

# absolute india

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## 'MAJOR CRISIS' AS RUSSIA AND BELARUS STARTS 'SPECIAL MILITARY OPERATIONS' IN UKRAINE



# War returns to Europe

Missiles and bombs rained from the sky, tanks rolled across the border, troops parachuted down on eastern regions and explosions were seen across the country after Russian President Vladimir Putin gave the order to attack. 'Hundreds' of Ukrainian troops were killed in early clashes, and official said, as the fight came to them on all fronts at a moment's notice. Official figures put the death toll at 40, with 'dozens' wounded. Cruise missiles, guided bombs and Grad rockets took out targets from east to west - aimed at airfields, military bases, ammo dumps, and command posts including in the capital. Six Russian jets were shot out of the sky over the eastern Donbass region with 50 Russian troops killed, Ukraine claimed, before Moscow boasted of taking full control of the skies, the report said.



### RUSSIA CAPTURES CHERNOBYL AFTER 'FIERCE' BATTLE, HITS TURKEY'S SHIP

Russian forces have seized control of Chernobyl nuclear power plant after a 'fierce' battle, with the condition of nuclear storage facilities 'unknown', sparking fears of a radiation leak that could cause fallout in Europe. Video revealed Russian tanks and armoured vehicles standing in front of the destroyed reactor, which sits just 60 miles north of the capital Kiev. Meanwhile Turkey reported that one of its ships had been hit by a 'bomb' off the coast of Odessa, where fighting is also going on. Turkey is a member of NATO, underlining fears that the war in Ukraine could quickly suck in other states and spark an all-out conflict in Europe, Dailymail reports.

### I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER MY COUNTRY WILL EXIST: UKRAINE PRESIDENT

The fate of Ukraine is looking increasingly uncertain as Russia launches a series of strikes across the country, President Volodymyr Zelensky has apparently told his Austrian counterpart, RT reported. The Ukrainian President apparently warned that the Eastern European nation may not be able to withstand the offensive by Moscow's armed forces. In a statement issued on Thursday, Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer shared details of his telephonic conversation with Zelensky. According to Vienna's leader, Zelensky told him, "I don't know how much longer my country will exist", RT reported.



### PUTIN'S CHILLING WARNING TO THE WEST

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday declared war on Ukraine and gave a chilling warning to its allies in the West, Daily Mail reported. "To anyone who would consider interfering from the outside - if you do, you will face consequences greater than any you have faced in history," he said on a television broadcast. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres had urged Putin to stop his tanks. Putin ignored the plea, going on TV to describe the invasion as a "special military occupation" and said he wants to "demilitarize" and "de-Nazify", not occupy, the country, the report said. He told Ukrainian service members to "lay down their arms and go home", saying Russia could not exist with a "constant threat emanating from the territory of Ukraine" and clashes between Russian and Ukrainian soldiers was "inevitable".

### RUSSIA WILL PAY VERY HEAVILY: NATO

NATO has announced the deployment of 'additional defensive land and air forces' to the eastern part of the bloc and an increase in the readiness of all its forces 'to respond to all contingencies,' in light of the Russian military 'operation' in Ukraine, RT reported. "Russia will pay a very heavy economic and political price. NATO will continue to coordinate closely with relevant stakeholders and other international organisations including the EU," the alliance said on Thursday in a statement. NATO claims that it has "made every effort to pursue diplomacy and dialogue with Russia" and has "repeatedly invited" it for talks in the NATO-Russia Council, RT reported.



The Ukrainian Armed Forces have said that they managed to stop Russian troops in northern Ukraine's Chernihiv region, but heavy fighting is underway in Kharkiv, located in northeast part of the country, where the "enemy" has suffered casualties. Around 50 Russian troops were killed in Ukraine's "retaliation" to Moscow's military operations, Ukrainian forces said on Thursday in a post on the General Staff's verified Facebook page, claiming that they have shot down six Russian Air Force

### HEAVY FIGHTING UNDERWAY IN KHARKIV

are trying to push back the Russian troops. Meanwhile, more than 50 Ukrainian soldiers had also been reportedly killed and dozens had been wounded in the operations. Urging citizens to stay calm, the Ukrainian Armed Forces said that all military units are in their positions.

planes, and two choppers as well as destroying two tanks. The forces, in a statement, said they regained full control on Mariupol in eastern Ukraine, although the situation in Kherson in the south is said to be critical, where Ukrainian forces

### DIFFERENCES CAN BE RESOLVED THROUGH DIALOGUE, MODI TO PUTIN

Differences between Russia and the NATO can only be resolved through "honest and sincere" dialogue, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday told Russian President Vladimir Putin as they discussed the ongoing Ukraine crisis. Reiterating his long-standing conviction that the differences between Russia and the NATO can only be resolved through honest and sincere dialogue, the Prime Minister appealed for an immediate cessation of violence, and called for concerted efforts from all sides to return to the path of diplomatic negotiations and dialogue. He also sensitised the Russian President about India's concerns regarding the safety of the Indian citizens in Ukraine, especially students, and conveyed that India attaches the highest priority to their safe exit and return to India.

### WEST MUST STAND UP: UK PM

Boris Johnson warned the West must stand up to 'dictator' Vladimir Putin as he vowed to 'hobble' the Russian economy with a 'massive' package of sanctions. In an address to the nation, the PM said Vladimir Putin cannot be allowed to 'snuff out' freedom in Ukraine with an act of 'wanton and reckless aggression'. He said Putin had 'unleashed war' on the continent and the West must respond to ensure the eventual 'failure' of his offensive 'diplomatically, politically, economically, and eventually, militarily'. In a hard message to Germany and Italy among others, Johnson also called for countries to wean themselves off gas and oil supplies from Moscow.



**Team Absolute** | New Delhi  
Ukraine was under siege on Thursday after Russian President Vladimir Putin announced he was invading in what he termed a "special military operation", sending in tanks from the northern border with Belarus in a combined Russian-Belarusian offensive, and launching attacks from the east and south, including on the capital Kiev, a Daily Mail report said. Hundreds of Ukrainians were killed in the onslaught, the Daily Mail quoted the Interior Ministry in Kiev as saying,

and videos on social media showed the scale of the invasion. Five Russian jets and one helicopter were shot down over the east of the country, near Kharkiv, Ukraine's military said. In his announcement on early Thursday morning, Putin insisted that Russia was only attacking military installations, and were avoiding populated areas. But Ukraine's officials said there had already been heavy casualties. Ukraine's border force said that their posts in the north have come under attack from both Russian and Belarussian forces - a hugely signifi-

cant development, meaning Russia is not acting alone, and is attacking from all sides, the Daily Mail reported. The livestream video of the invasion from Belarus was taken at the Senkivka, Ukraine crossing with Veselovka, Belarus. The column was seen entering Ukraine at 6.48 a.m., CNN reported. A Ukrainian government spokesman confirmed that Russia had invaded over the Belarus border as well, only 120 miles from Kiev.

### DEFAULT IN EPF BY EMPLOYER LIABLE TO IMPOSITION OF PENALTY: SUPREME COURT



**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court said any default in the payment of Employees Provident Fund (EPF) contribution by the employer is liable to imposition of penalty by authorities concerned. A bench of Justices Ajay Rastogi and Abhay S Oka said: "We are of the considered view that any default or delay in the payment of EPF contribution by the employer under the Act is a sine qua non for imposition of levy of damages under Section 14B of the Act and mens rea or actus reus is not an essential element for imposing penalty/damages for breach of civil obligations/liabilities." It noted that "it is well settled that mens rea or actus reus is not an essential element for imposing penalty or damages for breach of civil obligations and liabilities". The top court was hearing appeals against the common judgment and the order passed by the division bench of the Karnataka High Court in October 2009.

## Cost of War: Equities, rupee plunge as FIIs pump out over Rs 6K cr

- ▶ **THE INDICES -- S&P BSE SENSEX AND NSE NIFTY50 -- LOGGED ITS SECOND WORST DAY SINCE MARCH 2020 ON THURSDAY AS FOREIGN INVESTORS FLED.**
- ▶ **THE FIIS WERE NET SELLERS ON BSE, NSE AND MSEI IN THE CAPITAL MARKET SEGMENT ON THURSDAY. THEY NET SOLD RS 6,448.24 CRORE WORTH OF EQUITIES.**
- ▶ **THE INDIAN RUPEE WEAKENED BY 1.3 PER CENT TO RS 75.65 PER USD FROM ITS WEDNESDAY'S CLOSE OF RS 74.55.**

**Team Absolute** | New Delhi/Mumbai

Global headwinds triggered via Russia's attack on Ukraine heavily dented India's domestic equity markets as well as the rupee on Thursday. Subsequently, Sensex settled 4.7 per cent or 2,702 points down at 54,529 points, whereas Nifty settled 4.8 per cent or 815 points down at 16,248 points.



"Nifty logged its second worst day since March 2020 on Thursday, due to the escalation of the geo-political crisis in Ukraine. Nifty opened with a large gap down and kept falling through the day to close almost at an intra-day low. In the process, Nifty was the worst performing index in the Asian region," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

The Indian rupee too became a casualty of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine hostilities as it weakened by over 1 per cent on Thursday. "The RBI let the rupee loose today with no big intervention and allowed it to catch up with other currencies and align with the domestic fundamentals," said Sajal Gupta, Head, Forex and Rates, Edelweiss Securities.

### INDIA ISSUES HELPLINE NUMBERS FOR STRANDED NATIONALS IN UKRAINE

▶ **THE EMBASSY ISSUED HELPLINE NUMBERS WHICH ARE +38 0997300483, +38 0997300428, +38 0933980327, +38 0635917881 AND +38 0935046170.**



**Team Absolute** | New Delhi

India has asked its citizens stranded in Ukraine to "reach out to the embassy for evacuation and also has issued helpline numbers. The announcement was made after Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday announced a military operation in Ukraine. In an advisory to all the Indian nationals in Ukraine, the embassy said: "This is to inform all Indian nationals in Ukraine that since the Ukrainian airspace has been

closed the schedule for special flights stands cancelled." The embassy further stated that alternative arrangements were being made for evacuation of the Indian nationals. The embassy will convey information as soon as such arrangements are finalised, so that the Indian nationals can relocate to the western part of the country, said an official. "Please carry your passports and necessary documents on your person at all times. You are advised to follow Embassy website and social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) posts for updates on this regard."



# PROBE PLEA ALLEGING ENVIRONMENTAL VIOLATIONS BY DMRC, NGT TO JOINT PANEL

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The National Green Tribunal has asked a three-member joint panel to verify the factual position, and take remedial action, on a plea alleging violations by the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation's commercial complex project at Bhikaji Cama Place in the national capital.

Directing the joint committee of the Central Pollution Control Board, Delhi Pollution Control Committee, and Principal Chief Conservator of Forests to look into the matter, the NGT bench, headed by Chairman, Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel (retd), in the order passed on February 23, sought a compliance report in the matter within two months.

The plea highlighted the earlier order of the tribunal which stated that there is a need for maintaining adequate greenery and to mitigate the adverse impact of the project which needs to be monitored by the joint committee.

The survival of transplanted trees may be also monitored by the said committee, it said, adding that the committee may also evolve a plan



for mitigation measures against air pollution on account of traffic and traffic congestion based on authentic and realistic data and not merely data of lockdown period.

The project proponent will be bound to follow the directions issued in this regard, it was noted in

the tribunal's earlier order.

The green court noted the application which stated that the DMRC is going ahead with the project in violation of the above directions.

Further, the project has been expanded to cover more than 20,000 sq meters which requires

Environmental Clearance as per Environmental Impact Assessment Notification dated August 14, 2006.

Delhi Metro Rail Corporation may also ensure compliance of law on the subject and directions issued, subject to their legal remedies, the bench clarified.

# MPC unanimously agreed on repo rate, but not on accommodative stance: Minutes



Team Absolute | New Delhi

To support the economic recovery, the six-member Monetary Policy Committee of the Reserve Bank of India had unanimously voted to retain the repo rate at its last meeting.

However, not all members were in agreement for maintaining the accommodative stance. According to the minutes of the MPC meet which took place from February 8 to 10, all six members of the MPC unanimously voted to retain the RBI's repo rate, or short-term lending rate, for commercial banks, at 4 per cent.

Likewise, the reverse repo rate was kept unchanged at 3.35 per cent, and the margin-

al standing facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate at 4.25 per cent.

On the subject of retaining the accommodative stance, all members except Prof Jayanth R. Varma voted to maintain it. The Reserve Bank's MPC minutes, released on Thursday, quoted RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das as saying: "Amidst growing divergence in policy responses on the global front, our monetary policy should remain attuned to the evolving domestic inflation and growth dynamics. Despite recovery in 2021-22, real GDP is only marginally higher than the pre-pandemic level with private consumption still trailing its 2019-20 level."

"Inflation pressures in India continue to emanate largely from supply side factors, and the recent print also reflects adverse base effects. The expected moderation in inflation trajectory over the next financial year provides room for monetary policy to remain accommodative."

Besides, Das said that economic recovery from the pandemic remains incomplete and uneven and continued support from various policies remains crucial for a sustained recovery.

RBI Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra said: "To sum up, economic activity in India appears to have resiliently withstood the third wave, but messages from incoming high frequency indicators are mixed."

# Priyanka Gandhi slams politics of hate, use of religion

GAURA (UP) | Agencies

Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday hit out at the politics of hate and use of religion and caste in politics, saying the time has come to change the narrative.

Talking to IANS while campaigning in Gaura Assembly constituency in Uttar Pradesh, she said: "I am trying to send across the message that politics should not be based on hatred and violence and time has come for a new kind of politics which should work to address the problems of the people."

Attacking BJP and other political parties, Gandhi said: "The people are suffering because of politics of caste and religion and this type of politics only benefits a few political parties and never serves the interests of the common people."

"The political leaders should work to provide solution to the people's problems," she added.

Priyanka Gandhi was speaking in context of the viral video in which she was seen throwing flowers on the people returning from BJP rally and later distributed party manifestos to them. The viral video has been widely appre-



ciated and complimented on the social media for not showing any prejudice towards the opponent.

Earlier she had exchanged wishes with SP chief Akhilesh Yadav and RLD's Jayant Chowdhary when they came across each other in Bulandshahr.

# INDIA'S VACCINE COVERAGE VERY IMPRESSIVE: BILL GATES

HYDERABAD | Agencies

Microsoft Co-founder and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Co-chair Bill Gates was all praise for India for development, manufacturing and distribution of Covid-19 vaccines and termed the country's vaccine coverage as "very impressive".

He said that the Gates Foundation is working with its partners in India not just for Covid vaccines but using new platforms like mRNA to make vaccines for diseases like HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria.

Speaking virtually at BioAsia 2022 during a fireside chat with Telangana's Industries and Information Technology Minister K. T. Rama Rao on Thursday, he noted that India stood out for two things - creating great vaccines with global partners including Gates Foundation, and getting those vaccines out.

He said companies like Serum, Bharat Biotech, Biological E and many Indian partners really stepped up and they did fantastic job.

"India's vaccine coverage is very



impressive even better than most rich countries. This is quite phenomenal. The design of vaccines, manufacturing and distribution of vaccines all of that handled well and that ended up saving massive number of lives," he said. The philanthropic billionaire said in future, Gates Foundation would like to work with partners to make vaccines even faster and have even better vaccines that could avoid breakthrough cases. "We have a research agenda with our partners in India not just for Covid vaccines but also for creating new platforms including m-RNA and building up capacity as a standby for future pandemics. The new platforms can also

be used to get vaccines for some of the most difficult diseases like HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria," he said. Replying to a query from the minister, Gates said the world learnt a lot during this pandemic. "The speed with which we responded was not as fast as it would have been ideal. Getting diagnostic capacity up and quarantine people when the level of infection was low...only few countries like Australia did that. On the other hand, miraculous things happened. Development of vaccines is really incredible."

Gates, who had predicted the pandemic in 2015, said the last gigantic pandemic was almost 100 years ago

but it won't be long until the next one breaks. "It won't necessarily be a coronavirus or even flu. It is likely to be respiratory virus with all human travel we have it can spread in such a rapid way," he said while revealing that he is writing a book which deals with this in detail.

He, however, next pandemic won't be like this. He said in this pandemic millions of lives were lost, health system was disrupted and economies suffered. "We need to be better whether it's lives and economies and make sure this does not happen."

"We do need to get the world to spend more on R&D infectious diseases in some rich countries are sometimes ignored because the disease burden is quite modest compared to cancer, heart disease and others. This pandemic reminder we have to go back and do a better job to improve health equity," Gates said. He noted that India is in transition as it has some of diseases of rich countries which are becoming a challenge and still some infectious diseases. He said innovators all over in India see this as an opportunity.

# EC inactive on hate speeches, BJP enacting autocratic laws: CPI-M

AGARTALA | Agencies

CPI-M General Secretary Sitaram Yechury said on Thursday that the Election Commission is not taking action on rampant hate speeches against the minorities in different parts of the country, while the Supreme Court is not resolving the cases for more than three years against the abrogation of Article 370 from the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The CPI-M leader said that when the Election Commission did not act as per the law against hate speeches, and when vital cases are pending before the Supreme Court for years, the BJP government forcefully passed anti-people laws in the Parliament where it is a



majority.

"People are the owners of the public sector undertakings (PSUs) and crucial national assets. The Prime Minister and other ministers are the managers of these national properties. But the managers, without consulting the owners, are selling off national assets, including ports, airports and oil setor

infrastructure to their few industrialist friends," the Left leader said while addressing a public rally in Agartala.

The mega rally, which was held in connection with the two-day 23rd CPI-M state conference, was organised for the first time in four years after the Left party was voted out of Tripura by the BJP in the March 2018 elections.

# BENGAL GUV DHANKHAR SUMMONS ASSEMBLY SESSION AT 2 AM ON MARCH 7

Kolkata: In an unusual development, West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday summoned the Budget session of the Assembly at 2 am on March 7.

However, the Governor made it clear that he only accepted the Cabinet decision to summon the Assembly session at such an odd hour.

"Summoning WBLA Invoking Article 174 (1) of Constitution, accepting Cabinet Decision, Assembly has been summoned to meet on March 07, 2022 at 2.00 A.M. Assembly meeting after midnight at 2.00 A.M. is unusual and history of sorts in making, but that is Cabinet Decision," Dhankhar tweeted.

He also shared the order of him summoning the Assembly. The Governor said that he found the timing of the Assembly odd and urged the Chief Secretary to meet him to discuss the issue.



# 'Day-light robbery', Siddaramaiah slams disinvestment of banks

Bengaluru | Agencies

Karnataka Opposition leader Siddaramaiah on Thursday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, strongly objecting to the proposal to sell public sector banks as part of disinvestment programme.

"The hurry to disinvest banks is worrying and is backed by an unfounded economic approach. Through disinvestment of banks, the BJP government is executing day-light robbery of common man," he said.

"The recent announcement by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to sell public sector banks as part of disinvestment programme, has sent ripples across the nation, raising eyebrows among economists, political leaders and also common man. The decision lacks exhaustive research, consensus among banking professionals, experts and bank employees, and the analysis of the outcome. The decision stems more from the failure of the government to increase revenue for the last 8 years, rather than the structural need to disinvest," he said.



He further explained that, public sector banks in India have a rich, inspiring and progressive history - contributing to the development of every individual and enterprise. Banks are an important link between people and the economy. It gave economic independence to the common man. This was possible only because of nationalisation of banks in 1969 by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, he added.

# ARMS, AMMUNITION RECOVERED NEAR INTERNATIONAL BORDER IN JAMMU AFTER DRONE ACTIVITY

Jammu: Hours after the Border Security Force (BSF) troopers fired at a drone along the International Border in J&K on Thursday, police recovered three remote controlled Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), six grenades and a pistol besides other ammunition in R.S. Pura area of Jammu. "On the basis of inputs regarding drone activity and dropping of arms and ammunition by Pakistan based militant outfits LeT/TRF on the behest of Pak agency ISI in R.S. Pura, Amia area, special search operation was launched by police including SOG." During the search operation three boxes of the arms ammunition which were dropped through drone during night hours were recovered by the search party from the Treva village of Amia/R.S. Pura," police sources said.

The arms, ammunition and explosive recovered during the search operation include three remote controlled IEDs, as many detonators, 3 explosive bottles, one bundle of Cordtex wire, two timers of IEDs, one pistol, two magazines, six grenades and 70 rounds.

# HIJAB ROW: SIKH GIRL ASKED TO REMOVE TURBAN

BENGALURU | Agencies

Amid crisis related to wearing of hijab in classrooms, an Amritdhari (baptised) Sikh girl was asked to remove her turban in the reputed Mount Carmel PU College here in accordance with the February 10 High Court's interim order. Some parents of the college also complained of being targeted after their daughters were asked to remove the hijab.

The authorities are now crossing their fingers over the turn of events on Thursday, as the sensitive issue could spread more and to other colleges as well in the state capital.

Though colleges across the state witnessed widespread agitations, protests regarding denial of permission to attend classes with hijab, the agitations so far had not touched Bengaluru in a major way. The Special bench of the High Court has made it clear on Wednesday that no religious symbols are allowed in the classrooms in PU as well as graduation colleges



until the matter is disposed of.

Meanwhile, the college authorities of Mount Carmel PU College asked a Sikh girl student to remove her turban to follow the High Court order. The authorities also mailed about it to her father. The girl was asked to remove her turban on February 16, but she did not agree.

The school authorities informed the father of the Sikh girl about the situation and her family informed the college that she would not take off her turban and they would seek a legal opinion on the issue. The education department maintains that the High Court interim order does not talk about turbans.

# UP FARMER FOUND DEAD IN FIELD, 3 BOOKED

Kasganj: A 52-year-old farmer was found dead, with his throat slit, in a potato field at the Baisora Bujurg village in Kasganj. The victim, Horilal Jatav, was unmarried and used to sleep in his field to protect crops from being destroyed by stray cattle, said his family members.

The body has been sent for post-mortem.

Family members of the deceased alleged that the gram Pradhan and two others were responsible for his murder because of a land dispute.

Superintendent of Police (SP) Rohan P. Botre said, "On the basis of a complaint received from the family of the deceased farmer, an FIR has been registered against the gram pradhan, his father, and brother under IPC section 302 (murder).

# SEX RACKET OPERATING FROM SPA BUSTED, 3 ARRESTED

Gurugram: Three people, including a spa operator, have been arrested for allegedly operating a sex racket from a spa in Sector-31 market in Gurugram, police said on Thursday. Following a tip-off, a policeman, acting as a decoy customer, visited Lotus Spa late on Wednesday night and found the operator of the spa involved in sex trade.

On being informed, a joint team of the crime branch Sector-31, woman police station sector-51 and Sector-40 police station raided the spa and nabbed three people.

The arrested were identified as Spa operator Abhinav and two clients Dinesh and Harpreet. Deepak, the spa owner, is yet to be arrested. At the time of the raid, a room in the spa centre was occupied where a woman and man were found in an objectionable condition," the police said.

"Based on the information, a police team reached the spot and arrested the culprits red-handed while soliciting sex. Police have arrested an operator and two customers," said Kuldeep Singh, station house officer (SHO) of Sector-40 police station. During investigation, Abhinav disclosed that he used to take 10 per cent as commission from the spa owner. The arrested have been booked under different sections of the Immoral Trafficking Act and an FIR has been registered against them at the Sector-40 police station.





# MAKE YOUR BIRTHDAY MEANINGFUL BY PLANTING SAPPLINGS: CHIEF MINISTER

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that tree plantation is necessary to reduce the temperature of the atmosphere. Due to climate change and global warming, the temperature of the earth will increase by 2 degrees centigrade because of which glaciers will melt, sea level will rise and rainfall will be irregular. One of the effective means of avoiding these hazards is tree plantation. We have to make tree plantation an integral part of our life. We must plant saplings in the memory of family members and on every happy occasion. Activities such as making giving bouquets, garlanding and putting up hoardings on birthdays are futile. By planting a tree, birthdays will be more meaningful. With this, we will be offering something to the earth, remembering the day we have come into the world. It will be an expression of love for our earth. Along with this, activities like social service, helping the underprivileged on birthdays etc. should also be encouraged. These activities will give a meaningful shape to our birthday.

Chouhan along with social organizations was addressing a tree plantation programme in the ABD area of Taty Tope Nagar in Bhopal. A pledge was taken by Chief Minister Chouhan to plant saplings every



day in Amarkantak on the occasion of Narmada Jayanti on February 19, 2021. In the sequence of this resolution, saplings were planted by many organizations along with Chief Minister. Tree plantation was done by the representatives of these institutions in the programme organized today. Chouhan planted five saplings including Peepal. Under the leadership of Chief

Minister 425 saplings were planted simultaneously by various social organizations under the resolve to serve nature. Chouhan released the book "Shiv Vatika Prakriti Seva Ka Sankalp" focusing on the plantation done since February 19, 2021 in order of his resolve. He also reviewed the exhibition focused on the saplings planted throughout the year. Chouhan also unveiled the

Environment Resolution Plaque. He met the members of voluntary organizations who had come to plant trees.

Chouhan said that the world cannot move on without trees. If the environment is to be saved, then the society must also come forward. I started planting saplings every day from Amarkantak on February 19, 2021 on Narmada Jayanti. I have been planting saplings every day from wherever I am. Now I consider these plants like my family. Planting trees creates a feeling of closeness and affection. I feel incomplete on the day I do not plant any sapling. Many organizations joined in the year-long tree plantation campaign. It became clear that many people are doing exemplary work at the field level in Bhopal. Amazing work is being done in the field of environment, education, health, cleanliness, child welfare, women empowerment and self-reliance. From the activities conducted by social and voluntary organizations, it seems that with the cooperation of the institutions, the state can be taken forward and the work of public welfare can be expanded. Chouhan said that everyone expresses concern for the environment, the society will also have to make continuous efforts to some environment. We must make planting saplings a habit. It will not only give us satisfaction but also to inspire others.

## THERE WILL BE WONDERFUL LOOK OF CITY OF MAHAKAL ON DEEPOTSAV: CM

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that Bhagwan Mahakaleshwars city will definitely be aglow during the festival of lights on the occasion of Mahashivratri. The festival of Mahashivratri will be celebrated in a grand manner. On this day the whole city will be lit with earthen lamps.

Museum during his stay in Ujjain on Thursday in the city and sought information about the Deepotsav to be celebrated on the upcoming Mahashivratri festival. Through a presentation, Collector Ashish Singh apprised that the district administration is holding regular meetings from time to time for discussion on the preparations for the upcoming festival of Mahashivratri. There is a lot of enthusiasm among the people of the city for the Deepotsav. All social organizations are also extending special support. During the Deepotsav, lamps will be lit in the main ghats of the city as well as in the main commercial areas. Two persons each will be assigned the work of lighting per 200 diyas. Preparations are being made by the district administration to create a world record of lighting about 12 lakh diyas during this period. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Science and Technology Minister Omprakash Sakhelecha, Higher Education Minister Mohan Yadav, MP Anil Firojia, MLAs, public representatives, dignitaries and officials were present.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that Bhagwan Mahakaleshwars city will definitely be aglow during the festival of lights on the occasion of Mahashivratri. The festival of Mahashivratri will be celebrated in a grand manner. On this day the whole city will be lit with earthen lamps. Chouhan visited the auditorium of Triveni

## Countrys First Government Womens Cricket Academy Will Open In Shivpuri

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Sports and Youth Welfare Minister Yashodhara Rajee Scindia has decided to open a women's cricket academy for the young cricket lover daughters of the state. The country's first government women's cricket academy will be opened in Shivpuri. This will be the 11th academy of the state. So far athletics, shooting, horse riding, water sports, martial arts, men's hockey, women's

hockey, badminton, archery and men's cricket academy are running in Madhya Pradesh.

The talent search for Madhya Pradesh State Women's Cricket Academy will start from February 28. Players between the ages of 14 and 21 can participate. The first talent search for the academy will be held in Indore on February 28 and March 1.

Players from all the districts of Indore and Ujjain divisions can participate in

this trial. Talent search will be held in Bhopal on March 2 and 3 for the districts of Bhopal, Narmadapuram and Sagar divisions, on March 4 and 5 in Jabalpur for the districts of Jabalpur division and on March 7 and 8 in Shivpuri for the districts of Gwalior and Chambal divisions.

The facilities of education, accommodation, food, training kit are provided free of cost to the selected players in all the academies by the Sports Department.

## NEED TO FEEL THE PAIN OF SICKLE CELL ANEMIA (HEMOGLOBINOPATHY) PATIENTS

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel has said that the pain of Sickle Cell Anemia patients must be felt with full sensitivity and all measures should be taken for its prevention and treatment. "People will bless you, parents of those who become healthy due to your efforts will also be indebted to you. Being the Governor, I request you not to be negligent in the treatment of this disease.

Patel was taking a joint review meeting of the Hemoglobinopathy Prevention and Treatment Mission in Jhabua and Alirajpur districts at Jhabua on Thursday.

Patel said that the mission would be run as a pilot project in Jhabua and Alirajpur districts and efforts should be made to prevent and treat this disease with utmost seriousness within the next six months. He directed that every pregnant woman and



child should be compulsorily tested for Sickle Cell. If pregnant women are diagnosed with Sickle Cell Anemia, the unborn babies should also be tested. Patel directed that efforts should be made to eradicate Sickle Cell Anemia from its very roots with

the collective efforts of Health Department and AYUSH Department. It is necessary to be aware and have a positive attitude towards this disease. The disease should not be hidden, it should be checked and treated.

In the meeting, MP Guman Singh said that information regarding this disease should be provided to the people so that patients be treated. It should be publicized in the local language. MLA Kantilal Bhuria also expressed his views. National Secretary of NESCO, Gautam Dongre, who came from Nagpur, told that both his daughter (17) and son (12) are suffering from Sickle Cell Anaemia. As the disease is very painful, it should be investigated and treated promptly, his organization is working in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra in this direction. A separate WhatsApp group has been created in which experts are available for consultation.

During the meeting, Governor Patel distributed mobile phones to seven Anganwadi workers in the National Poshan Mission. Governor also planted a Tulsi sapling in the Collectorate premises.

## Main ceremony of Rozgar Diwas in Shahdol on 25

Team Absolute | Bhopal

State level programme of statewide Rozgar Diwas (employment day) will be held at Shahdol district headquarters on February 25 at 1 pm. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will benefit the beneficiaries of many schemes including new entrepreneurs by distributing sanction letters in the programme.

Commissioner Industries and Secretary MSME P Narhari informed that in the Rozgar Diwas programme, loans will be distributed by the Chief Minister to the beneficiaries selected in self-employment schemes. During this, distribution of Covid-19 Mukhya Mantri ex-gratia assistance also at the local level, distribution of tricycles with batteries to the Divyang will be done and vehicles will be distributed to the benefi-

ciaries under the Mukhya Mantri Ration Aapke Gram Yojana. In the programme Panchayat and Rural Development, Urban Development and Housing, MSME Department, Khadi and Village Industries Commission and State Level Bankers Committee will mainly participate. There will also be a virtual dialogue of the Chief Minister with one beneficiary each of selected districts Jhabua, Damoh, Bhand, Dindori. District level programmes will also be held in all the districts, where loan sanction letters will be given to the selected beneficiaries by public representatives.

Under various self-employment schemes, loans worth Rs. 2776 crore 36 lakh 81 thousand have been sanctioned/distributed for employment to 5 lakh 2 thousand 685 youths since January 12.

## Bride terms bridegroom 'mentally ill,' refuses to marry him

**▶ A WOMAN IN REWA DISTRICT REFUSED TO MARRY THE BRIDEGROOM, RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WEDDING RITUALS, CITING HIS MENTAL CONDITION. NOT ONLY THAT, THE BRIDE'S FAMILY MEMBERS EVEN ALLEGEDLY BEAT UP THE BRIDEGROOM AND THE 'BARAATIS' AFTER TAKING THEM HOSTAGE.**

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A woman in Rewa district refused to marry the bridegroom, right in the middle of the wedding rituals, citing his mental condition. Not only that, the bride's family members

even allegedly beat up the bridegroom and the 'baraatis' after taking them hostage.

A video of the incident has gone viral in which the bridegroom is being seen being dragged by hair.

His side alleged that the bride's family took them hostage and beat them up following a dispute.

The 'baraat' from Manikwar village had arrived at Vanpadhar village under Maugani police station area. Amidst the matrimonial rituals, a dispute erupted over the behaviour of 'baraatis' and the girl refused to get married.

According to the police, the girl raised questions on the boy's mental status and refused to marry him.

The dispute erupted after some of the 'baraatis', during a traditional ritual in which the groom's relatives throw 'batasha' (a kind of sweet) on the bride's relatives, allegedly misbehaved

with women of the other side.

The dispute escalated and the girl's relatives allegedly started beating the 'baraatis'.

Video of the bridegroom and his companions being beaten has gone viral on social media.

As per reports, one of the baratis rushed to the police station and informed them about the incident after which police reached the spot and freed the 'baraatis'.

Additional Superintendent of Police, Shiv Kumar told reporters that the girl's family members alleged that the boy was behaving "improperly" during the rituals. It was also alleged that the boy's family hid the fact that his "mental condition is not good". There was a dispute over this and the marriage did not take place. At the same time, the boy's father accused the bride's family of taking them hostage and beating the 'baraatis'.

## Sanchi Milk Helpline Started For Milk Producers and Consumers

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Additional Chief Secretary Animal Husbandry and Dairying JN Kansotia launched an integrated call-centre "Sanchi Milk Helpline" to solve the problems of the milk producing farmers and consumers associated with the milk fedraion of the state. Consumers and milk producer farmers can use "Sanchi Milk Helpline" number 0755-4355800 to register complaints.

The helpline will function in two shifts from 6 am to 2 pm and from 2 pm to 10 pm. One nodal officer each has been appointed at the milk fedraions level to supervise the grievance redressal work.

MP State Co-operative Dairy Federation's Managing Director Shamim Uddin

informed that transparency will come in the entire functioning of dughd sanghs through the helpline. The problems of committee members, consumers and people related to Sanchi will be resolved quickly and transparently and effectively. Sanchi consumers will be able to solve problems related to availability, quality and parLOUR of milk and milk products at the earliest. Similarly, problems like payment to members of milk cooperative society, error in marking of fat and SNF during milk collection, rate of milk, availability of ghee, animal feed, training and milk bill payment to societies, maintenance of electronic equipment, tanker operation, collection vehicle, bulk milk cooler maintenance etc. can also be resolved through the helpline.

## GADKARI AND CHOUHAN PERFORM ABHISHEK AND OFFER PRAYERS TO LORD MAHAKALESHWAR



Bhopal: Union Road, Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari and Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan performed abhishek and puja-archana at Lord Mahakaleshwar Temple in Ujjain today. The priests of Mahakaleshwar temple, Pt. Pradeep Guru, Pt. Ashish Guru, Pt. Sanjay Guru and other priests conducted the abhishek and puja-archana.

Chouhan honoured Union Minister Gadkari by presenting him a shawl and memento on behalf of Mahakaleshwar Temple Management Committee. Meanwhile, Minister for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Science and Technology Omprakash Sakhelecha, Higher Education Minister Mohan Yadav, MP Anil Firojia along with MLAs and public representatives were present.

## Tourism Cities of Khajuraho and Orchha Captivate Ambassadors and High Commissioners

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Ambassadors and High Commissioners of Korea, Argentina, Vietnam, Brunei, Finland, Malaysia, Thailand and Laos along with their families attended the 48th Khajuraho Dance Festival in the world tourism city of Khajuraho on a special invitation from the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Department. While enjoying the tourism and culture of the state, everyone got to know the history of Khajuraho and Orchha temples and other major destinations. They also enjoyed various cultural programmes during Jungle Safari in Panna Tiger Reserve and Khajuraho Dance Festival. The grand dance festival, attractive temples of Khajuraho and Orchha and various tourism activities captivated the ambassadors and high commissioners. Argentina's Ambassador Hugo Javier Gobbi told that the experience of Khajuraho Dance Festival was wonderful. The melodious music of the ceremony, the grandeur of the Khajuraho temples and the beautiful dance made it an unforgettable moment for my family. During the Orchha visit, there was an opportunity to understand the architecture of the temples closely. Along with this, he was overwhelmed by the local culture of Madhya Pradesh, the liveliness and mutual harmony of its residents through rural home-stay and village tour. He thanked the tourism department for



providing this amazing travel experience.

Appreciating the art and beauty of dance in Indian culture, Thailand's Ambassador Pattarat Hongtong said that the Khajuraho Dance Festival is a suitable platform for talents from across the country and abroad. It is a wonderful feeling to see the stage decorated with lights amidst the temples, energetic music and the artists swaying together on various instruments. He said that seeing the grandeur of Lord Rama and Laxmi Temple in Orchha and the religious rituals that took place added to his memorable moments. Watching the sunrise and sunset while passing through the wheat fields felt like a cinematic-view during the bicycle tour. The hospitality services of the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Department and the friendly behaviour of the local people made him feel a sense of belonging, which made his visit even more special. Brunei High Commissioner Dato Alaihuddin Mohamad Taha

described the Khajuraho dance festival and the visit to Orchha very interesting. He said that he would like to come here again and stay for a few days to learn about the surrounding areas and the local culture. He said that after going back, I would also advise the residents of Laos and tourists to visit Khajuraho and Orchha once. Shri Taha's wife said that it is difficult to enjoy so many activities together in one trip, including bicycle tour, rural home-stay, museum tour with dance and music amidst the historical buildings of Madhya Pradesh. She was glad that both of them became a part of this journey. She thanked the Government of Madhya Pradesh and the Department of Tourism for organising this exciting and wonderful journey.

The wife of Malaysia's High Commissioner Hamid Abdul Hidayat during a bicycle tour in Khajuraho said that Khajuraho is clean and full of greenery. The pleasant morning here has its own

bliss. She felt very good here. She said that she is fortunate to have got a chance to be a part of this wonderful journey. cultural and tourism activities in Orchha. The Tourism Board took ambassadors and high commissioners on a visit to the temples of Khajuraho with information about their history and a tour of Kutni Island, safari in Panna forests. Along with a visit to the Ram Raja Temple of Orchha, Jahangir Palace, Chaturbhuj Temple and Laxmi Narayan Temple, they got introduced to the rural tourism and local culture in the home-stay developed in Ladpura Khas village and also experienced the rural culture of the state. During the discussion between the Principal Secretary Culture and Tourism Sheo shekhar Shukla and the ambassadors, all the guests described the Khajuraho and Orchha itinerary as very effective and beneficial. All the ambassadors also assured that they would promote tourism destinations of Madhya Pradesh in their respective countries and encourage the tourists and travel operators of their country to enhance bilateral cooperation. He said that the initiative of the Madhya Pradesh government to promote tourism by organising these world-class cultural festivals is commendable. Inviting international guests to perform various tourism activities in the state and introducing them to their country, region and culture will definitely spread the tourism activities of the state in the country and abroad and attract tourists.



EDITOR'S SPECS

## 'Ram' over 'kaam' in Ayodhya

With Ayodhya set to face its first election after the construction of Ram temple began, a high voltage campaign is being witnessed in the holy city which is revolving around 'ram' rather than 'kaam (work)'. The BJP has gone into an overdrive to assert the fact that it is responsible for the Ram temple construction while the opposition is driving home the point that the temple is being built on Supreme Court orders. Top BJP leaders who have campaigned in Ayodhya are underlining the fact that the temple construction was possible only because of the Modi government. They claim to have ushered in an era of 'Ram Rajya' and cite the 'Deepotsav' programme as an example. BJP MLA Ved Prakash Gupta, is a local businessman. He is seeking re-election in the name of 'Ram'. Gupta hopes to ride high on the wave of Ram and is claiming credit for temple construction. He is confident of his victory and says that the holy city is witnessing world class development which will put it on the global map. Some of his over-enthusiastic supporters even started distributing packets of 'Ram Raj' - soil from the temple construction site-but were later stopped. Since 1991, the BJP has lost Ayodhya Sadar seat only once in 2012 when Tej Narain Pandey of Samajwadi Party had defeated its candidate, Lallu Singh. Pandey is again the SP candidate from here and his narrative revolves around 'kaam' rather than 'Ram'. Pandey, a former student leader, is trying to cash in on the local resentment prevailing due to the proposed demolition of hundreds of shops and houses for road widening. He is also banking on the support of 62,000 Brahmin voters and 37,000 Yadav voters to give him a head start. Ayodhya goes to polls on March 3.

# PAKISTAN AND CHINA MOVE TO TAKEOVER GILGIT-BALTISTAN

Dr Amjad Ayub Mirza

Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan is said to use the occasion of Pakistan Day, observed each year on March 23, to make a public announcement that Pakistan occupied territory of Gilgit-Baltistan has been incorporated into its federal system as her fifth provisional province.

Gilgit-Baltistan, formerly named the Northern Areas, was only allowed to have its own assembly in 2009. The Gilgit-Baltistan assembly is controlled by the state of Pakistan from Rawalpindi where the chief of Pakistan army General Qamar Javed Bajwa has his headquarters.

Eminent PoJK historian and political commentator Dr Shabbir Chaudhary who lives in exile in the UK writes in his book titled 'Legal Status of Jammu and Kashmir: "everything in ...Gilgit- Baltistan is controlled by Islamabad. Even the school curriculum is written by them, and our children are not taught history of Jammu Kashmir." (p. 148)

Gilgit-Baltistan was part of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir until November 1, 1947 when Major Alexander William Brown, the former political agent of the Gilgit agency, launched a coup against Maharaja Hari Singh and arrested Governor Brigadier Ghansara Singh. It was Major Brown who actually replaced the state flag with the Pakistani flag and announced its accession to Pakistan.

He had no power to take that decision, yet as Indian troops were pushing the Pakistani invading army out of Kashmir in October 1947, Brown acted in desperation in order to deny India the passage to central Asia.

Currently, Gilgit-Baltistan and her dry port of Sost at the Pak-China border right up to the sea port of Gwadar in Balochistan are key to China's economic expansionist design. The militant insurgency in Balochistan has brought the China-Pakistan-Economic-Corridor (CPEC) to a standstill. A massive military operation allegedly supervised by the Chinese PLA is under way to crush Baloch rebels.

It is in this backdrop that China has been exerting pressure on the Pakistan government to make sure that CPEC is made foolproof in



Gilgit-Baltistan. Pakistan's solution is to make PoGB into its 5th province and take full control of the administrative matters along with intensifying its plunder of our natural resources.

Under the current circumstances granting mining licenses to non-residents in PoGB has become a great cause for concern for locals who have been protesting for months and demand cancellation of any mining licenses issued to aliens.

This hampers the loot of natural resources of Gilgit-Baltistan by Chinese companies, most of which are state owned. By incorporating PoGB into Pakistan's federal set up it will become possible to impose direct rule from Islamabad and any one could be granted a mining license.

Another aspect of Pakistan's attempt to incorporate PoGB into Pakistan stem from China's need to gain access to the clean water from our glaciers. In a book titled 'Kashmir the Untold Story' co-authored by Iqbal Chand Malhotra and Maroof Raza they reveal that China's major rivers Yangtze and Yellow river

are polluted hence they cannot be used for the purpose of manufacturing semiconductors.

Semiconductors are used extensively in mobile phones, cars, fighter jets, satellites and even naval ships. Hence whoever will dominate the manufacture of semiconductors in the world market will rule the digital world. Chinese strategists were interested in Shaksgam valley, which is home to over 242 glaciers'. (Malhotra, Raza, p 154). It is therefore important for China to control the waters flowing into PoGB.

By incorporating PoGB, Pakistan will act in clear violation of the UN resolutions that have designated PoGB as disputed territory. This would give the Indian government the right to challenge Pakistan in the International Court of Justice.

Recent decision made by Pakistan to make PoGB her 5th province has generated a new wave of protests and discontent in the occupied region. Political leaders who traditionally side with Pakistan-based

political parties such as the Pakistan People's Party and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz have also come out in protest warning Islamabad and Rawalpindi alike of grave consequences if such a move is made on March 23.

The question is, can Pakistan afford such an adventure that on one hand becomes a genuine reason for revolt by the locals and on the other hand paint Pakistan as a state that has committed yet another serious violation of the dictates of the United Nations.

The move to take over Gilgit-Baltistan by Pakistan and China may not be a pleasant one after all.

(Dr Amjad Ayub Mirza is an author and a human rights activist from Pakistan occupied Jammu Kashmir. He currently lives in exile in the UK. The views expressed are personal)

## international

# RUNNING OUT OF FOOD & MONEY, INDIAN STUDENTS QUEUE UP OUTSIDE EMBASSY IN KIEV

New Delhi | Kiev

Amidst the prevailing tension, the Indian students stranded in Ukraine are left with no choice but to queue up outside the Indian Embassy in Kiev seeking the authorities' help as they ran out of food and money.

The Russian military actions in Ukraine have triggered panic among all sections, including students from India. Speaking to IANS, a student said, "We urged the embassy officials in Kiev to allow us to sit inside as the temperature outside is two degrees Celsius and the students are standing since morning, but the authorities advised us to find hotels." Stranded students also sent a video from outside the embassy in which some officials are seen explaining the situation to the students.

Divyanshu Gehlot, president of the Indian student at Ivano-Frankivsk National Medical University, said, "The situation here is really bad. Bombs are exploding in every 15 minutes since morning. We plead with folded hands to the Indian Embassy and



Government of India to get us out of here. We ran out of food and there is no money in ATM." Apart from Divyanshu, there are many other Indian students who are constantly seeking help from the government. The Indian Embassy has issued advisory for students and citizens living in Ukraine urging them not to move out and stay wherever they are. The embassy has also asked the students and citizens in Kiev to stay in touch with the embassy via its official social media handles.

"As you are aware, Ukraine is under martial law, which has made movement difficult. For those students who are stranded without a place of stay in Kyiv, Mission is in touch with establishments to put them up. We are aware that certain places are hearing air sirens/bomb warnings. In case you are faced with such a situation, google map has a list of nearby bomb shelters, many of which are located in underground metros," reads the advisory issued to Indian nationals and stu-

dents in Ukraine.

"While Mission is identifying possible solution to the situation, please be aware of your surroundings, be safe, do not leave your homes unless necessary and carry your documents with you at all times," it added. "After waking up in the morning, we first collected water and food items. We used to bring food and other articles for a week. But now nothing is available here. We ran out of flour, rice and cooking oil. That's why we brought bread and milk. There are long queues outside ATMs and banks. Residents of Ukraine are going to Poland but how do we go? Everyone is terrified," Ritika Nigam, who lives in the city of Ternopil in Ukraine, told IANS.

Earlier, an Air India plane which was sent to bring back students from Kiev, had to return because of missile attacks. Sources in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) have said that the government is reviewing options to evacuate Indians and students via the neighbouring countries like Poland, Hungary, Moldova and Romania but before taking any final decision, the government is evaluating all possible actions.

# RUSSIAN CIVILIAN SHIPS ATTACKED BY UKRAINE MISSILES

New Delhi: The Ukrainian military has damaged two civilian ships in the Sea of Azov using missiles, Russian security service FSB said on Thursday, RT reported.



The attack reportedly injured one person and caused a fire onboard one of the ships.

The border guard division of the FSB's Krasnodar branch identified the ships as oiler 'SGV-Flot' and general cargo ship 'Seraphim Sarovskiy'. The 'SGV-Flot' was the one that was hit. It said the injury sustained by a crew member was "serious", but the fire was extinguished. Both attacks came from the port city of Mariupol, the FSB claimed, the report said. Russian maritime traffic authorities had earlier banned all travel in the Sea of Azov due to the country's ongoing military operation in Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin said the operation was necessary to "demilitarise" and "denazify" the country. He claimed that Russia had to act due to a growing threat to its national security posed by NATO's presence in Ukraine, and to stop attacks by Ukrainian troops against the separatist regions in the east, which Moscow recognised as sovereign states on Monday.

# Ukraine President likens Russian attack to Nazi invasion

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky announced in a televised statement on Thursday that his nation has cut all diplomatic relations with Russia



Germany attacked Soviet Union during World War II, Zelensky said. Russia is walking "the path of evil," he added. Zelensky also appealed to the Russian people to oppose what is happening in Ukraine with mass protests, as he briefly switched to Russian language at this point of his speech. He asked the people of Ukraine to support the national armed forces, including by taking up arms and preparing for a fight. He promised to lift personal sanctions, which he had imposed previously, from anyone willing to defend Ukraine, RT reported. The Ukrainian leader called on the country's media to

support national unity by conducting "information mobilisation". Zelensky asked the media "to report how strongly our military is fighting". He said there is a shortage of such information and that the troops need support from the public. The President claimed that "the enemy has suffered serious losses" and the damage will grow further. Zelensky said his government is "already distributing weapons" to every one willing to defend Ukraine's sovereignty, as he called on all able-bodied persons to report for duty at the mobilisation centres. He stressed that under the circumstances, "there are no opponents among us" and offered to lift personal sanctions, which his government had imposed on some political opponents, provided they are prepared "to defend our nation with arms," RT reported.

# How online disinformation campaign aided new war narrative for Putin

London | New Delhi

A well-prepared online disinformation campaign on various social media platforms changed the whole narrative around the escalated Russia-Ukraine tensions, aiding Russian President Vladimir Putin's decision to go to war over claims to protect the people "who have been suffering from abuse and genocide by the Ukrainian regime for eight years," reports said. A report in France24 has detailed how days after the Kremlin slammed Western "hysteria" over the Russian military buildup around Ukraine, the messaging from Moscow changed, following Putin's decision to recognise the pro-Russian, self-declared republics of Donetsk and Luhansk in Eastern Ukraine. The disinformation posts were first circulated in pro-Russian groups mostly on the encrypted messaging service Telegram, and then relayed by the state and pro-Kremlin media organisations to the world. "Over the past

few days, Russian state media has insisted that Putin has ordered troops on a peace-keeping' mission into eastern Ukraine to prevent what the Russian leader has called a agencide' of Russian-speakers by the government in Kiev," the report mentioned. Some of the disinformation examples were a photo of an alleged Ukrainian armoured vehicle on Russian territory, a video of Ukrainian troops on an "invasion" mission infiltrating Russia, and another clip supposedly showing Ukrainian or Polish "saboteurs" trying to blow up Russian tanks. Fact-checkers have exposed such fake



Bellingcat, was quoted as saying. Some of the footage was shot in early February, while editors added footage and sound from a video shot during a Finnish military exercise in 2010. "The image of an alleged Ukrainian armoured vehicle supposedly advancing into Russian territory was also promptly and effectively debunked," the report said. The

Soviet-era vehicle in the photo does not belong to the Ukrainian arsenal, according to investigators at Oryx, an open-source platform. Another claim that a shell fired from Ukrainian territory destroyed a Russian outpost on the border was supported by video by the FSB, one of Russia's key intelligence services, according to the report. The Conflict Intelligence Team (CIT) analysed the video and found that the closest Ukrainian positions" are located more than 37 kilometres from the impact zone. "We find this 'incident' to be yet another in a string of poorly staged pretexts for a possible operation against Ukraine," CIT said in a tweet. It's not the first time that Putin has used the term "genocide" in Ukraine's context.

"This is what he had already done in 2014 before launching the invasion of Crimea," Stefan Meister, a specialist in Russian security and disinformation at the German Council on Foreign Relations, was quoted as saying.



# MVA, BJP TRADE BARBS AFTER MALIK'S ARREST

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A day after the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) unprecedented arrest of serving Cabinet minister Nawab Malik, the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi and opposition BJP in Maharashtra protested against each other across the state on Thursday. Leaders of the ruling Shiv Sena-Nationalist Congress Party-Congress alliance staged a sit-in near the statue of Mahatma Gandhi outside the Mantralaya here and all over Maharashtra to protest against Malik's arrest and the manner in which the Centre is 'unleashing' central probe agencies to harass and topple non-BJP governments in the country. The BJP leaders, on the other hand, demonstrated in Mumbai, Thane, Pune, Nagpur, Aurangabad and other cities, alleging that Malik has "mafia connections" and he must either resign from the Cabinet or be sacked immediately. The MVA leaders and activists, along with Malik's daughter, Nilofer Malik,

raised slogans slamming the Centre, flaying the 'political vendetta' through the misuse of central probe agencies and harassing leaders to break or bend them to grab power at any cost. "ED Murdabad," "Modi Government Hai, Hai, Modi Government Chor Hai", "Nawab Malik Zindabad" rent the air in Mumbai and other cities as MVA leaders carried banners, placards and posters, vowing "never to bow before the 'tanashahi' of Delhi". State Congress President Nana Patole and Legislative Party leader Balasaheb Thorat said the BJP has no moral right to seek the resignation of Malik, and instead they should demand the sacking of the Union minister whose son crushed farmers under his vehicle in Uttar Pradesh. They pointed out that 'vindictive action' has been taken against Malik in a two-decade-old case, trying to link it with the mafia or the terror attacks 30 years ago. Minister Ashok Chavan pointed out that politics had stooped to a new low with a sitting minister being arrested merely on the basis of suspicions, which is not

only unwarranted, but poses a serious threat to democracy. Those present included Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, ministers like Subhash Desai (Shiv Sena), Jayant Patil, Dilip Walsepatil, Chhagan Bhujbal, Hasan Mushrif, Dhananjay Munde, Jitendra Awhad, Rajesh Tope, Rajendra Shingane, Balasaheb Patil (NCP), Balasaheb Thorat, Ashok Chavan, Vijay Vadetiwar, Sunil Kedar, and Aslam Sheikh (Congress). Ministers of State Satej alias Bunty Patil, KC Padvi, Dattatraya Bharme, Prajakt Tanpure, Aditi Tatkare and Sanjay Bansode also joined the protests. They were joined by MP Supriya Sule, Maharashtra State Commission for Women Chairperson Rupali Chakankar, ex-minister Naseem Khan, Yuvraj Mohite, ex-MPs Bhalchandra Mungekar and Hussain Dalwai, Lokbharati MLA Kapil Patil, Mumbai Congress President Bhai Jagtap, General Secretary Sachin Sawant, and spokesperson Raju Waghmare. Also protesting were scores of MPs, MLAs, MLCs and other office-bearers of all the three parties from across the state, youth,

women and frontline organisations and supporters. Meanwhile, the BJP leaders organised noisy demonstrations at railway stations, bus stations and other public places demanding the resignation of Malik, accusing him of "financing terror operations" through absconding mafia don Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar and his family. The Maharashtra Police maintained tight security at all the government and opposition protest venues, as the MVA grappled with its biggest political crisis after it won the 2019 Assembly elections, and the BJP ogled at its major political opportunity in the past 27 months since the latter lost power. In a shocking pre-dawn operation on Wednesday, the ED picked up Malik from his home and took him to the agency's office around 7.30 am. There, they handed him the probe summons, and after eight hours of interrogation, arrested him on charges of money-laundering arising out of a tainted land deal nearly two decades ago, which was highlighted by the Leader of Opposition, Devendra Fadnavis, last November.

## Maha worries over its students, visitors stuck in war-torn Ukraine

The Maharashtra government expressed concern over the fate of a large number of students, businessmen and tourists from the state who are stranded in Ukraine as Russia launched military operations against that country on Thursday.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra government expressed concern over the fate of a large number of students, businessmen and tourists from the state who are stranded in Ukraine as Russia launched military operations against that country on Thursday. Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has directed the Chief Secretary and others to coordinate with the Ministry of External Affairs on the arrangements being made for the rescue of Indians, particularly people from Maharashtra stuck in Kiev and other cities of Ukraine. "The CM has expressed concern over the safety of the people who have travelled to Ukraine for business, education or tourism purposes. He has directed all concerned officials to keep track of their wellbeing," an official from the CMO told IANS. Earlier, Higher & Technical Education Minister Uday Samant wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, Minister for External Affairs S. Jaishankar and others seeking their urgent intervention to bring back the students trapped there as all commercial flights have been closed. Samant pointed out that there are around 1,200 students from Maharashtra and their lives could be in danger due to non-availability of flights and other resources for survival during the war-crises



that have erupted there. "The Government of India, in the past, has rescued Indians stuck in a similar situation in other countries. It is a kind request to urgently rescue these students and direct the concerned authorities to bring them back safely to the state," Samant said in his letter. Besides Maharashtra other states like Kerala, Telangana, Karnataka and Haryana, have also sent similar appeals to the Centre seeking intervention on priority. An estimated 20,000-plus Indians, mostly students are reported to be stranded in Ukraine, Europe's second largest country as Russia started pounding its former territory with bombs and missiles from Thursday morning.

## Mamata's call to Pawar, an effort to secure support for her nephew: BJP

The BJP has claimed that West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's call to NCP supremo Sharad Pawar in the Nawab Malik case is an effort to secure support for her nephew Abhishek Banerjee, against whom ED investigation is underway.

against whom ED investigation is underway. BJP co-in-charge for West Bengal, Amit Malviya said Banerjee's call to Pawar is not out of principle or for solidarity but a desperate attempt to secure support at a later date. On Wednesday, Chief Minister Banerjee called Pawar after Maharashtra minister and senior NCP leader Nawab Malik was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). "Mamata Banerjee's call to Sharad Pawar is not out of principle or solidarity. It is a desperate attempt to secure support at a later date, given her nephew is under ED scanner, not to forget the dark shadow of post-poll violence that hangs over her, who as CM, oversaw the pogrom," Malviya said. After Malik's arrest, BJP national general secretary and Maharashtra

in-charge CT Ravi tweeted, "NCP leader Nawab Malik arrested by the ED for money laundering. Playing the usual 'Victim Card' will begin now." Leader of Opposition in Maharashtra Devendra Fadnavis termed the matter as 'extremely serious' since the land worth crores of rupees was allegedly grabbed at a throwaway price with persons linked to absconding mafia don Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar, colluding with enemies of the country, and the proceeds were laundered for terror funding and anti-national activities. BJP state President Chandrakant Patil demanded that since Malik has been arrested, he should quit, as also all other ministers facing various allegations should resign from the Cabinet immediately, failing which the BJP would launch an agitation on the streets.

## After Malik arrest Maha BJP chief says more ED probes coming

BJP has demanded the sacking of Nawab Malik from Maharashtra after he was arrested by ED

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A day after the Enforcement Directorate took custody of Maharashtra Minority Affairs Minister Nawab Malik over a case involving money laundering, Maharashtra BJP Chief Chandrakant Patil has claimed that more enquiries from the central agency will be taking place in the coming days. Patil was speaking at a protest held by state BJP leaders demanding the resignation of Malik from the cabinet. After the arrest of Malik, Mumbai saw protests from both sides of the political spectrum in Maharashtra

on Thursday. Leaders from the Shivsena-NCP-Congress alliance which runs The Maha Vikas Aghadi government protested in front of the Mantralaya building (secretariat) against the arrest of Nawab Malik alleging that the move was politically motivated. On the other hand, senior BJP leaders including State President Chandrakant (Dada) Patil, Kirit Somaiya and others took out a protest near Dadar East Railway station demanding the sacking of Malik from the ministry. While speaking to the media during the demonstration, Patil hinted that more enquiries from the ED are yet to come in the next 2 to 3 days. While stating that Nawab Malik's case has proven to be a threat to national security, he demanded the arrest of the Minister.



At the same time, BJP leader Kirit Somaiya released a list of probable leaders from the MVA upon whom ED enquiries could take place. The list includes 12 leaders from Shivsena, Congress and the NCP who have been recently caught in controversies relating to corruption, land grabbing and money laundering. Terming the list as 'MVA's dirty dozen' Somaiyahs called out Anil Parab, Sanjay Raut, Sujet Patkar, Bhavna Gavali, Anand Adsul, Ajit Pawar, Hasan Mushrif, Pratap Sarmaik, Ravindra Waikar and Jitendra Awhad. The other two are Nawab Malik - who was taken in ED custody yesterday and Anil Deshmukh - the ex-home minister

who was arrested in November last year for violating the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The BJP leaders during the protest reiterated their stand that Nawab Malik cannot retain his chair as a minister when serious enquiries are taking place against him. BJP leader Kirit Somaiya has always been on the front to 'expose' scams related to deals, properties held by leaders from the ruling alliance. Earlier this month, Somaiya alleged that Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut has links with Sujet Patkar's company which is allegedly complicit in a 100-crore Covid Centre scam. The ED had already summoned transport minister Anil Parab in the Rs 100 crore extortion case in September 2021. The revenue department had already found the leader's resort illegal and the documents submitted were forged.

# Maharashtra HSC Board Exams Postponed For These Papers

The question paper sets of various subjects of Maharashtra HSC board exams were up in flames Wednesday morning after the truck transporting them from Madhya Pradesh to Maharashtra caught fire in Ahmednagar district.



Team Absolute | Mumbai

A day after question paper sets of Class 12 or HSC final exams were gutted in a fire, the Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education (MSBSHSE) today postponed exams of some papers by a month. Maharashtra HSC exams for second and third language subjects, earlier scheduled for March 5 and 7, will now be conducted on April 5 and 7. According to the board officials, Hindi, German, Japanese, Chinese and Persian language exams

were scheduled on March 5, while exams for Marathi, Gujarati, Kannada, Sindhi, Arabic, Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Punjabi, Bengali, Urdu, French, Spanish and Pali were scheduled on March 7. The question paper sets of various subjects of Maharashtra HSC board exams were up in flames Wednesday morning after the truck transporting them from Madhya Pradesh to Maharashtra caught

fire in Ahmednagar district. The question papers were for the Pune division of the board. The boxes containing question papers were destroyed in the blaze, a police official said. "The truck that caught fire was transporting papers of exams which were to be held on March 5 and 7, and since the confidentiality of these papers has been compromised, we have decided to reschedule these exams. As per the protocol, these papers will have to be reset and reprinted for all nine divisions," MSBSHSE chairperson Sharad Gosavi said. Exams, which were scheduled on March 5, will take place on April 5 and those scheduled on March 7, will take place on April 7, Mr Gosavi added. Maharashtra HSC or Class 12 final exams will begin on March 4 and other papers will be conducted as per schedule. The Maharashtra board has decided to go with offline exams this year, despite a section of students requesting online exams in view of COVID-19. The board has released question banks for Maharashtra SSC and Maharashtra HSC final exams at maa.ac.in.

## Tendulkar to take legal action against use of his 'morphed' images in casino ads

Cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar has expressed shock over his allegedly morphed images being used to endorse a casino and said he will soon be taking legal action against the misuse of his image

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar has expressed shock over his allegedly morphed images being used to endorse a casino and said he will soon be taking legal action against the misuse of his image. Tendulkar took to the social media on Thursday to clarify that he had nothing to do with the advertisements of a casino doing the rounds on the social media, which has his picture. "It has come to my notice that there are multiple ads being shown on social media platforms, with a morphed photo showing me endorsing a casino," Tendulkar said a statement on his Twitter handle. "I have never endorsed gambling, tobacco, or alcohol—directly or indirectly—in an individual capacity. It pains to see that my images are being used to mislead people," Tendulkar, who has always maintained a spotless image,



said in the statement. The former India cricket captain, the most successful batter in international cricket, requested everyone to "remain vigilant about misleading images on social media." "While my legal team will be taking the required action, I felt it was important for me to share this information with everyone," the legendary cricketer said in the statement.

# Malik becomes first serving Maha minister to be held for money laundering

Team Absolute | Mumbai

A special PMLA court in Mumbai on Wednesday remanded Maharashtra minister Nawab Malik to eight-day ED custody till March 3, nearly 15 hours after his pre-dawn dramatic detention, interrogation and arrest in an alleged money-laundering case arising out of a tainted land deal. Malik was produced by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) before the special court eight hours after his detention and arrest on Wednesday evening, following which a furious legal battle ensued for his 14-day remand with the defence team opposing the same. The development gave a massive jolt to the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government as Malik became the first sitting Cabinet minister to be arrested, sending tremors in the political circles. After a series of meetings with top leaders of Shiv Sena-Nationalist Congress Party-Congress, it was decided that irrespective of the court orders, Malik would not be compelled to resign as the Minority Affairs Minister. On Wednesday afternoon, ED Assistant Director Niraj Kumar said in his arrest order that the agency had "reason to believe" that Malik "has been found guilty of an offence punishable under the provisions of PMLA," and accordingly placed him under arrest at 2.45 pm. Shortly after the formal arrest, Malik was whisked away by an ED team to a government hospital for a medical check-up from where he was taken to the designated special PMLA court. Additional Solicitor General Anil Singh represented the ED while senior counsel Amit Desai appeared on Malik's behalf, as the minister's colleagues, political activists and relatives reached the court. While he was escorted out of the ED office



by the CISF, police and ED staff, a grinning Malik in a white kurta-pyjama was seen raising a fist in the air, and declaring: "Jhokenge Nahin, Ladenge Aur Jeetenge" (Will not succumb, will fight and win) to his supporters as he was made to sit in a vehicle. The fast-paced developments started with an ED team along with a CISF team knocking at Malik's home at around 4.30 am and taking him away a couple of hours later for questioning in the 17-year-old Kurla land deal case having a mafia taint, with an alleged money-laundering angle emerging from it. The ED had deployed teams of the CISF and Mumbai Police for the operation even as a

large number of NCP workers staged a noisy protest outside the agency's office since morning to protest against the detention of Malik. Malik, 62, became the first sitting minister and the second senior NCP leader in the MVA government to be arrested by the ED. Former Home Minister Anil Deshmukh was arrested by the ED on November 2, 2021 in alleged corruption and money-laundering cases. Malik's arrest triggered hectic political activity with NCP President Sharad Pawar rushing to meet Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, Home Minister Dilip Walse-Patil, Chhagan Bhujbal Balasaheb Thorat, Ashok Chavan and others in an urgent meeting held on Wednesday evening. The MVA partners and top leaders like Pawar, Jayant Patil, Supriya Sule, Majeed Memon, Chhagan Bhujbal, Vidya Chavan, Sanjay Raut, Kishore Tiwari, Nana Patole, Chavan, Naseem Khan, and others slammed the ED for the action against Malik, saying they would not be "cowed down" by the vendetta politics and targeting of opponents, and "silencing" them by letting loose central probe agencies on them. Simultaneously, the opposition BJP sharpened its swords and intensified efforts to bring down the MVA government before its declared deadline of March 10. Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis termed the matter as "extremely serious" since the land worth crores of rupees was allegedly grabbed at a throwaway price with persons linked to absconding mafia don Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar, colluding with enemies of the country, and the proceeds were laundered for terror funding and anti-national activities. BJP state President Chandrakant Patil demanded that since Malik has been arrested, he should quit, as also all other ministers facing various allegations should resign from the Cabinet immediately, failing which the BJP would launch an agitation on the streets.



## Deanna Allison signed for 'Dark Winds' as a regular cast member

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Deanna Allison, who has worked in the 2003 film 'Edge Of America', has joined the cast of the upcoming series 'Dark Winds' in a series regular role. She will essay the role of Emma Leaphorn, the wife of a Navajo police officer Joe Leaphorn played by Zahn McClarnon. Her character in the show is described as a strong woman with good intuition who works as a midwife, reports 'Variety'. Emma is deeply invested in her work. When she suspects that one of her patients is a victim of domestic violence, she immediately asks her husband to investigate. As per 'Variety', the series follows an investigation into the murder of a young Navajo woman, led by Joe. Season 1 will comprise six episodes and is slated to debut on AMC and AMC Plus in 2022. The series also stars Kiowa Gordon as Jim Chee as well as Rainn Wilson, Noah Emmerich, and Jessica Matten. Allison's role in the series will be her first regular TV series role. Graham Roland, who developed 'Dark Winds' for television will also executive produce the show along with Zahn McClarnon and Vince Calandra. Calandra will also serve as the showrunner. George R.R. Martin and Robert Redford will also work in the capacity of executive producers on the series produced by AMC Studios along with Tina Elmo and Vince Gerardis. Chris Eyre will executive produce and direct the pilot.



## CHARLIZE THERON 'DIDN'T FEEL SAFE' WITH TOM HARDY

Los Angeles | Agencies

'Mad Max: Fury Road' actress Charlize Theron said that she "didn't feel safe" after a huge row with co-star Tom Hardy during filming for the 2015 blockbuster. The 46-year-old actress has apologised "profusely" for their infamous on-set rows while shooting the 2015 post-apocalyptic blockbuster - which they have both opened up about in the past - and she admitted their behaviour was "not a conducive working environment", reports femalefirst.co.uk.

In Kyle Buchanan's new book 'Blood, Sweat Chrome: The Wild and True Story of Mad Max: Fury Road' - as quoted by USA Today - she said: "It was like two parents in the front of the car.

"We were either fighting or we were icing each other - I don't know which one is worse - and (our co-stars) had to deal with it in the back. It was horrible! It was not a conducive working environment... I apologise profusely." Camera operator Mark Goellnicht recalled a moment Tom, 44, showed up three hours late to filming, with Charlize branding him "disrespectful" and demanding he paid the huge fine.

He added: "He charged up to her and said, 'What did you say to me?' He was quite aggressive.

"She really felt threatened, and that was the turning point, because then she said, 'I want someone as protection.' She then had a producer that was assigned to be with her all the time."

Theron described producer Doug Mitchell as "a man forgiving another man", and said she wanted a woman in a position of power to "maybe equalise" some of the tension. She said: "It got to a place where it was kind of out of hand, and there was a sense that maybe sending a woman producer down could maybe equalise some of it. 'A lot of what I felt was coming my way from Doug was ... oh, [screw] it. I'll just say it. It was a man forgiving another man for really bad behavior, and I didn't feel safe.'" Producer Denise Di Novi was called in to help, but Tom branded the idea Charlize was "intimidated" by him as "b\*\*\*\*\*".



Los Angeles | Agencies

## 'Spider-Man: No Way Home' set for digital debut

After enjoying an extended theatrical run, 'Spider-Man: No Way Home' will make its digital debut on March 22 and on 4K UHD and Blu-ray on April 12.

To mark the occasion, Sony Pictures shared a picture of Tom Holland, Tobey Maguire and Andrew Garfield recreating the iconic Spider-Man pointing meme, reports 'Variety'.

The film, which is now available for

pre-order on digital, 4K UHD and Blu-ray, has minted \$772 million and counting at the U.S. box-office since its opening in theaters on December 17.

As per 'Variety', the gross collections are beyond James Cameron's 'Avatar' as the third highest-grossing domestic (USA) release in history. The top two spots are grabbed by 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens' and 'Avengers: Endgame'. With global box office gross

at \$1.8 billion, 'Spider-Man: No Way Home' has become the highest-grossing Sony release in history.

'Spider-Man: No Way Home' features three generations of Spider-Man actors on screen by bringing together Holland, Maguire and Garfield. Holland and Garfield have already expressed their interest on record for starring together in another 'Spider-Man' movie.

## OSCAR CUTS: INDUSTRY, NOMINEES REACT TO DECISION ON OFF-AIR AWARDS

Los Angeles: Earlier, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences had decided to present eight awards off-air to make the broadcast crisp and streamlined. But, apparently the move has caused outrage among the nominees across eight categories. The original score, make-up and hairstyling, documentary short, film editing, production design, animated short, live action short and sound -- will be awarded prior to the start of the upcoming March 27 show, edited for time, and broadcast sporadically throughout the evening, according to Variety. Before the decision was made public, a Zoom call was convened to lend a personal touch to the news and show respect for their nominees. Present on the call was Shawn Finnie, executive vice president of membership and awards; Christine Simmons, AMPAS chief operating officer; Jennifer Todd, governor of the producers branch; and Academy CEO Dawn Hudson, who joined the call after it began. A source told 'Variety' that several individuals on the call tried to offer alternative ways to streamline the show but their suggestions weren't considered. They were informed that the decision was final. The source is quoted by 'Variety' said: "To relegate us in this way, it's so disrespectful. It sends a strong message about prioritising branches and specific filmmakers within the Academy." One notable producer speaking on condition of anonymity, said: "I think there would be other ways where the Academy could still present these awards live and quicken the pace of the show overall. This specific choice feels a bit lacking in creativity."



## 'The Daily Show', 'The Harder They Fall' and 'Red Table Talk' bag top prizes

Los Angeles | Agencies

The ongoing NAACP Image Awards, which kicked off from February 21, honoured 'The Daily Show' with Trevor Noah, 'The Harder They Fall' and 'Red Table Talk' among the productions that nabbed top prizes on Wednesday for the third night during the virtual ceremony.

The five virtual ceremonies will lead up to the live telecast, where the top categories such as entertainer of the year, will be doled out on February 26 on BET. The Monday-Friday virtual ceremonies are live-streamed via the Image Awards' YouTube channel and NAACPImageAwards.net, reports 'Variety'.

Comedian Maya Rudolph bagged her first Image Award in the outstanding guest performance category for 'Saturday Night Live'. For Trevor Noah, winning at the Image Awards has now become a regular affair, he has scored a repeat win in the outstanding host in the reality/reality competition, game show or variety series or special category.

According to 'Variety', 'The Daily Show' also topped the outstanding variety or game show category, with Joy Reid's 'The Reid Out' named outstanding news/information series and 'Wild 'n Out' the top reality/reality competition series.

'Red Table Talk' hosted by Jada Pinkett Smith, Willow Smith and Jada's mother, Adrienne Banfield-Norris,

clinched its second consecutive Image Award for the outstanding talk series, with Jada Pinkett Smith, Adrienne Banfield-Norris and Willow Smith opening the account of their win at the Awards as they were feted with an additional honour.

'The Harder They Fall' directed by Jeaymes Samuels, who has also scored the music of the film, bagged two awards -- one for outstanding breakthrough creative (motion picture) for Samuels and the second for outstanding ensemble cast in a motion picture. The western film, with a total of 12 Image Award nods, stars Jonathan Majors, Idris Elba, Regina King, Zazie Beetz, Delroy Lindo, Lakeith Stanfield, Danielle Deadwyler, RJ Cyler, Edi Gathegi and

## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Alessandra Ambrosio



## WOMEN'S ODI WORLD CUP

# TEAMS CAN PLAY MATCHES EVEN WITH NINE FIT PLAYERS

Auckland | Agencies

Teams at the women's ODI World Cup starting next week will be allowed to take the field even with nine fit players in case of a Covid-19 outbreak.

According to reports from New Zealand, which will be hosting the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup from March 4-April 3, the International Cricket Council (ICC) has confirmed that female members of a team's support staff will be permitted to field in a match in the case of a significant Covid outbreak, with games to proceed so long as a team has a minimum of nine players available.

Normally, a team has to have eleven players with substitutes from the squad of 15 allowed to take the



field in case more than one player is unavailable. But with the organisers looking to keep the tournament on track despite rising Covid-19 case numbers in New Zealand, the ICC has made these changes to the rules of play.

"If it becomes necessary, we would allow a team to field nine players as an

exception for this environment," Chris Tetley, the ICC's Head of Events, said on Thursday "And if they had female substitutes from within their management team, we would enable two substitutes to play, non-batting, non-bowling... to enable a game to take place."

Teams have been permit-

ted to bring extra reserves with them to New Zealand, beyond the 15-player squad, so players can be brought in and out of the squad in the case of Covid infections.

We've allowed squads to bring additional travelling reserves so that they can replace on a temporary basis if needs be, because of Covid, players in and out of the squad during the event which is four five-week-long event, so there's opportunity for players, maybe to contract Covid," Tetley said. Daily case numbers in New Zealand rose beyond 6000 on Thursday to a new high of 6137. The World Cup schedule features 31 matches at six less than a month and Tetley said that games could rescheduled should there be a significant Covid-19 outbreak in team.

# 1st T20I: Kishan, Iyer sparkle in India's convincing 62-run win over Sri Lanka

Lucknow | Agencies

Ishan Kishan (89 off 56 balls) and Shreyas Iyer (57 not out off 28 balls) sparked with scintillating knocks against an underwhelming Sri Lanka bowling attack to set up a convincing 62-run win at the Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Cricket Stadium on Thursday.

In a tall chase of 200, Sri Lanka were never in the race from the word go. With the pitch slowing down in the second innings and dew not coming to their rescue, India's bowlers did well to keep Sri Lanka to just 137/6 in their 20 overs. Such was the ease of the win that only Ravindra Jadeja completed his quota of four overs. India struck with a wicket on the very first ball as Pathum Nissanka played on to his stumps off Bhuvneshwar Kumar.

Sri Lanka's free fall continued as Dasun Shanaka reverse-swept straight to point off Chahal. Shanaka's dismissal made Chahal the leading wicket-taker for India in T20Is. Chamika Karunaratne hit two sixes but gave a thick edge behind to Kishan off Iyer. Charith Asalanka was the lone ranger for Sri Lanka while Dushmantha Chameera took a six and two fours off Iyer to showcase his batting skills. Asalanka reached his fifty off 43



### Brief scores

India 199/2 in 20 overs (Ishan Kishan 89, Shreyas Iyer 57 not out; Dasun Shanaka 1/19, Lahiru Kumara 1/43) beat Sri Lanka 137/6 in 20 overs (Charith Asalanka 53 not out, Dushmantha Chameera 24 not out; Bhuvneshwar Kumar 2/9, Venkatesh Iyer 2/36) by 62 runs

balls with a flick through mid-wicket and that was the lone bright spot for Sri Lanka in the series opener.

Earlier, Kishan, who didn't have a great time against the West Indies, toyed with the Sri Lanka bowlers and mixed fluency with dismissive shots to reach his highest T20I score. Iyer, on the other hand, stepped up in the last three overs to pro-

vide a great finish to India's innings after being pushed into batting first. In the final over, Iyer again launched a six over long-on and then brought up his fifty off just 25 balls with a flick through square leg. Iyer was decisive in India collecting 69 runs off the last five overs, which was enough for the hosts to extend their winning streak in T20Is to ten matches.

## PREMIER LEAGUE: LIVERPOOL THRASH LEADS TO MOVE TO WITHIN 3 POINTS OF MAN CITY

London: The 2019-20 winners Liverpool narrowed the gap with Premier League leaders Manchester City to just three points after a thumping 6-0 win at home to Leeds United. Two penalties from Mohamed Salah and a close-range finish from Joel Matip put Liverpool 3-0 up at the break against a rival that, as usual, looked lively in attack and vulnerable in defense. City are at the top of the table with 63 points from 26 matches with Liverpool now moving to 60 off 26. Chelsea are placed third with 50 points but have a match to play. Meanwhile, in other matches on the night, Watford coach Roy Hodgson had an unhappy reunion with his former club as Crystal Palace won 4-1 at Vicarage Road to deepen Watford's relegation worries. Although Moussa Sissoko quickly canceled out Jean-Phillipe Matete's 15th-minute opener for the visitors, Conor Gallagher continued his excellent form with a 42nd-minute effort to restore Palace's lead and two late goals from Wilfried Zaha gave the final score a sheen that flattered the visitors. Burnley gave their survival hopes a huge boost at the expense of Tottenham's European ambitions, thanks to Ben Mee's powerful header which gave them a 1-0 win at home to Antonio Conte's side. The win is only Burnley's third of the season but their second in two games and leaves them just two points behind Newcastle United and Everton and three behind Leeds, who have played two more games.

## NZ v IND: Smriti, Harmanpreet, Mithali score fifties in India's win

Queenstown | Agencies

Fighting half-centuries by opener Smriti Mandhana, Harmanpreet Kaur and skipper Mithali Raj helped India Women beat New Zealand by six wickets in the fifth and final ODI here on Thursday. Their first win of the five-match series gives India women a big boost ahead of next week's ICC Women's Cricket World Cup to be played in New Zealand.

Smriti scored 71 while Harmanpreet Kaur struck 63 before Mithali guided the visitors to victory with an unbeaten 54 as India Women reached 252/4 off 46 overs in response to 251/9 scored by



the New Zealand women in their allotted 50 overs on electing to bat first. The hosts were boosted by

a 66 by Amelia Kerr while skipper Sophie Davine contributed 34 and Hayley Jensen and Lauren Down scored a 30 each. For India, Rajeshwari Gayakwad (2/61), Deepti Sharma (2/42) and Sneha Rana (2/40) were the most successful bowlers.

### Brief scores :

New Zealand Women 251/9 in 50 overs (Amelia Kerr 66, Sophie Davine 34); Rajeshwari Gayakwad (2/61), Deepti Sharma (2/42), Sneha Rana (2/40) lost to India Women 252/4 off 46 overs (Smriti Mandhana 71, Harmanpreet Kaur 63, Mithali Raj 54 not out; Hannah Rowe 1/41) by six wickets.

"We have improved over the last few games we have played, that's a good sign before the World Cup. (It) Was important to have the right preparation before the big tournament. Unfortunately, we couldn't get the camps in India due to the rising Omicron cases."

Mithali Raj, Captain, India

## HOCKEY PRO LEAGUE

### INDIA WOMEN LOOK TO CONTINUE WINNING MOMENTUM AGAINST SPAIN

Bhubaneswar: The India Women's team is set to take on Spain in the FIH Hockey Pro League 2021/22 matches scheduled to take place here Saturday and Sunday. The two-legged affair between the two teams will take place at the iconic Kalinga Hockey Stadium. India captain Savita said though Spain are a strong opponent and India will still be without regular skipper Rani Rampal, the hosts will be looking to continue with the momentum they gained in their first two matches against China in Muscat, Oman, last month.

"Spain are a good team. They have improved a lot in the past few years, and so have we. We have confidence in our team, and we will focus on ourselves. We will follow the plans and structure laid down by our Chief Coach Janneke Schopman," Savita said at a pre-match virtual press conference, claiming her team will focus on its own targets. The Indian goalkeeper also spoke about the hard training sessions the team is currently having in Bhubaneswar ahead of the two-legged tie against Spain.



## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

# Teenager Elanga scores as Man Utd draw away to Atletico

Madrid | Agencies

Anthony Elanga's 80th-minute goal gave Manchester United a 1-1 draw away to Atletico Madrid in the first leg of their UEFA Champions League last-16 tie.

The result flattered United, who did very little in the game played on Wednesday night, but at the same time, it was a punishment for Atletico for not taking chances and their tendency to defend a narrow lead.

The game was just seven minutes old when Atletico took the lead. United half-cleared a corner, but Renan Lodi whipped the ball back into the area for Joao Felix to race in ahead of Harry Maguire and head the ball past David de Gea and in off the post.



United were struggling to connect in attack, while Atletico looked threatening every time they pushed forward, although having taken the lead, they were content to sit deep and look to play on the break, reports Xinhua.

At the half-hour mark, De Gea was United's saviour as he denied Angel Correa when the striker was through on goal after robbing Raphael Varane, who moments after returned again gave the ball away to Geoffrey Kondogbia.

The 19-year-old Elanga also came on for Marcus Rashford in the 76th minute, and he levelled the scores within four minutes. Bruno Fernandes found a rare gap in the Atletico defense and the youngster rolled the ball across Jan Oblak and into the back of the net.

## AFC ASIAN CUP

### India face Hong Kong, Afghanistan, Cambodia in final qualifiers

Kuala Lumpur | Agencies

The Indian men's football team will have to contend with Hong Kong, Afghanistan and Cambodia in its bid to qualify for next year's AFC Asian Cup in China.

India, who are ranked 104th in FIFA Rankings, have drawn lower-ranked opponents in Hong Kong (148), Afghanistan (150) and Cambodia (171) in the draw for the final qualifying round conducted virtually in the Malaysian capital on Thursday.

In the final round qualifiers, 24 teams have been divided into six groups of four each. India will host the Group D matches at the



Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan (VYBK) in Kolkata with matches being played on June 8, 11 and 14, 2022.

The six group winners and five best second-placed teams will join hosts China PR, Australia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Japan,

Korea Republic, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria and the United Arab Emirates and Vietnam in the Finals, which will start in China on June 16, 2023, the Asian Football Confederation informed in a release on Thursday.

## Kohli terms Rahul and Chahal as the most transformative players in the IPL



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Virat Kohli, who quit as the captain of Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) after the 2021 edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL), had termed the journeys of batter KL Rahul and leg-spinner Yuzvendra

Chahal as 'most transformative' ones in the tournament. Rahul began his IPL journey with RCB in 2013 before another stint in 2016 while Chahal was associated with the franchise from 2014 to 2021. "The only two people who come to mind for me are KL (Rahul) and Yuzi

(Yuzvendra Chahal). KL Rahul was at RCB in 2013 along with Karun and Mayank. KL Rahul was never a guy who was looked at as a T20 specialist. He was part of the Sunrisers Hyderabad in 2015 and Avinash Vaidya was our manager before. He approached me because he was in touch with KL Rahul, and he was not getting any game time. And I had seen him play for India," said Kohli on 'The RCB Podcast'. Kohli then elaborated on his initial equation with Rahul at RCB. "I hadn't seen much of KL since he left RCB, and I had heard he is doing well in first-class cricket. He was very young when he was at RCB, and I was already playing for India and we were regularly playing for RCB. So, we never really connected in a very detailed manner."

## MEN'S T20 WC QUALIFIER A CANADA SEAL FIFTH PLACE, GERMANY TAKE SEVENTH SPOT

Al Amerat (Oman) | Agencies

Canada cruised to a seven-wicket win over Bahrain to secure the fifth spot and Germany defeated the Philippines by nine wickets to claim the seventh position, in the classification round on the concluding day of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Qualifier A, here on Thursday.

A skipper's knock by Navneet Dhaliwal and a career best T20I spell by Harsh Thaker steered Canada to victory. Dhaliwal's unbeaten 54 off 27 was laced with 3 fours and 4 sixes, as Canada achieved victory with 5.3 overs remaining.

Having restricted Bahrain to 131/8, Canada's Rayyan Pathan and wicketkeeper Shreyas Movva steadied the ship after Matthew Spoor's fell early. Pathan looked in ominous form during his 26-ball 38 but was dismissed in the eighth over. Movva and Dhaliwal paced their innings without taking risks before the eventful 14th over.

Earlier, Thaker had produced a magical spell of 4-20 to deny Bahrain a big total. The right-arm off-spinner triggered a middle-order collapse to restrict Bahrain to 131/8.

David Mathias and Haider Butt came together with the team in trouble at 31/3 inside the



powerplay overs. Openers Muhammad Younis and captain Sarfaraz Ali were sent back to the pavilion by Canada's left-arm quicks Kaleem Sana and Rishiv Joshi. First change bowler, Saad Zafar, met with immediate success in the fifth over. The left-arm orthodox bowler got rid of Shahbaz Badar with a well-taken return catch.

In another match of the day, the Philippines got off to a dream start in the powerplay as the openers forged a partnership of 56 - their side's highest ever stand in T20 Internationals. Daniel Smith smashed boundaries at will and Henry Tyler provided excellent support from the other end.

Germany's Elam Bharathi's supreme spell stood out. He finished with career-best figures of 4/6 in 4 overs. A late 27-run partnership between Huzaifa Mohammed and Miggy Podosky took the Philippines past 100, and they eventually finished on 109/8 at the end of 20 overs - a national team record.

In response, Germany chased the target down with 7.1 overs to spare. Huzaifa Mohammed sent opener Talha Khan back in the very first over to add some spice to the contest. But half centuries from Justin Broad (50) and captain Michael Richardson (59) ensured that Germany got over the line comfortably.



## I understand the trauma of body-shaming: Simran Tomar

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**H**appy to have bagged the titular role in Nilanjana Purkayastha and Herumb Khot's 'Chikoo - Yeh Ishq Nachaye', actress Simran Tomar is leaving no stone unturned to entertain the audience. Born in Jaunsar, Dehradun, the actor was raised in Delhi where she did theatre and was a part of the theatre society during her graduation at Gargi College (Delhi University). "It feels great to be a part of 'Chikoo - Yeh Ishq Nachaye'. The production house and the team are excellent. The success of every project depends on teamwork," she says. In the acting profession for about 6 years now and there wasn't a day which didn't feel good being an artist, shares Simran. Playing a lead in a show is a big deal. But when the show already has a fan base, a new character needs to put in extra effort. Simran felt the expectation pressure too. "This is going to be my very first time on television, I'm getting used to this new schedule. The character is complex, layered, but we all are focusing on our performance and presentation. The show will now focus on how Chikoo, who is in her late teens, is being body-shamed in college." "I can understand the amount of trauma and fear one goes through when feeling rejected based on their looks. I have known a number of people being insecure with their own bodies. Chikoo is each one of us, who must have felt lost at one point and needs to turn things over," she says. Talking more on body-shaming, she continues: "Body-shaming happens when we create differences or division. And, we've already created differences based on multiple things, since childhood we've been asked to see or to do things in a particular way. Division has created such a compact society where one cannot see anything or anyone different than them. We need to be open, accepting and kind. We still need to learn a lot."



## Samantha is a technician's delight: Neeta Lulla

**Hyderabad:** Costume designer Neeta Lulla, who worked for Samantha Ruth Prabhu's 'Shakuntalam' reveals that Samantha was one of the most inspiring actresses she has worked with.

As the celebrity costume designer shared her experience working for the upcoming epic love saga, said that Samantha has 'transformed' herself into the world of 'Shakuntalam' as well. "Samantha totally nailed the character of Shakuntala holistically. From carrying the look, the performance, and watching her on the set, has transformed even me. I was engulfed in the era of 'Shakuntala and Dushyant'", Neeta Lulla said.

Neeta also mentions that Samantha was apprehensive about how she would pull off a queen's look. "She is a technician's delight. Such an obedient and wonderful person who appreciates the efforts put in, and works doubly hard", Neeta explains.

"I am amazed at the scope of her versatility on character portrayal", Neeta said. "It was never Samantha on set but only Shakuntala". Days after the first look poster of Samantha Ruth Prabhu's 'Shakuntala' look came out, ace designer Neeta Lulla's customised jewellery is in discussion. As Samantha sported an angelic look with customised floral accessories which were designed by Neeta Lulla, her look has become one of the most discussed topics.



## Sajid Nadiadwala receives Certificate of Recognition as Ambassador for Indo-Abu Dhabi entertainment!

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**M**aking his country proud at the global level yet again, producer-director Sajid Nadiadwala has been recently bestowed upon the prestigious honour of being 'Ambassador for Indo-Abu Dhabi entertainment in Abu Dhabi under Mohamed Khalifa Al

Mubarak for promoting Indo- Abu Dhabi Relations. The felicitation was done under H.E. Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak. The award was presented by Mr Michael Garin, CEO of twofour54 Abu Dhabi and the Emirate's media and entertainment hub. Adding on to the achievements of Sajid Nadiadwala, the Abu Dhabi Government also presented him a gold visa for his contribution. Al Mubarak is a member of the Executive Council of Abu Dhabi, overseeing some of the Emirate's most significant institutions across the culture, tourism, media, entertainment, and real estate sectors.

Sajid Nadiadwala says, "It is an honour to receive this prestigious recognition from His Excellency Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak. On behalf of Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment, I would like to thank everyone who made this possible. Our experience in Abu Dhabi has been and continues to be wonderful. We look forward to showing India the beauty of Abu Dhabi through our movies." Sajid Nadiadwala and his team are currently working on various projects to collaborate with Abu Dhabi.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**A**ctor Divyenndu reveals about his tough night shoots during the filming of Yash Raj Film's debut web series 'The Railway Men' which is about the Bhopal gas tragedy. As per the recorded estimates it killed more than 15,000 people and affected over 600,000 workers.

Talking about his difficult shoot schedule Divyenndu shares: "I am mostly doing night shoots since the show is based on the Bhopal gas tragedy. I have been shooting at nights the entire past month and covering up on my sleep in the days which has been exhausting and I can undoubtedly say that it is the toughest shoot of my life till date". Divyenndu, is best known for his roles in 'Pyaar Ka Punctama', 'Toilet: Ek Prem Katha', 'Batti Gul Meter Chalu' and Prime Video series 'Mirzapur'.

On working with a cast like R. Madhavan, Kay Kay Menon, and Babil Shah, he adds: "But it is definitely all worth it because as an actor, it is a satisfying feeling to be a part of such an important story and be able to work with such an amazing and talented team of co-stars." Divyenndu also has his film, 'Mere Desh Ki Dharti' releasing soon. As per reports, he will also be part of Imtiaz Ali's project.

## DIVYENNDU RECOUNTS TOUGH NIGHT SHOTS FOR 'THE RAILWAY MEN' BASED ON BHOPAL GAS TRAGEDY



Team Absolute | Mumbai

**A**ctor Karan Deol is just two films old in the industry and he is looking forward to making his own identity that is not just because of his family background. He comes from a family that has actors like his grandfather Dharmendra, father Sunny Deol, and uncles Bobby Deol and Abhay Deol and so there is a lot of expectation from him.

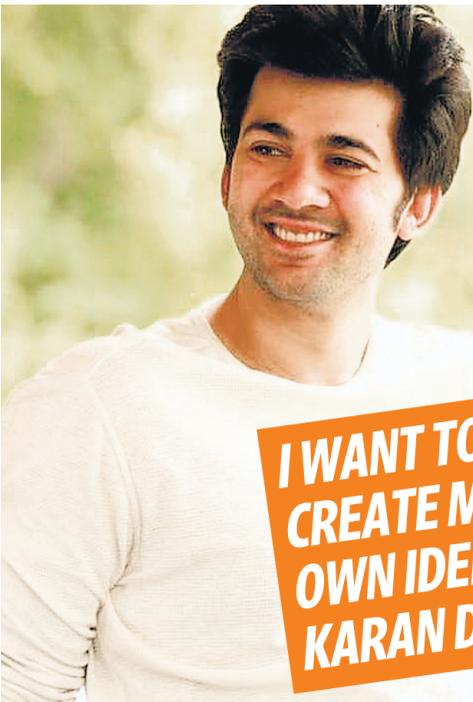
When asked, who does he want to be recognised as from his family?

He says: "I am privileged and blessed enough to come from a family who has given so much to the industry. The learning and adoration for them will always be the same and something that I, as an actor, will be taking from them throughout my career. I am new to the industry and I am here to provide quality entertainment for all the viewers."

Karan's Bollywood debut of 'Pal Pal Dil Ke Paas' did not meet up to the expectations of many. His next film 'Velle' came after a gap that did well in cinemas.

He shares his willingness to make his own identity in the industry: "As I said, it feels really great to be recognized as an actor coming from such a legendary background but I would want to make my own mark. I want to be called 'Karan Deol.' I want to break the shackles and create my own identity in the industry."

## I WANT TO CREATE MY OWN IDENTITY: KARAN DEOL



## The more I explore the character, more I learn about the craft: Himanshu Soni



Team Absolute | Mumbai

**A**ctor Himanshu Soni who plays Abhimanyu Pandey is getting a lot of appreciation for his role in the show 'Aggar Tum Na Hote'.

Himanshu has played a variety of roles in shows like Buddha, Rajon ka Raja, Neeli Chatri wale and Radha Krishna.

He says: "I have always done a variety of shows and I make it a point not to repeat myself as an actor. I'm getting a great response for this show and it has given me an opportunity to explore my acting potential. The more I am exploring the character, the more I am learning

about the craft. "I'm flooded with messages on social media and fans keep asking what will happen next. Nowadays it is important for an actor to know the audience's instant reaction as in daily shows things change." 'Aggar Tum Na Hote', which showcases the extent to which a nurse goes to treat her patients, came on air last November. The story revolves around Niyati Mishra (essayed by Simaran Kaur), who is a young, hard-working dedicated nurse and Abhimanyu Pandey (Himanshu Soni), who is a rich and seemingly normal young man dealing with mental instability.

## INSTAGRAM PIC OF THE DAY



Ankitta Sharma