonam A Kapoor."

Sonam, the daughter of actor Anil Kapoor, started her career as an assistant director with filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali's 'Black'.

The actress made her acting debut with the 2007 romantic drama 'Saawariya', alongside Ranbir Kapoor. Produced and directed by Bhansali, the film was based on Fyodor Dostoevsky's 1848 short story White Nights.

Sonam has featured in movies like 'Delhi-6', 'I Hate Luv Storys', 'Mausam', 'Raanjhanaa', and 'Prem Ratan Dhan Payo'.

On the personal front, Sonam is married to businessman Anand Ahuja. The couple has a son named Vayu.

Janhvi drops energetic dance video after being discharged from hospital

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Janhvi Kapoor, who was recently discharged from the hospital after being treated for food poisoning, shared a fun dance video on Tuesday featuring her latest track 'Shaukan' from the upcoming spy thriller 'Ulajh'.

Janhvi took to Instagram and

posted a reel video.

In the clip, the actress is seen wearing a black tube top and brown flared trousers while grooving to the dance number 'Shaukan', sung by Jubin Nautiyal, Neha Kakkar, and Shashwat Sachdev.

The post is captioned: "Karle galatiyan... and never play safe with #shaukan."

The video garnered two million views within an hour of posting.

The song was composed and produced by Shashwat Sachdev, with lyrics penned by Kumar.

For those unversed, Janhvi was recently admitted to a hospital in South Mumbai due to deteriorating health and was diagnosed with food poisoning.



Chahatt Khanna